

EXPOSITORY NOTES
ON THE GOSPEL OF
MATTHEW

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THE ENTIRE NEW TESTAMENT

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P R E F A C E

Much of the material embodied in this volume has appeared in the course of the past nine years, in *The Sunday School Times*, and is used here in accordance with an understanding had with, and permission given by, the owners of that periodical when I assumed responsibility for the leading article on the weekly International Lesson.

With so much matter already in print and available for use, it was thought best not to wait until circumstances permitted me to give a series of lectures on Matthew to be stenographically reported and edited for publication, but rather to write a connected exposition, filling in with new material what was lacking in the notes from *The Times*. This accounts for the different form in which this book appears to those on the other Gospels for which I have been responsible. I send the book out with the earnest prayer that it may prove helpful to many.

H. A. IRONSIDE

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
PREFACE	3
INTRODUCTION	7
1. THE GENEALOGY AND BIRTH OF THE KING	11
2. THE PRESERVATION OF THE KING	16
3. THE FORERUNNER, AND THE ANOINTING OF THE KING	24
4. THE TESTING OF THE KING	32
5. THE PRINCIPLES OF THE KINGDOM (Part One)	43
6. THE PRINCIPLES OF THE KINGDOM (Part Two)	58
7. THE PRINCIPLES OF THE KINGDOM (Part Three)	70
8. THE WORKS OF THE KING	86
9. THE KING CONTINUES TO MANIFEST HIS POWER AND GRACE	103
10. THE KING'S COURIERS	118
11. THE GRACE OF THE KING	131
12. THE KING'S AUTHORITY DENIED	141
13. THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM	156
14. THE KING'S AUTHORITY OVER ALL NATURE	178
15. THE KING DENOUNCES HYPOCRISY	188
16. THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM	199
17. THE GLORY OF THE KINGDOM	210
18. IDEAL SUBJECTS OF THE KINGDOM, AND DIS- CIPLINE IN THE CHURCH	221
19. THE NEW LAW OF THE KINGDOM	235
20. KINGDOM STANDARDS	252
21. THE KING IN JERUSALEM	263
22. THE KING AND HIS OPPONENTS	280
23. THE KING'S INDICTMENTS	300
24. THE KING REVEALS THE FUTURE (Part One)	311
25. THE KING REVEALS THE FUTURE (Part Two)	327
26. THE KING FACES THE CROSS	342
27. THE CONDEMNATION AND DEATH OF THE KING	371
28. THE RISEN KING, AND THE ROYAL COMMISSION	393

INTRODUCTION

While we have no means of knowing just when this Gospel was written, or even whether (as some suppose) it first appeared in Hebrew, or was originally written in Greek as it has come down to us, it is very evident that it is placed rightfully at the beginning of the New Testament; for it is very definitely the connecting link between the prophets of old and the new dispensation of grace. The many quotations in it from the books of the prophets are designed to show how our Lord Jesus Christ came as the promised King of Israel, in exact accordance with the numerous predictions which God had inspired His servants to give from Abraham's day to that of Malachi, when prophetic testimony ceased, and was silent for four hundred years, until John the Baptist, the last of the prophets, came declaring, "The time is fulfilled."

Matthew is in a very real sense the Jewish Gospel. This does not mean that it has no message for Christians, but rather that it is designed by the Holy Spirit to present Christ so as to make it clear to honest Jewish inquirers that He is the One of whom Moses and the prophets spake. In 1:1-17 we have the genealogy of the King, and in 1:18-25 the birth of the King. In 2:1-12 the Gentiles do

homage to the King, and in 2:13-23 we see the preservation of the King. Chapter 3 gives the dedication and anointing of the King; while in chapter 4 we have His testing. In chapters 5 to 7 inclusive (the so-called "Sermon on the Mount") the King unfolds the principles of His kingdom. From chapter 8 through 12 we see the King accredited by mighty works of power, but meeting with ever-increasing rejection. In chapters 13 to 20 we behold a new condition—that which was to prevail after the rejected King returned to heaven, and until He comes again. The kingdom of heaven is seen throughout in mystical form. In other words, it is the development of what we generally speak of as Christendom. The culmination as to Israel is seen in chapters 21 to 23, God's earthly people set to one side because of their refusal to receive the King when He came to them in exact accordance with their own Scriptures. Chapters 24 and 25 have to do with the second advent of the King. In chapters 26 to 28 we have His death and resurrection, closing with His commission to His disciples to go forth to the nations with the kingdom message.

The genealogy given in Matthew is that of Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus, lineal descendant of David and heir to the throne, through whom the throne rights were transmitted to our Lord. His birth occurred in Bethlehem late in 5 B. C. or early in 4 B. C., while the visit of the Wise Men took

place possibly some two months afterward, and this was followed almost immediately by the flight into Egypt.

We need not be surprised to find that everything in connection with the advent of the King was of a miraculous character, when we realize that He was truly "Immanuel," "God with us," as predicted in Isaiah 7:14. When God came down to earth how could it be otherwise than that certain natural laws should be suspended in order that He might enter into our world in a manner becoming to His majesty and power. So we see Him taking our humanity as born of a virgin mother, His coming made known in some supernatural way to the Wise Men from the East, and His life preserved by divine arrangement so that the malice of Herod could not reach Him in order to destroy Him. The beauty and simplicity of the narrative fills us with admiration and moves our hearts to worship and thanksgiving for God's unspeakable Gift.

While it is of great importance that we observe and take into account the special dispensational place of this Gospel we shall lose much if we fail to realize that it is Gospel, and not law. For the Gospel is God's message concerning His Son, and here the Son is presented in His Kingly aspect that we may learn to reverence Him as such and bow in subjection at His feet.

CHAPTER ONE

THE GENEALOGY AND BIRTH OF THE KING

THE book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham." Matthew begins with the genealogy of our Lord from Abraham to Joseph. But this was not the blood-line. It was the royal line, however, and carried with it the throne rights. As Son of Abraham, our Lord is the promised Seed in whom all nations of the world shall be blessed (Genesis 22:18). As Son of David, He is the King who is to reign in righteousness upon David's throne (Isaiah 9:6, 7). His actual descent from David was through His mother, Mary, who was the daughter of Heli, but was married to Joseph before her holy Child was born, thus giving Him legal, full title to the throne, though the curse upon Jeconiah (Jeremiah 22:30) would have precluded His occupancy of it had He actually been the Son of Joseph.

We need not quote this genealogy here as it can be readily referred to by the careful student. We note verse 17: "So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying

away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations." This verse epitomizes the genealogy, dividing it into three groups of fourteen generations each. In order to do this, certain names are omitted and in the last instance Mary's name has to be counted to make fourteen, unless, as others have suggested, we are to consider the birth of Jesus as the thirteenth and the second coming of Christ as the fourteenth.

Others have drawn attention to the inclusion of the names of five women in this list, and all of these just such as no Jewish chronologist would naturally have desired to recognize. These are Tamar, whose shameful story is recorded in Genesis 38; Rahab the harlot, a Gentile, who, though a woman of evil character, became the wife of an Israelitish prince; Ruth the Moabitess, also a stranger from among the Gentiles, who entered this royal line only through her levirate marriage to Boaz, her first husband's near kinsman; Bathsheba, definitely mentioned as "her that had been the wife of Urias," thus bringing to mind David's terrible failure; and last of all, and sweetest of all, Mary the Virgin of Nazareth, the one whose fair name has been impugned by unbelieving Jews, because she became the mother of Jesus apart from the natural order.

What a list is this! How it tells out the grace that is in the heart of God who, in His sovereignty, chose to bring these five women into the line of

promise. The names of unchaste Tamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba tell us of mercy that goes out to the most sinful and depraved. The name of Ruth, loyal and devoted, yet a stranger, speaks of grace acting in spite of the ban upon the Moabites (Deuteronomy 23:3-6). When we think of Mary the Virgin Mother we adore the God who gave us His holy and blessed Son through her as the human instrument.

We come now to consider the birth of the King, of which we read in verses 18 to 25:

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with Child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with Child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: and knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born Son: and he called His name JESUS."

"Before they came together." The Scriptures are clear about the virgin birth of Jesus. His mother, Mary, was engaged to Joseph, but had not yet been married to him when he learned that she was to become a mother through direct operation of the Holy Spirit and altogether apart from natur-

al generation. "Minded to put her away privily." If Mary was not a virgin, the penalty for her condition, according to the law, was death. Joseph thought to save her from this. "Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife." The wonderful mystery of the incarnation was revealed to Joseph by angelic ministry. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus." "Jesus" from the Greek, and Joshua from the Hebrew are one name, and the meaning is "Jehovah the Saviour." "That it might be fulfilled." This is a distinctive phrase in this Gospel, used often because the object of the inspired writer is to show that Jesus is the Messiah promised in the prophets. "They shall call His name Emmanuel . . . God with us." Isaiah made this prediction nearly seven centuries before its fulfillment. The name given is an intimation of the mysterious union of the divine and the human in the virgin's Son (Isaiah 7:14). "Took unto him his wife." He married her notwithstanding her condition, that she might have the place in Israel of a wedded wife ere she became a mother. "He called His name Jesus." Obedient to the last detail, by calling the Child "Jesus," Joseph evidenced the reality of his own faith.

The name "Jesus," as intimated above, is simply the Anglicized form of the Greek *Iesous* which is the equivalent of the Hebrew *Joshua*—"the salvation of Jehovah." Many had borne that name before the Saviour came into the world, and even in its Greek form it was not uncommon. We

read of a "Jesus, which is called Justus" in Colossians 4:11. But throughout all the centuries since the incarnation, death, and resurrection of our blessed Lord, that name has stood out as distinct from every other. To Christians it is the name above every name at which every knee shall bow. Having taken it here on earth He will keep this name "Jesus" for all the ages to come. The two shining ones who announced His future coming (Acts 1:10,11) spoke of Him as "This same Jesus." In Revelation 22:16 He says, "I Jesus have sent Mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches." In response to His last message from heaven, "Surely I come quickly," the seer replied, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20). By this name we shall know Him throughout a blissful eternity, provided we know Him now on earth as our very own Saviour, Jesus, who has redeemed us to God by His blood.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PRESERVATION OF THE KING

OF Messiah it was prophesied that He should bring blessing to the nations as well as to Israel. Aged Simeon epitomized these promises when he declared of Jesus that He should be "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel" (Luke 2:32). The incident now before us is an earnest or foretaste of this.

Many non-scriptural ideas and legends have been linked with the visit of these Wise Men from the East. Contrary to the pictures we see generally, they are not called Kings, but Magi, that is, Wise Men, who devoted themselves to the study of ancient lore. Undoubtedly they were somewhat acquainted with certain prophecies, possibly those of Balaam (who was of the East) and of Daniel, whose book was written partly in the Hebrew and partly in the Chaldee languages. We need to remember also that the entire Old Testament had been translated into Greek some two centuries earlier, and this translation, known as the Septuagint (LXX), was available to scholars throughout the world and was studied, undoubtedly, by many Gentile students of sacred lore. We have no authority for saying there were only three Magi. This may have been deduced from the fact that

three kinds of offerings are mentioned (2:11). It is probable that an attempt to see in their visit the fulfillment of Psalm 72:10 is responsible for the idea that they were Oriental kings. But Psalm 72 is yet to be fulfilled at Christ's second coming.

We read:

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule My people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young Child; and when ye have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down, and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way"—vers. 1-12.

The circumstances connected with the Nativity of our Lord, in David's city, Bethlehem, are given in considerable detail by Luke. Matthew tells us only that He was born in that city in the days of Herod the King. This gives the date of His birth as several years earlier than the commonly accepted record. He was born at least four years B. C.

This question, however, is one to which chronologists have given much thought and study, and inasmuch as they are still in disagreement as to the exact date we need not discuss it here.

The Wise Men (Magi) had learned of the birth of the promised King by divine revelation, or else had worked out the great time prophecy of Daniel 9, so that they felt assured he was present in Israel. Guided by a star they came inquiring as to the place in which He might be found. Their question, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" proved most distracting to the aged wretch who sat upon the throne at that time—one of the most wicked kings that ever reigned. He called a meeting of the chief priests and scribes, and sought from them the answer to the inquiry of the Eastern visitors. Without hesitation they pointed him to the prophecy of Micah 5:2 where, quoting from the Septuagint, they read, "Thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule My people Israel." They knew the scripture; yet subsequent events proved they were unprepared to welcome Him of whom those sacred records spoke.

Herod, determined in his heart to destroy the infant King—if indeed He had appeared already—conferred with the Magi as to when the mysterious star had first appeared; and then bade them go on to Bethlehem, and if they found the Babe to return

and report to him that he, too, might do Him honor. Actually, his intention was the very opposite.

Led by the star which was seen again as they left Jerusalem they had no difficulty in locating the house where the holy family resided at this time. It is evidently a mistake to suppose that Mary and Joseph, with the Child, were still in the stable where the shepherds found them. They were now in a more convenient dwelling. Doubtless some weeks or even months had elapsed since the birth of Jesus.

Beholding Him the Wise Men prostrated themselves before Him and presented their well-selected gifts: gold, speaking of the divine nature and righteousness; frankincense, suggesting the fragrance of His perfect Human life; and myrrh, pointing forward to His sacrificial death. Mary's thoughts may well have been exalted as she beheld these eastern sages thus doing homage to her sacred Son. Joseph is not mentioned. He may not have been present during the visit of the strangers. "Being warned of God in a dream" not to return to Herod the Wise Men departed to their homes by a different route.

From His earliest infancy the holy Child Jesus was in a very special way under divine protection, for, though God manifest in the flesh, He was not exempt from human suffering. Angels watched over His early years like a heavenly bodyguard. They announced His birth, even as Gabriel had pre-

dicted His incarnation, and they were sent of God to explain the mystery of Mary's condition to Joseph; and then they instructed him as to each step he was to take in order to guard his sacred charge from the vengeance of Herod and others who might seek to put Him to death before the appointed time. The angels were created by the eternal Word, the Son, who in the fulness of time became Man for our salvation. It was their joy to herald His coming into the world and to watch over and minister to Him in His humiliation down here. Upon the departure of the Magi it was an angel who spoke to Joseph in a dream (which in itself reminds us how God often has revealed His will to men, as in Job 33:14-17). Joseph was commanded to "take the young Child and His mother, and flee into Egypt," there to abide until further instruction came, in order to protect the Child from the wrath of Herod, who was determined not to permit anyone to live who might contest the rights of his family to the throne.

According to the bidding of the angel Joseph "arose . . . and departed into Egypt." There God was to provide a place of refuge where the holy Babe would be permitted to develop in peace and security. The family, with Jesus, remained in Egypt until word came that Herod had died, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called My Son." These words were spoken by Jehovah

through Hosea (11:1) and referred primarily to Israel as a nation. Now they were to be fulfilled a second time in Him who came to redeem Israel. He, like the family of Jacob, went down into Egypt and was brought out of it in God's due time.

Herod's reaction to the refusal of the Wise Men to bring him word again was terrible. In his rage and fury, he ordered the massacre of all the innocent children two years of age and under, who were in Bethlehem, hoping thereby to destroy Him who was born to be King of the Jews.

"Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet." "Jeremy" is a translation of the Greek form of Jeremiah. The prophecy referred to is found in 31:15. "In Rama was there a voice heard . . . Rachel weeping for her children." Primarily, these words seem to refer to the distress of the mothers in Judah when their sons went into captivity. But the passage is cited as fitting perfectly with the grief of those mothers of Bethlehem whose infants were so ruthlessly slaughtered. Often in Scripture we find these twofold applications.

"When Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth." In due time the word came through a heavenly visitant, speaking to Joseph in a dream as before, "Saying, Arise, and . . . go into the land of Israel." The way was now clear for the young Child Jesus and His mother to return to their own land. Herod had passed away, and now

had to answer to God for his life of crime and cruelty. Joseph "arose, and . . . came into the land of Israel." Joseph's obedience to each message of the angel is noteworthy. Without raising any questions he complied immediately with every commandment which was given him in this supernatural way. We know very little of the life and experience of this man, who was chosen to be the foster-father of Jesus, but what little we are told makes us realize that he was one who was very sensitive to the Word of the Lord. He furnishes us with a most precious example of implicit obedience to the will of God, even under most perplexing and difficult circumstances.

"When he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea . . . he was afraid." Herod had murdered most of his own offspring, but Archelaus was permitted to live, and to him he willed his kingdom. Joseph feared he might be as vicious as his ungodly father; so he hesitated about actually putting his little family into his power. But again God directed him by appearing to him in a dream, and warning him not to settle in Judea but to turn aside "into the parts of Galilee." "He came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth." From Luke's Gospel we learn that Mary was living in Nazareth when Gabriel first appeared to her (Luke 1:26). Joseph also dwelt there, and it was from this city that the two journeyed to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born (Luke 2:4). They returned, therefore, to their

own former home town, and there Jesus grew from Childhood to Manhood. Because of His residence there He was called a Nazarene, a name intimately connected with the Hebrew word *Netzer* meaning "branch," as in Zechariah 6:12, and other scriptures. In a secondary sense it might mean "a separated one," a Nazarite, as in Numbers 6:2, for Jesus was the true Nazarite, separated to God from His birth. The city of Nazareth evidently took its name from this word *Netzer*, possibly because of some special tree or sprout found in that vicinity. Therefore, it was easy to link the name *Nazarene* with the prophecies concerning Jesus as the Branch, or Sprout of the Lord (Isaiah 4:2), the Branch out of David's roots (Isaiah 11:1). But as applied to Jesus by His enemies, it was a term of reproach—a term, however, which the early Christians readily appropriated and gloried in (Acts 24:5).

CHAPTER THREE

THE FORERUNNER, AND THE ANOINTING OF THE KING

OUR Lord has told us that of those born of women none was greater than John the Baptist. His greatness consisted, not simply in his personal character—though he stands out preeminently as a devoted man of God, true to principles and unyielding in his stand against iniquity even in high places (Matthew 14:4)—but in the fact that he was chosen of God to herald the coming of Christ as Israel's Messiah and the world's Redeemer (John 1:29-31), and formally to open to Him the door into the sheepfold (John 10:2,3) by baptizing and acknowledging Him as the Anointed of God. Time can never dim the luster that belongs to him as the forerunner of the Christ, who was permitted to see and know the One of whom he prophesied—a privilege denied to all the earlier prophets.

Luke gives the date of the beginning of John's ministry as the fifteenth year of Tiberias Caesar, which most authorities identify with A. D. 26. He preached in the Jordan valley, in the land of Judea. His special ministry was the calling of the people

of Israel to repentance. He "came . . . in the way of righteousness," to emphasize God's holy and just demands on His creatures and to insist that only the self-judged sinner is fit for the presence of the Lord. Such a ministry is needed greatly today when men have lost, in large measure, the sense of the sinfulness of sin. It is useless to preach the gospel of the grace of God to men who have no realization of their need of that grace. Only when the soul is awakened to see its uncleanness and unrighteousness in the eye of a holy God will there be the cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The wilderness of Judea is the region east and south of Jerusalem, including the lower Jordan Valley, and the western side of the Dead Sea.

John's message was a call to self-judgment. He urged the people to take sides with God against themselves. "For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins."

In Isaiah, chap. 40, we find the prophecy which was fulfilled in John the Baptist. His message was, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." Israel had waited expectantly for centuries for the Messiah, but they were not ready to receive Him: they needed that preparation of heart which comes from honestly facing one's sins before God.

Both John's raiment and his food are mentioned. Elijah-like, he appeared in wilderness garb and subsisted on wilderness fare. He was a man of the great open places, whose manner of living added to the force of his words. It is considered debatable by some whether he actually fed upon locusts, or whether the term used refers to the carob-pod of the locust-tree. But inasmuch as locusts are eaten today and have been used as food (very much like dried shrimp) from time immemorial, it seems most likely that John actually used them in his diet. On one occasion Jesus called attention to John's abstemiousness (Matt. 11:18; Luke 7:33).

As John proclaimed the need of repentance his hearers came to him from all parts of the land, "and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." Baptism in itself was not an act of merit. It was meant to imply that the baptized person owned that his just desert was judgment because of his sins. Thus they condemned themselves and justified God (Luke 7:29). That John did not imply that his baptism freed them from their sins is clear from the preaching recorded in

John 1: 29. He pointed the people to Jesus as the only One through whom they could obtain remission of sin.

When haughty religious professors, who gave no evidence of repentance, came with the rest, seeking baptism, John rebuked them sternly, saying, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Strong language was used because of the hypocrisy of these religious formalists, who by their hidden wickedness proclaimed themselves children of the evil one. The Pharisees were the orthodox party in Israel, and the Sadducees were the heterodox group (Acts 23: 8); but both alike rested upon their own fancied righteousness and therefore saw no need to repent (Romans 10: 3). John demanded fruits meet for repentance ere he was willing to administer the sacred rite of baptism. While good works have no value so far as procuring salvation is concerned, the truly repentant one shows by a new life the reality of his profession by turning to God and away from his iniquities.

These religious professors were ready to reply indignantly that they were children of Abraham, and so needed no repentance. John realized what was going through their minds and exclaimed, "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." It is a common thing for unspiritual religionists to

rest upon and glory in the piety of their forefathers. But unless the same faith that was in them is found in us, our glorying is vain. God who made man from the dust of the earth could raise up children of faith from stones if He so willed. He added, "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." Too often in our days the ax is laid to the fruit of the tree. But it is the root that is wrong. There must be a new man if there would be fruit for God. To lay the ax to the root of the tree implies the utter condemnation of the natural man and suggests the positive need of new birth.

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." The outward symbol was only for those who professed sincere repentance toward God, and who cast themselves upon His mercy as needy, helpless sinners. When Christ should come He would baptize with (or in) the Holy Spirit and fire.

"Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." The wheat are the children of the kingdom (Matt. 13:38). They are the ones who were to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. The

chaff are the the evil-doers who will be baptized in the fire of judgment. Nothing could emphasize our Lord's Deity more than John's declaration regarding Him and this twofold baptism. Imagine a creature baptizing in the Holy Spirit. Only One who is Himself Divine could do this. And on Pentecost Peter declares unhesitatingly that it was He who sent the Spirit (Acts 2: 33). He it is who will consign the impenitent to the fire of everlasting punishment (Matt. 25: 41). This is not to be confounded with the cleansing efficacy of the Holy Spirit, nor with the tongues "like as of fire" which appeared at Pentecost. "He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" is placed in direct contrast with gathering the "wheat into the garner" (verse 12).

"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him." The day arrived at last for the manifestation of the King; and Jesus appeared in the throng, and stepped forward to undergo the rite to which so many confessed sinners had submitted. He who was to take the sinner's place came to be baptized of John, that He might thereby be identified with sinners for whom He was to lay down His life. "But John forbad Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" To the Baptist it seemed out of keeping that the sinless One should submit to a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. He felt his own need rather to be baptized of

Jesus. "And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered Him." It is as though Jesus said, "I wish to submit to this as a pledge that I have come to fulfil every righteous demand of the throne of God on behalf of sinful men." It was our Lord's public dedication to the work of the cross for which He had come into the world. It is a very shallow interpretation indeed that makes the act of baptism the fulfilling of righteousness. In other words, it was not in order that He might set us a good example that Jesus was baptized, but rather that He might identify Himself with sinners as the One who was to make Himself responsible to satisfy every righteous claim for those who owned that they were justly under the curse of the violated law, and so with no righteousness of their own. They were like debtors giving their notes to God. Jesus endorsed those notes, guaranteeing full payment—that settlement was made on the cross.

In the next two verses we learn how God expressed His approval of the Son in a remarkable manner: "And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him." Immediately following our Lord's open dedication of Himself, "the heavens were opened" above Him, and in visible manifestation the Holy

Spirit anointed Him for the great work He had come to undertake to the glory of God and for the salvation of a lost world. It is to this that Peter refers, as recorded in Acts 10:38, and of which Jesus Himself speaks in John 6:27. He was anointed as Prophet, Priest, and King, and sealed by the same Spirit as the Holy One of God, who alone could meet the need of a dying world.

Here in Matthew's Gospel it is His anointing as the King to which our attention is directed particularly. Mark emphasizes His prophetic office, and John presents Him as our Great High Priest, but this was after finishing the work the Father gave Him to do.

"And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Audibly, the Father declared His delight in His Son. He who had in His baptism offered Himself to God to become a sacrifice for sin was thus attested to be Himself the sinless One, for the sin offering must be most holy (Lev. 6:25). There was in Him no taint of sin, no inbred evil such as all of Adam's fallen sons possess. He could say, "I do always those things that please Him" (John 8:29). Thus the Father ever found His joy in contemplating the perfection of His Son. He would have us delight in Him too.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE TESTING OF THE KING

BEFORE the Lord Jesus presented Himself to Israel as the promised King He must needs pass through a period of testing, which He did for forty days. He met Satan, the strong man armed, and bound him ere He began His public ministry and went forth to spoil his (Satan's) goods.

Why was Jesus tempted? And, being tempted, was there a possibility that He might have sinned, and so jeopardized or annulled the whole plan of redemption? These are questions asked often, and it behooves us to be able to give scriptural answers concerning them.

If we would be clear in our thinking as to this, we must remember that while our Lord was, and is, both Human and Divine, He is not two persons, but one. Personally He is God the Eternal Son who took Humanity into union with His Deity in order to redeem sinful men. He has therefore two natures, the Divine and the Human, but He remains just one Person. Therefore as Man here on earth He could not act apart from His Deity. Those who maintain that He might have sinned may well ask themselves, "What then would have been the result?" To say that as Man He might

have failed in His mission is to admit the amazing and blasphemous suggestion that His holy divine nature could become separated from a defiled human nature and so the incarnation prove a farce and a mockery. But if we realize that He who was both God and Man in one Person was tempted, not to see if He would (or could) sin, but to prove that He was the sinless One, all is clear. The temptation was real, but it was all from without, as Adam's was in the beginning. But Adam was only an innocent man; whereas Jesus, the last Adam, was the Lord from Heaven, who had become Man without ceasing to be God, in order that He might be our Kinsman-Redeemer (Lev. 25:48). The temptation and His attitude toward it proved that He was not a sinful Man, either in nature or in act, and He could therefore take our penalty upon Himself and bear the curse of the broken law for others, because He was not under that curse Himself. Scripture tells us definitely that He "knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21); He "did no sin" (1 Pet. 2:22); "in Him is no sin" (1 John 3:5). He could say, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me" (John 14:30). There was no lurking traitor within to answer to the voice of the enemy without. He was tempted as we are, sin apart (Heb. 4:15, *literal rendering*), that is, there was no sin within to tempt Him. From the moment of His birth He was holy, not merely innocent (Luke 1:35).

The temptation of Jesus took place, if we may trust tradition, on Mt. Quarantania, west of the Jordan, across from Jericho, a very forbidding and desolate wilderness. It followed His baptism almost immediately, in the early part of A. D. 27, shortly before the Passover.

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." As the perfect Man, Jesus was ever subject to the Spirit's control. Mark tells us the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness (Mark 1:12). He was impelled to go, for it was imperative that His holiness be demonstrated from the very beginning of His ministry. Temptation is really testing. He was tested by Satan, that evil personality who is the foe of God and man. It was he who tested Adam the first and found him wanting. Now he must needs be overcome by the last Adam, the Second Man (1 Cor. 15: 45, 47).

"And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungred" Jesus fasted for the full period of testing—forty days. It was not until all this was over that He is said to have become hungry. Then, in the hour of nature's weakness, came the tempter, endeavoring to overcome Him. The tests were threefold: the appeal to the body, the soul, and the spirit; involving the desires of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, or the ostentation, or vainglory, of

living. The order of the temptation is different in Matthew and in Luke. Matthew evidently gives the three points in their historical order, taking them exactly as they occurred. Luke gives the moral order, in accordance with 1 John 2:16. Thus the first appeal was to appetite, the desire of the flesh, physical; the next to the esthetic nature, the desire of the eyes, the soul; and the last to the spiritual nature, the pride of life, or the vainglory of living. The Lord Jesus was impervious to every suggestion of evil. These are the same temptations in character which the serpent brought to bear upon Eve in Eden. She saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food (the lust of the flesh), pleasant to the eyes (the lust of the eyes), and to be desired to make one wise (the pride of life). She succumbed on every point, and when Adam collaborated with her in disobedience to God the old creation fell. They were tested in a garden of delight, a most beautiful environment. Jesus was tempted in a dry, thirsty wilderness among the wild beasts, but stood firm as a rock against all Satan's wiles and blandishments; thus manifesting Himself as King of righteousness, and so the suited One to be crowned King of peace (Heb. 7:1, 2). He who triumphed over the enemy after being tested in all points like as we, apart from sin, is now our great High Priest, and is appearing in Heaven on our behalf, ready to assist us in every hour of weakness and temptation.

"And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Every test was a direct assault upon the truth of His Divine-Human Personality. There might seem to be nothing inherently wrong for Jesus to satisfy His hunger by making bread from stones, but He had taken the place as Man, of dependence on the living Father (John 6:57). As such, He acted only in obedience to the Father's will, and He could not entertain any suggestion coming from another and an opposing source. He would not act, even to relieve His hunger, upon the enemy's advice.

"But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Jesus met each temptation with a definite word from God—a quotation from the Holy Scriptures. In this instance He quoted Deuteronomy 8:3, where Moses reminded Israel that of far more importance than material food was the spiritual nourishment that is found in the Word of God. When God provides food for His children He does not give them stones for bread, nor make bread out of stones; but when we get out of the place of dependence upon the Father we are very likely to break our teeth upon hard stony bread, which we thought would be better than that which comes from God.

"Then the devil taketh Him up into the holy city, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple."

Whether the devil actually did this or it was only in vision we are not told, nor is it important that we should know. The point is that even the sanctuary may be a place of temptation, for pride of grace is one of the greatest snares to which we are exposed. From that elevated place Jesus saw the throngs gathered in the courts below. Satan was about to use this as a reason why He should display His power.

"And saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone." Satan quoted only a part of Psalm 91: 11, 12. He omitted the most pertinent portion—"To keep Thee in all Thy ways." It was no part of the holy ways of the Son of God to leap spectacularly from the temple heights in order to astonish the worshipping multitudes below as they beheld Him suspended in the air above them, sustained by angel hands. This would have been a presumptuous use of the promise. When Satan quotes Scripture, look closely at the text and be sure nothing vital is omitted, for it is possible to back up the gravest error with a text from the Bible used out of its connection or only partly expressed.

"Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Where God commands, faith can act upon His words, know-

ing — as Augustine said — “God’s Commands are God’s enablings.” But to expose oneself to danger needlessly is to tempt God, and this is contrary to the principle of faith.

“Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them.” These things belonged to Christ, the Heir of all things; but Satan has usurped the inheritance. He attempted to present to Jesus what might be called a “short cut” to world-dominion.

“And saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.” Actually, they were his to give only by God’s permissive will, for “the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will” (Dan. 4:25). Satan had robbed Adam of the authority given him and reigned as usurper in the hearts of wicked men; but he had no undisputed title to the kingdoms of the world, which he offered to give to Jesus if He would worship him, that thus He might obtain the kingdom without the cross.

“Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.” By another “saying” of God the foe was vanquished. Jesus did not dispute Satan’s word as to his sovereignty of the kingdoms of the world. It is not by debate the victory is won, but by the Word itself.

"Then the devil leaveth Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him." What a glorious consummation to the temptation! The defeated, foul fiend fled away; and holy messengers from the court of Heaven came with gladness to minister to their Creator, who in grace had taken the creature's place. When we think of angels ministering to Jesus, as they did in the wilderness and in Gethsemane, we realize how truly human He had become, in that He, who had created those glorious beings, should now be served by them.

God's King must reign in righteousness. The sinner's Substitute must be as an unblemished lamb—with no defect outwardly or inwardly. Therefore the Lord as a Man must be subjected to the most searching tests, to demonstrate His fitness for the great work He came to do. Had the temptation brought to light any evidence of inbred sin or moral corruption of any kind, it would have been the proof that Jesus was not the Holy One of God, destined to bring in everlasting righteousness and to make propitiation for iniquity. But nowhere was the perfection of Jesus demonstrated more clearly than when Satan made every effort to find some defect in His character, some form of self-seeking in His heart. The King was tested and proved to be all that God the Father had declared at His baptism—the One in whom He had found all His delight.

We read in Hebrews 2:18 that our Lord Jesus "suffered being tempted." We suffer as we resist temptation, and so are kept from sinning against God (1 Peter 4:1). In this we see the great contrast between Christ as the Holy One, and ourselves as sinners with a nature that delights in evil. When born of God we are made partakers of the divine nature, and so we, too, hate iniquity.

Having been tried and proved to be perfect in all His ways, the King then entered upon His public ministry, accredited by mighty signs and wonders, which should have made it clear to all Israel that He was in very truth the promised Messiah.

"Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

—vers. 12-17.

The quotation from Isaiah differs from that which we find in our Old Testament, because it is taken from the LXX, the translation in common use at that time, instead of from the original Hebrew (see Isa. 9: 1, 2). As He went from place to place Jesus preached, saying, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." This message was the same as that of John the Baptist. "The kingdom of heaven," as we have seen, is a term used

only in this Gospel. It speaks of heaven's rule over earth. This was now ready to be set up if there had been readiness on the part of Israel to receive it. But it could be set up only on a foundation of national repentance; and for this the people were not prepared. They would not receive the King; consequently, they lost the kingdom, as the sequel shows. Ere that kingdom shall be restored to Israel (Acts 1:6) God was to make known another program, which for the time being was hidden from human understanding.

Verses 18 to 20 tell us of the calling and response of the first of the twelve apostles:

"And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And He saith unto them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed Him."

These men, as we know, had been attracted already to Jesus (John 1:40-42). Now they left all to follow Him, though little realizing what was in store for them, both of joy and sorrow.

Verses 21 and 22 give the call of James and John:

"And going on from thence, He saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed Him."

They, too, were to be numbered among the King's closest friends, to bear witness to Israel; and later,

though James was to die a martyr's death early in the new age, John was destined to outlive all the rest of the chosen twelve.

The nature and scope of the ministry of Jesus is epitomized for us in verses 23 to 25:

"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And His fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and He healed them. And there followed Him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan."

Everywhere He went He brought blessing and salvation to those who sought His favor; so that many followed Him from place to place, doubtless expecting that at any moment He might declare His royal authority and, overthrowing the Roman power, bring deliverance to Israel. But ere this could be done there was another and far greater work that had to be accomplished, even the settlement of the sin question: for this He had come into the world. The King must be the Victim ere He should take His great power and reign. And so, although for the moment the crowds applauded, and the common people heard Him gladly, He moved on with even tread to the place called Calvary.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE KINGDOM

Part One

IN the so-called "Sermon on the Mount" our Lord was not preaching the Gospel, but He was setting forth the principles of His kingdom, which should guide the lives of all who profess to be His disciples. In other words, this is the law of the kingdom; the observance of which must characterize its loyal subjects as they wait for the day when the King Himself shall be revealed. Throughout, it recognizes the existence of definite opposition to His rule, but those who own His authority are called upon to manifest the same meek and lowly spirit that was seen in Him while in the days of His humiliation here on earth. The Epistle of James answers very closely to the teaching set forth here. He calls it "the perfect law of liberty," because it is that which is becoming to the new nature received when one is born of God.

For the natural man this sermon is not the way of life, but rather a source of condemnation; for it sets a standard so high and holy that no unsaved person can by any possibility attain to it. He who attempts it will soon realize his utter helplessness,

if he be honest and conscientious. He must look elsewhere in the Scriptures for the Gospel, which is the dynamic of God unto salvation to all who believe (Rom. 1:16). The keenest intellects of earth have recognized in the Sermon on the Mount the highest ethical teaching to men, and have praised its holy precepts even when conscious of their inability to measure up to its standards. So far as the unsaved are concerned, therefore, the teaching given here becomes indeed, as C. I. Scofield has well said, "Law raised to its Nth power." But for the believer, just as the righteous requirements of the law are "fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4), so the principles laid down in this sermon will find their practical exemplification in the lives of all who seek to walk as Christ walked. It is not for us to relegate all this to the Jewish remnant in the last days or to disciples before the cross, though fully applicable to both. But we discern here "wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 6:3) which we dare not refuse to obey, lest we be proved to be such as are described in the following verse (1 Tim. 6:4): "He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings." We need to remember that, though a heavenly people, we have earthly responsibilities, and these are defined for us in this greatest of all sermons having to do with human conduct.

With this in mind, let us look first at the incomparable beatitudes with which it opens:

"And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain: and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him: and He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you"—vers. 1-12.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit." These are the men and women who recognize the fact that they have no spiritual assets. They confess their lost condition and so rely upon divine grace.

"Blessed are they that mourn." The very sorrows men are called to pass through prove a means of blessing if they know the "God of all comfort" (2 Cor. 1:3), who binds up broken hearts (Ps. 34:18) and makes our griefs to become the means of our growth in grace when we trust His love and rest in the realization that all things work together for the good of His own (Rom. 8:28).

"Blessed are the meek." The world admires the pushing, self-assertive man. Jesus Christ was meek and lowly in heart. Those who partake of His spirit are the ones who get the most out of life, after all. It is they who "inherit the earth," for

they see in all Nature the evidences of a Father's love and care.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." Such hunger and thirst—such deep, earnest desire—gives evidence of the new life. These desires are not given to mock us. Satisfaction is the promised portion of all who thus yearn after God, in whom alone righteousness is found.

"Blessed are the merciful." To those who show mercy, mercy will be extended. This is a law of the kingdom. The hard, implacable man, who deals in stern justice alone, will be dealt with in the same way when failure comes into his own life.

"Blessed are the pure in heart." Purity is singleness of purpose. The pure in heart are those who put God's glory above all else. To such He reveals Himself. They see His face when others discern only His providential dealings.

"Blessed are the peacemakers." Strife and division are works of the flesh (Gal. 5: 19, 20). Sowing discord among brethren is one of the things that the Lord hates (Prov. 6: 16-19). We are commanded to follow after the things that make for peace (Rom. 14:19). In doing this we manifest the divine nature, as children of Him who is the God of peace (Rom. 15:33).

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake." This intimates clearly that the instruction set forth here is intended, not, as many

have insisted, for the millennial kingdom of Christ, for then there will be no persecution for the sake of righteousness, but for the disciples of Christ during the time of His rejection, when His followers are exposed to the hatred of a godless world.

"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you . . . and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake." We all shrink from false accusation, but we may find comfort as we remember that our Lord Himself was not exempt from this. There is blessing as we go through these experiences in fellowship with Him; not even attempting to justify ourselves, but leaving it to Him to clear us in His own way and time.

"Rejoice, and be exceeding glad," instead of giving way to depression of spirit: "for great is your reward in heaven." God is taking note of all that His people suffer at the hands, or by the lips, of a godless world or false brethren; and He will make up for it all in His own way when we see His face. His prophets in every age have been called upon to endure similar treatment, but He has observed it all and will reward according to the lovingkindness of His heart.

In the next section, verses 13 to 16, we have Christ's disciples presented under various figures, all speaking of the importance of faithfulness to the trust He has committed to us.

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of

men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

"Ye are the salt of the earth." Salt preserves from corruption. The disciples of our Lord are left in the world to witness against its iniquity and to set an example of righteousness. Savorless salt, like inconsistent Christians, is good for nothing.

"Ye are the light of the world." Christ so designated Himself as long as He was in this scene (John 9:5). In His absence His disciples are to witness for Him as lights in this dark world (Phil. 2:15). The light manifests the evils that were hidden in the darkness (Eph. 5:13).

"On a candlestick . . . it giveth light unto all that are in the house." One who professes to be a follower of Christ, but who hides his light under a bushel—that is, obscures his testimony by an over-occupation with the affairs of this life—makes no real impression for good upon his community; but one who lives consistently and is out-and-out for Christ shines as a lamp on a stand, enlightening the whole house.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works." Mere profession is not enough. The life should speak for God. As we live Christ before men, we let our light shine.

Thus they recognize our good works and see in them an evidence of sincerity. So they glorify God by recognizing the reality of His work in the souls of those who are faithful in their witness and behavior. We need to remember that we do not let our light shine by mere profession, but as it was said of our Lord Himself, "the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). So it is a devoted, faithful life that gives light to others.

In verses 17 to 30 we see how our Lord applied the precepts of the law, neither ignoring them nor in any way belittling them, but showing that there is a deeper meaning in it all than is seen on the surface. It is that which, rightly applied, makes manifest man's utter helplessness and inability to keep its holy precepts in his natural state. Let us notice with care what Jesus taught as to this:

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and

offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell"—vers. 17-30.

"I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." This our Lord did in three ways: by His perfect obedience He magnified the law and made it honorable (Isa. 42:21); by His death He met all its claims against the lawbreakers, and so He becomes the end of the law for righteousness to all who believe (Rom. 10:4); by His Spirit He enables believers to fulfil the righteous requirements of the law (Rom. 8:4).

"One jot or one tittle." The jot is the *yodh*, the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The tittle is a little mark indicating a slight change in the meaning of a letter. Our Lord's words indicate the perfection of Holy Scripture.

"Whosoever . . . shall break one of these least commandments." That is, anyone who ignores the divine authority of God's revealed will by loosening the moral effect of His commands, so as to make men careless of their obligations to Him, shall be esteemed as of no worth in His kingdom.

"Except your righteousness shall exceed." The scribes and Pharisees were extreme legalists and trusted in their own righteousness, but had not submitted to the righteousness of God (Rom. 10:3). The righteousness God accepts is of a higher character. This higher righteousness is suggested in the verses that follow. The law forbade murder. Jesus shows that unreasonable anger is, in itself, a violation of the spirit of the commandment. "Thou shalt not kill." It is as a result of such a condition of mind that murder is committed. To use vile invectives against another is the manifestation of the hatred which causes men to kill, and therefore places one in danger even of hell-fire.

To profess to be a worshiper of God while wilfully wronging another or cherishing malice in the heart is obnoxious to God. Let him who comes to His altar with a gift first seek out the brother he has wronged and then draw near to sacrifice.

Nor should one permit a spirit of antagonism toward another to continue if it is within his power to come to agreement; for sin never dies of old age, but becomes worse as time goes on. Many a one has suffered severely because of what might easily have been cleared up if he had given heed to these words.

In verse 28 Jesus shows us that an unchaste look, a leering, concentrated lascivious gaze upon a woman is actually, in God's eyes, a violation of the seventh commandment. With such a standard who

can plead "Not guilty!" How important then the admonition to put to death any offending member lest one be betrayed into greater sin, which, if unrepented of, brings eternal judgment in hell itself.

Surely every right-thinking person must admit that the righteousness inculcated by our Lord in this matchless discourse (which has won the admiration of intelligent people everywhere) is a standard far beyond that to which the natural man can attain. It is only when one has been born again that he can live on this high plane. When men talk of the Sermon on the Mount being religion enough for them, they only show how little they have entered into the meaning of our Master's words. He portrays a supernatural life which can be lived only by supernatural power—that power which the Holy Spirit gives to him who believes the gospel.

We have next an absolutely authoritative declaration concerning the marriage relationship. Of old God permitted certain things because of the hardness of men's hearts, which are forbidden to the disciples of Jesus. He says: "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery." By comparing these verses with a later declaration found in 19:9 of this same Gospel, we may see that marriage, which is in God's in-

tention for life, is dissolved by the grave sin of fornication on the part of either husband or wife. This leaves the innocent party free to marry again; but as 1 Corinthians 7 intimates, "only in the Lord." It is absurd to say, as some have done, that fornication here refers only to immoral behavior before marriage and discovered only afterward (as in Deut. 24:1), but has no reference to the same sin committed after marriage. This would be to make violation of the marriage vows a lesser offence than sexual sin indulged in while single. The clear sense of the passage is evident. The adulterous husband or wife breaks the tie. A divorce in the courts legalizes the separation, and the innocent one is as free before God as though never married at all.

Our Lord continues to magnify the law by stressing its fullest content. He speaks of oaths in verses 34 to 37:

"But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth; for it is His footstool; neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."

Judged by this high standard how much of our conversation is unworthy of those who profess to be subject to the Lord. What careless speech and foolish bywords professed Christians indulge in, just as though Jesus had never spoken regarding this matter.

The balance of the chapter may be considered as one whole section, setting forth as it does the manifestation of grace in the lives of the disciples of Christ:

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"—vers. 38-48.

"An eye for an eye." This is pure law—absolute righteousness (Ex. 21:24). Judged by that standard, every man's case is hopeless.

"Resist not evil." God has dealt with His children in grace. Therefore He expects them to manifest the same grace toward others.

"Let him have thy cloke also." This was far above what the law demanded. When the grace of Christ controls the heart one can suffer the loss of all things without resentment.

"Go with him twain." Ordinary etiquette in those days demanded that one go a mile to direct

or guide a bewildered or belated traveler. Grace goes the second mile.

"Turn not thou away." The disciple of Christ is to be like his Master—willing to communicate. He may not be in a position to give *all* that is asked of him, or to lend *all* that one might want, but he is to be ready to comply, so far as possible, with requests for aid and assistance.

"It hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy." The scriptures of the Old Testament plainly commanded the former, but it was rabbinical tradition that added the latter of these sayings, possibly basing it on such passages as Deuteronomy 23: 6 and some of the imprecatory Psalms (Ps. 137:9).

"But I say unto you." Speaking as the Sent One of the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ corrected the faulty position of the rabbis and set forth His perfect law of love, even for one's enemies. By doing them good and praying for them, we overcome the evil in a Christlike way. No matter how badly others treat us, we are to seek to help them. We are to bless them that curse us, to be kind even though they manifest hatred, to pray for them even when they persecute and seek to injure us. This is the grace of God in action, as seen in the lives of surrendered believers who are dominated by the Spirit of Christ. Does this seem too high a standard for sinful man to attain? It is! But a re-

generated man can do what is impossible for the natural man.

"That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." That is, as we obey our Lord's commands given here, we manifest the fact that we are children of the Heavenly Father, who showers His mercies upon just and unjust alike and would have us imitate Him. It is the divine nature, of which each believer is a partaker (2 Peter 1:4), which enables him to approximate the character portrayed in this searching discourse.

"If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?" Even the most blatant worldling loves his own, and can appreciate those who show appreciation of him. But those who follow the Lord are to love all men, even those who by bitter opposition would make life miserable if they could.

"If ye salute your brethren only . . . do not even the publicans so?" It is a small thing if Christ's disciples show only the same interest in others that men evidence who are engaged in the most despicable callings. Publicans were detested by the Jews. They were taxgatherers in Israel who bought their offices from the Roman Government and "farmed the taxes," extorting everything possible from their own countrymen, and fattening upon the proceeds after turning over only what was obligatory to the assessor appointed by the State. Yet these gave recognition to their own brethren.

"Perfect, even as your Father . . . is perfect." This is perfection in the sense of the complete absence of partiality, thus imitating Him who is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34), but who lavishes His favors upon just and unjust alike.

God's choicest blessings are for those who manifest the same spirit of reverence for Him, and meekness and compassion for others, which were seen in all their fulness in our blessed Lord, as He walked this earth in the days of His flesh (Heb. 5:7). Thus, and thus only, that which is beyond the reach of the natural man is fulfilled in those who have received a new life and nature through trusting in Christ as their Saviour. No adverse circumstances can disturb the serenity of those who know the Lord and who acknowledge His authority over their lives.

CHAPTER SIX

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE KINGDOM

Part Two

BEFORE proceeding to look somewhat carefully at this second great division of the Lord's discourse on the mount I would revert for a few moments to some questions referred to already in beginning our examination of chapter 5, because of the fact that so many earnest believers, in seeking to avoid the Scylla of legality, are crushed upon the Charybdis of antinomianism.

Two questions are asked very frequently. The first is, *Was the Sermon on the Mount intended for Christians?* No one rightly can be called a Christian until united to Christ by the Holy Spirit in the present dispensation of the grace of God (Eph. 3:2). The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch (Acts 11:26); but they *were* disciples, as all Christians are. During our Lord's earthly ministry those who received His Word became His disciples. To them He set forth the principles of the kingdom He had come to announce. These principles are in no way opposed to the fuller revelation given to the Church later on. As mentioned before, just as the righteousness of the law is "fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but

after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4), so the higher righteousness of this wonderful sermon will characterize those who are regenerated and controlled by the Holy Spirit.

The second question is, *Does this sermon show men the way of salvation?* No; it was not intended to do so. It sets forth the behavior that should be seen in those who are saved. If men are seeking salvation by human effort then this sermon can only condemn them, for it presents a standard of righteousness ever higher than the law of Moses, and thus exposes the hopelessness of the sinner to attain to it. But he who confesses his sinfulness and in faith turns to Christ and obeys the instruction given here, builds upon a rock which cannot be shaken.

A careful consideration of this sixth chapter will, I trust, make these things even clearer to the minds and hearts of any who have been perplexed regarding the exact application of our Lord's teaching as here recorded.

In the first eighteen verses Jesus insists on reality in the things of God, and gives us important instruction in regard to prayer. Let us notice now verses 1 to 4, which have to do with almsgiving or the manifestation of charity toward the poor and needy.

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the syna-

gogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly"—vers. 1-4.

"Do not your righteousness . . . to be seen of men" (R. V.). It is righteousness in the sense of fulfilling our obligations toward our fellows that is particularly in view; that is, ministering to human need. All should be done without ostentation.

"They have their reward." When the applause of men has been sought and obtained we need not expect further reward when we stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.

"When thou doest alms." Nothing is more objectionable than advertised charity. It is humiliating in the extreme to the one who receives, and hurtful to the soul of him who gives.

"Thy Father which seeth in secret." God's eye is upon all His children, and He will value aright all that is done for His glory (2 Chron. 16:9). To do good secretly, knowing that one has the Lord's approval and that he is imparting happiness to others in their distress, should be reward enough to the true child of God, but He who takes note of all done in His name will not fail to recognize it when we see Him as He is.

In verses 5 to 15 we have our Lord's own teaching in regard to prayer. To ignore this as though it were not in keeping with the truth of the present dispensation of the grace of God would result in

robbing our own souls of some of the most precious and important instruction that we have in all the Word of God. Think of the privilege of sitting at the feet of the Great Intercessor Himself and hearing Him tell us how to pray! It is indeed a priceless opportunity not to be despised or passed on to disciples of some other age. We need to remind ourselves anew that inasmuch as we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus there is nothing in Scripture of a moral or spiritual character that is not part of our heritage. Let us consider, then, with some degree of care that which is embodied in this section of the Sermon in regard to our approach to God in prayer.

"And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses"—vers. 5-15.

We are first warned against mere formality in prayer, and having our thoughts fixed upon what

other men think of as pretended piety, rather than concern for the glory of God. He demands reality. There were those of the Pharisees who looked upon prayer (even as Mohammedans, Romanists, and others do now) as having a certain degree of merit in itself. Formal prayers were recited in public places, and the longer the prayer the more intense was the impression made on those who stood by. These were inclined to judge a man's piety by the length of his devotions. Jesus warned His disciples against such an abuse of prayer. He did not forbid their praying in public places. In 1 Timothy 2:8 this is definitely implied. But He did inveigh against praying to be seen of men, or engaging in any other religious exercise for ostentation. For the individual the proper place for prayer is in the closet, the hidden room alone with God, where no human eye beholds nor human ear hears. God who sees in secret will hear and answer according to His own will.

Nor is it necessary to "weary the Lord with words" (Mal. 2:17). Vain repetitions, the continued repeating of meaningless or empty phrases, is expressly forbidden. How incongruous are the ejaculations of the "rosary" in the light of this scripture! We are not heard for our "much speaking." He who knows all our needs better than we know them ourselves would have us lay them before Him in childlike simplicity, not as though He needed to be made willing to aid by our constant plead-

ing (ver. 8). It is true that elsewhere our Lord speaks of importunate prayer, but that is not to be confounded with empty repetitions of certain pious phrases.

In verses 9 to 13 we have the beautiful and suggestive outline, which is commonly called "The Lord's Prayer." This title is a misnomer, except in the sense that it is His because He gave it. But actually it is "the disciples' prayer." Jesus Himself could not pray it, for it includes a request for the forgiveness of sins, and He was ever the Sinless One. There does not seem to be any valid reason for supposing that He meant it to be repeated frequently, or as part of a service of prayer or worship, as it is commonly used today. No mention is made of its use in the early Christian assemblies of the Book of Acts, nor is it even referred to in the Epistles. It would seem that the Lord gave it as an outline or pattern of prayer; thus suggesting the manner in which God should be addressed and the petitions we are entitled to present to Him. While there is no expression in this prayer which is a contradiction of the later revelation, nevertheless it is limited in a marked degree. Now that the Holy Spirit has come to guide us in our supplications it would seem needlessly formal to be bound to use the exact words which we have here when we come to God either in public or in our private devotions.

Let us note the order of the requests:

"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name." This is an expression of worship and adoration on the part of those in acknowledged relationship with God. He is known as Father, which therefore applies only to those who are born again.

"Thy kingdom come," looks on to the second advent of Christ when the kingdom of God will be established in power over all this world.

"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Up there no one seeks to circumvent the will of God. Here on earth self-will has caused untold misery. When men learn to do God's will in this scene as saints and angels delight to do it in heaven the golden age will have come indeed.

"Give us this day our daily bread." It is the expression of dependence upon the living Father for every day's necessities. We never are able to be sure of the morrow except as God provides for our needs.

"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." In the Epistles we are told to forgive as we have been forgiven (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13). This is to be the measure of our forgiveness as we are wronged by others.

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (or, the evil one). It is the recognition of our own acknowledged weakness; a cry to God to preserve us from being placed in circumstances

where we might be overpowered by the voice of the tempter.

The last part of verse 13 is not found in the best manuscripts and is omitted in most revisions. It seems to have been added after it became customary to use this prayer in a ritualistic service.

In the government of God as Father over His own children our forgiveness of daily offences depends upon our attitude toward those who offend against us. If we refuse to forgive our erring brethren God will not grant us that restorative forgiveness for which we plead when conscious of sin and failure. This, of course, has nothing to do with that eternal forgiveness which the believing sinner receives when he comes to Christ. It is the Father's forgiveness of an erring child, which must of necessity take into account the attitude of the failed one toward other members of the family.

In the verses that follow (16 to 18) the Lord reverts to what had been said before in verses 1 to 4.

"Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly"—vers. 16-18.

All dissimulation or hypocrisy is sternly rebuked. To seek to establish a reputation for piety by a melancholy demeanor is utterly foreign to the

straightforwardness that should ever characterize those who profess subjection to Him who was guileless in all His ways, and who calls for absolute honesty in the behavior of His disciples. Rather, let him who is abstaining from food or other things, in order to have more time with God, cultivate a cheerful manner as becomes one who enjoys communion with the Father.

The right attitude toward temporal possessions is inculcated in verses 19 to 24. All are to be held in subjection to God and used as He directs.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

He who is in touch with eternal realities can well afford to hold earthly possessions with a loose hand. Worldly wealth soon passes away and leaves him, who had nought else, poor indeed. But those who lay up heavenly treasure by spending and being spent for God, while numbered perchance among the poor of this world, will be rich in faith; and when life is ended here they will find endless treasure held in reserve above. The more we dis-

tribute for the blessing of others, as guided by the Lord, the more wealth we lay up in heaven.

We are so constituted that our hearts will be set on that place in which our riches are laid up. The worldling has everything here, but will be poor for eternity. The heavenly-minded believer may be poor indeed in this world's goods but rich toward God.

What we need to be concerned about, therefore, is a single eye for the glory of God; an eye that discerns His will in order that we may walk in it. If we turn away to paths of self-will we go into wilful darkness and will soon lose our way. We must choose for ourselves whether we will serve God or mammon—that is, riches. We cannot serve both. The love of one crowds out love for the other.

It is the will of God that His children should live without worry or anxiety. This is set forth in the closing section of this chapter.

"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What sha.. we

eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

—vers. 25-34.

When Jesus said, "Take no thought," He did not mean that His disciples should be careless or improvident. But they are forbidden to be anxious, to become distressed and perplexed as they face the future. He who has saved and cared for us thus far can be depended upon to undertake and provide for us to the end. Our Lord directs attention to the fowls of the air which are fed by the heavenly Father, and to the flowers of the field clothed in beauty by a beneficent Creator. We cannot even increase our stature by anxious thought. Why, then, give way to worry as to how we shall meet future exigencies? The God who clothes the grass of the field has promised to clothe His children. Why, then, be of little faith?

The nations of the world make the pursuit of these temporal things the main object of life. We are not to imitate them in this, but rather to be concerned first of all with pleasing God, and ordering our behavior in accordance with the righteous principles of His kingdom. Jesus sums up our entire responsibility when He says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." It is not, "Seek *for* the kingdom," but rather, put the interests of God's

kingdom first in your life. The message is for those who are already disciples of Christ. As such, we are to fulfil its righteousness — that is, the things that are obligatory upon us as subjects of our blessed Lord. Then we may have the assurance that all needed temporal mercies will be provided.

And so the chapter closes with the exhortation to leave tomorrow with God while seeking to please Him today. When the morrow comes He will provide all needed grace for whatever problems we have to face. Today is ours to glorify Him.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE KINGDOM

Part Three

AS we continue our study of the instruction given by Jesus Christ to His disciples on the Mount, let us remind ourselves again that we have to do here, not with the gospel for the unregenerate, but with the holy principles that should control the lives of those who profess allegiance to the Lord Jesus and who recognize Him as earth's rightful King, even though a false usurper, Satan, is acknowledged by unsaved men as the prince of this world (John 12:31; 14:30). Loyalty to the true King necessarily involves obedience to His words (1 Tim. 6:3-5).

His kingdom, as far as its outward aspect is concerned, is now in abeyance. He has gone "into a far country," even heaven itself, to receive a kingdom, and to return (Luke 19:12). At His second advent the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ (Rev. 11:15). But while He is personally absent, though present by the Spirit, yet unseen to mortal eyes, all who are born again are in the kingdom of God, and, though in the midst of a rebellious

world, are responsible to maintain allegiance to the One whom that world rejects. Thus they know the reality of the kingdom, which is not meat and drink (that is, it has not now to do with temporal things), but is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost (Rom. 14:17). It was concerning this aspect of the kingdom that our Lord instructed His disciples during the forty days between His resurrection and ascension (Acts 1:2,3). This was the burden of the apostles' message, as they called upon men to acknowledge the Lordship of Christ (Acts 2:36; 20:25). And this was the theme of Paul's preaching to the very end (Acts 28:31). The risen Christ is Lord of all, and He gives remission of sins to all who believe on His name. Those thus brought into this new place before God, saved by pure grace, are now called upon to own His Lordship in all things. They are left in this scene to witness for Him and to make known His grace toward those who still belong to the world. They are to seek the good of all men. In doing this, they will be misunderstood often, and will be subject to cruel persecutions and vindictive treatment. But they are not to retaliate in kind, but by manifestation of the Spirit of Christ are to overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:21), showing themselves to be law-abiding citizens, ever seeking the blessing of their fellow-men.

The more we meditate upon that which is set forth in the present chapter the more we shall

realize how far short we come of rising to the heights of unselfish devotion to Christ which is here inculcated. As the Holy Spirit brings these instructions home in power to our hearts we shall find ourselves searched more and more deeply by His solemn utterances. He who desires truth in the inward parts (Ps. 51:6) was speaking through His Son in a manner calculated to lay bare all the hidden springs of character, and to cause every honest soul to realize how much we need to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, in order that we may represent Him aright in this world where He is still the rejected One.

In the first five verses of this section the Lord exposes that almost unconscious hypocrisy, so common to us all, which leads us to judge our fellows so severely, while overlooking or excusing our own sins as though they were of little moment. Then He goes on to show the necessity of being on praying ground ourselves if we would receive the expected answer to our petitions.

The broad and narrow ways are placed in vivid contrast. The first is the road followed by all who ignore the grace of God revealed in Christ and its claims upon mankind; and the other is the path of devotion to Him who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28). Note that it is the way that leads to life, not merely to heaven at the end of life.

"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him? Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it"—vers. 1-14.

"Judge not." It is a question of motives. There are circumstances when the people of God are commanded to judge (1 Cor. 5:12), in the sense of dealing with offenders against the Christian standard of morals, even to excluding them from church fellowship (1 Cor. 5:3-5, 13). But we are not to attempt to sit in judgment upon the hidden springs of action. We are so easily prejudiced and our snap judgments are wrong so often. We cannot read the heart or discern the thoughts. This is God's prerogative alone. If we disobey this command we need not be surprised if others pass judgment on us in a similar way.

"With what measure ye mete." We will be measured ourselves by the same stringent rule that we apply to other men.

"The mote . . . the beam." There is a fine irony here that is very striking. The two words used in this passage stand out in vivid contrast. The word translated "mote" signified originally a bit of dry twig or straw, such as the wind often carries into the human eye, thus causing blurred vision and tears until it is ejected. The word for "beam" really means a stick of timber, but was used colloquially in the Greek speech of our Lord's days on earth as a synonym for a splinter, which, though small in itself, seems a veritable beam because of the pain it causes. In one of the papyrus notes found in Egypt some years back, a youth writes to his mother telling of the suffering he had endured because a "beam" had been driven into his thumb underneath the nail. This makes clear our Lord's meaning. No one is fit to rebuke another when there is something in his own life that is as much worse than that which he thinks he detects in the other, as a beam or splinter of wood is greater than a mote or speck of straw.

"How wilt thou say to thy brother" Even the world says, "Consistency, thou art a jewel." One cannot expect to correct a fault in another if he has an even more glaring one in his own life.

"Thou hypocrite." The original word was used by the Greeks to designate an actor. It means,

literally, a second face, as actors of old wore masks to represent the characters portrayed. We speak of being "two-faced." God demands reality. Our Lord insists upon this. No shallow, empty religiousness will do for Him. We cannot know Him as our Father who loves to meet our needs in His grace and mercy, unless we are honest in seeking His face. To judge others superciliously, while living in sin ourselves, is abominable in His sight. If we are honestly seeking to know Him and ready to do His will, He will guide us to the strait gate—the submission to the claims of Christ—thus leading into the narrow way of unselfish devotion to God and to the interests of those for whom Christ died. This is indeed the way to life.

"Neither cast ye your pearls before swine." It is folly to endeavor to present the deeper and more precious things of the divine revelation to men who have no desire for holiness.

"Ask . . . seek . . . knock." In these words our Lord stresses the importance of prevailing prayer, which is not just a casual or thoughtless repeating of certain words. We are bidden to ask; that is, to make our requests known to God (Phil. 4:6,7), and if not answered at once we are to seek further by endeavoring to learn more clearly the mind of God in the matter, that we may pray with enlightened intelligence (Isa. 26:9). Then we are to knock with that importunity which implies sincere exercise and faith which brings the answer (Luke

11:5-10). God does answer prayer. This is one evidence of the supernaturalism of what is commonly called "revealed religion," as distinguished from mere human philosophy. The word "religion," is too broad a term for Christianity itself, but is used here because it is a convenient expression to cover the full setting forth of man's relationship to God as made known in both Old and New Testaments. In all past dispensations, as well as in the present one, God has been revealed as the Hearer and Answerer of prayer (Ps. 65:2; Isa. 56:7; Matt. 21:13). It is He Himself who invites us to come to Him with our petitions, and promises to give according to our need (Phil. 4:19).

"Every one." When God's conditions are complied with, the answer is sure—not for some, but for all who approach Him in prayer in accordance with His revealed will. It is not necessarily true that we receive always exactly what we ask. God reserves to Himself the right to answer as His wisdom dictates. But He never ignores the cries of His children.

"Will He give him a stone?" A stone might bear an outward resemblance to a loaf of bread, but it could not be eaten, nor if it could it would not nourish and sustain. Earthly fathers are considerate of their children's needs and do not ordinarily mock them by ignoring their requests for food, or by giving something they cannot use when they plead for sustenance.

"A fish . . . a serpent." One is food to strengthen and build up; the other is poisonous, dealing death. No one with a real father's heart gives that which is harmful to a child, but rather that which will be for good.

"How much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things?" Human parenthood is only a feeble picture of the Father-heart of God, who delights in giving to His children that which is for their good. In the family, the father should be an example of the love and forethought of the Heavenly Father, who delights to bless His children by giving to them what will be for their lasting profit. Prayer is the appointed means whereby these mercies are received.

"Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them". This is indeed the Golden Rule. It is linked with prayer; for no one can pray aright who is not characterized by active benevolence to his fellows (1 John 3:17-22). This is not the gospel; it is the fruit of the gospel. People often speak glibly of the Golden Rule, as though the keeping of it were a comparatively small matter, and as though it involved the whole of Christianity. How frequently we hear the assertion, "The Golden Rule is good enough for me. It is all the religion anyone needs." But who, judged by this standard of unselfish living, would ever pass muster before God's holy tribunal? It is but another way of insisting on the demand of

the law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." No one save our blessed Lord has ever fully lived this out. Consequently, the Golden Rule but adds to our condemnation, and emphasizes the need of salvation by grace. Only as Christ is received and dwells in us by His Spirit can we come up to this high and holy standard.

It has been said frequently by those who would disparage the Lord Jesus and His teaching, that the Golden Rule was in no sense original with Him, but was simply an adaptation of what others had taught before Him. K'ung Fu-tsze (Confucius), the Chinese sage, is said to have proclaimed this some hundreds of years before Christ. But there is a vast difference between the positive instruction of the Lord Jesus Christ, commanding His disciples to do to others as they would have others do to them, and the negative teaching of the Master K'ung, who said, "Do not do to others what you would not like them to do to you." The one is the manifestation of divine love; the other is but ordinary human advice.

"Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction." This is the way of self-will, of disobedience to God's Word. All are on the broad way who refuse to own their needy condition and who ignore the claims of Christ. It is entered by a wide gate, for all men naturally choose this road.

“Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way . . . unto life.” There is no real life apart from the knowledge of Christ (1 John 5:12). It is as we yield our wills to Him that we enter the strait gate and pass into the narrow way. This leads to life—life in its richest, fullest sense—to be embraced in measure here on earth, but enjoyed in all its fullness in a blest eternity.

In the next section we are warned against false prophets who would seek to mislead and turn aside those who are seeking the way of life.

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them”—vers. 15-20.

“False prophets . . . in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly . . . ravening wolves.” The simile is a very striking one. It suggests a prowling wolf with the fleece of a sheep drawn over its body as it roams about the outskirts of the flock waiting for an opportunity to pounce upon an unsuspecting lamb or sheep. In like manner teachers of that which is false do not come out in their true color at first, but seek to hide their actual identity and intentions in order that they may draw away disciples after them (Acts 20:30). The only safe way is to try all such by the Word itself, and par-

ticularly by the doctrine of Christ, as in John's Second Epistle.

"Ye shall know them by their fruits." This is the test for any system of doctrine, and for those who propagate it. That which is of God will result in fruit in the life for His glory.

"Every good tree . . . a corrupt tree." The two are put in vivid contrast, as picturing men and women who are born of God and those who are still unregenerated. This is a parable from nature, designed to impress upon our minds the great truth that we are all like trees, either good or bad, and our behavior will betray or indicate our true character. Goodness and badness are used here, as throughout the Book of Proverbs, in a relative sense (Pro. 12:2; 13:22; 14:14). Actually, there is none good until changed by regeneration (Rom. 3:12). The testimony of the lips indicates the state of the heart.

"Evil fruit . . . good fruit." A heart in rebellion against God cannot produce in the life that which brings honor to Him, even as one who is subject to His will cannot go on in sin, bringing discredit on His holy name.

"Hewn down, and cast into the fire." Though God has long patience, even with wicked men (James 5:7; 2 Peter 3:9), the day draws on apace for each one when judgment must fall on those who persist in their unrepentant course. This was

what John the Baptist also proclaimed (Matt. 3:10).

"By their fruits ye shall know them." Whatever the professions men may make, it is the life that tells (1 Thess. 1: 5; 2: 10). Good men delight in purity and righteousness. Evil men grovel in that which is sinful and corrupt. Where grace operates in the soul, the good fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22,23) will be manifest in the life. That which is really of God will produce godliness on the part of its recipients.

In bringing His great discourse to an end the Lord sets forth in a most graphic and solemn way the eternal results which depend upon our attitude toward the Word which He had proclaimed.

"Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it"—vers. 21-27.

"Not every one that saith . . . Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." Mere lip profession is of no avail if the heart and life are not subject to the Word of God. We are not saved by

our works, but good works are the test of reality. He who is born of God will delight in obedience to the Father's will (Eph. 2:8-10).

"Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord . . . in Thy name . . . (have we) done many wonderful works?" There may be much of outward show and apparently successful service coupled with a Christless profession. In the day of manifestation, nothing will avail but a personal faith in Him whom we profess to own as Lord.

"I never knew you." To none will He say in that day, "I used to know you, but I know you no more." His word to the lost will be, "I never knew you." Of all His own He says, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them" (John 10:27).

"A wise man, which built his house upon a rock." He who hears and heeds the words of Christ makes it evident that he is a genuine believer; and has builded his house upon the Rock which is Christ Himself.

"It fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." No storm of adverse circumstances, no assaults of him who is the prince of the power of the air, can avail to destroy the house that is based upon this Rock of Ages.

"A foolish man, which built his house upon the sand." He who hears with the outward ear, but takes no heed to obey the truth, is as one building on sinking sand.

"It fell: and great was the fall of it." When the testing time comes, the one who has built his hopes for eternity on anything short of Christ Himself will come to disaster. Because Jesus is Lord, He calls for unqualified obedience to His Word. He speaks as the King and sets forth with clearness and conciseness the principles upon which His kingdom is founded, so utterly opposed to the selfish policies of earthly rulers and nations. To own Him as Lord and obey His Word is to build a house that will stand in "the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds." To fail to heed His voice means both temporal and eternal loss.

Christ is presented in many scriptures as the Rock foundation on which the Church is built. He is also the Rock upon which each individual believer is established. He who trusts in Him builds on a sure foundation (Isa. 28:16; Rom. 9:33) which will never fail. To build our hopes on any other person, system, or fancied meritorious behavior, is to erect our house on shifting sands. In the day of judgment, all who have relied on anything save Christ and His finished work will find themselves lost and hopeless for eternity.

Never had such words as these been heard in Israel. There was something so definitely authoritative about them that the hearers were deeply moved, though we are not told to what extent they gave heed to the message and indicated their allegiance to Him who proclaimed it. Their attitude

is summed up in the two closing verses of the chapter:

"And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes"—vers. 28, 29.

"The people were astonished at His doctrine." Although He had addressed Himself primarily to His immediate disciples, the throngs drew near to listen, and as the great discourse reached its dramatic conclusion they were amazed at the clarity and profundity of His teaching.

"He taught them as one having authority." Ordinarily the scribes and other teachers in Israel based everything they put forth upon the authority of noted rabbis who had preceded them. But Jesus spoke directly as giving the last and final word on every subject He set forth. This was what astonished His hearers. This sermon was like a plumb-line, testing all their pretension to righteousness. Did they face it honestly before God and recognize their sinfulness and need of a Saviour? We are not told, but we may be sure that many went to their homes pondering the great truths that had been set before them.

When our Lord returns and the kingdom of God is fully displayed upon earth, the principles proclaimed in this sermon will prevail everywhere, for then righteousness and praise will be made to spring forth among all nations (Isa. 61:11). That will be the time of earth's regeneration (Matt.

19:28). Now when the individual is regenerated (Titus 3: 5), he is given power to walk before God in holiness and righteousness (1 John 3: 7-10).

Did Jesus set aside or belittle the moral law? He did not. He referred to what was said of old as that which was divine and authoritative. But He added to or explained it in its deepest spiritual meaning, so that men would understand its true application. Moral principles are unchanging. They are the same in every dispensation. But the child of God today is lifted above mere legal obedience through love for Christ and the controlling influence of the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE WORKS OF THE KING

HAVING listened to the instruction of the King as He proclaimed the laws of His Kingdom, we are now called upon to consider His works. We may think of these as His royal credentials, proving Him to be in very truth the promised Messiah who was to bring healing and plenty to Israel, reigning in righteousness and peace (Ps. 72:7). It is written of the first miracle performed by the Lord Jesus Christ that in doing it He "manifested forth His glory" (John 2:11). This was true of all the marvelous signs He wrought. Each one told out in some special way the mystery of the Incarnation, "that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19).

"Do you not have difficulty about the miracles?" one scientist asked another. The first was confessedly an agnostic. His friend had been but lately led to confess his personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. "Not since I know Jesus as the Son of God," was the answer. "From that moment I was enabled to believe in Him as the supreme miracle—God become Man for my redemption—it was easy to accept every other miracle which Scrip-

ture tells us He performed. Knowing Him, nothing He is said to have done is incredible."

In all His works of power Jesus Christ was but telling out His personal glory. They were the evidences of His Messiahship, for He wrought them all, not merely of His own volition as the Eternal God veiled in humanity, but as the obedient Son, controlled by the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38). He chose in all things to be subject to the Father, and by the Spirit the Father wrought all His works in and through the Son (John 5:17-19). For the time being, during "the days of His flesh," Jesus Christ was the active Servant of the Godhead here on earth and as such we need not wonder at the mighty deeds that characterized His ministry. It would have been far stranger had it been otherwise. It would be difficult to imagine that God, who came down to earth and took our flesh-and-blood humanity into union with His Deity, could go through the world unmoved by human suffering and do nothing to relieve it. Jesus was greater than anything He ever did. When He acted in power, performing what we, with our limited understanding, call miracles, He was but doing that which was perfectly in keeping with His Divine-Human Personality.

As we consider this chapter and those that follow we are struck by the fact that one miraculous sign follows another in rapid succession, all alike testifying to the compassion as well as the power of Jesus. He "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38).

Never do we read of Him as working a miracle simply to excite the astonishment of those who followed Him. All were directly intended to relieve human suffering or to minister to the needs of mankind. In chapters 8 and 9, which are linked together very intimately, we see Him cleansing the leper (8:1-4), healing the centurion's servant (vers. 5-13), raising up Peter's wife's mother from her bed of sickness (vers. 14, 15), calming the raging sea to save the lives of His disciples (vers. 23-27), delivering the demoniacs of Gadara (vers. 28-34), giving new strength to the palsied man (9:1-8), healing the afflicted woman who touched His robe; the raising up of the ruler's daughter; the healing of the two blind men; the casting of a demon out of the dumb man (vers. 18-34), and relieving of various ailments the motley throng that sought His help (vers. 35-38). Interspersed between the accounts of these works of mercy we have important teaching as to discipleship (8: 19-22), Matthew's call (9: 9), His solemn rebuke of hypocrisy in vers. 10 to 15, and the parable of the new garment and the new bottle in vers. 16 and 17.

Let us consider first the cleansing of the leper.

"When He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth His hand and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them"—vers. 1-4.

Had Israel been right with God disease would have had no place among them (Ex. 15:26). Every sick person in Palestine was a sad testimony to the fallen condition of the favored nation. Everywhere Jesus went He found men and women suffering from illnesses of various kinds. Each one pictured the consequences of sin in one form or another.

Leprosy speaks of the uncleanness and loathsomeness of sin. It is a constitutional disease which wrought fearful havoc in the bodies of its victims, even as sin works havoc in the souls of those who are under its power. A man was not a leper because he was disfigured by horrible ulcers and painful sores. These things were but the witness to the disease that was working within. Even so, one is not a sinner because he sins: he sins because he is a sinner.

Here we read of a poor leper who came to the Lord Jesus and worshipped or did homage to Him, pleading for deliverance, yet uncertain as to the readiness of Jesus to grant it. He said, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." At once the answer came, as Jesus reached forth His hand and touched him, "I will; be thou clean." Immediately the man was freed from his uncleanness. The Lord then commanded him to go to the priest at the temple and offer the gift which Moses commanded, as recorded in Lev. 14. This was for a testimony to the priest that God was working in Israel.

The second incident recorded is the healing of the centurion's servant.

"And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion, beseeching Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said unto them centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour"—vers. 5-13.

Here we find a Roman centurion, evidently one who had come to know the God of Israel, whose servant was sick of the palsy. In this paralyzed man we have a picture of the helplessness of the sinner. And such was the condition of all of us until grace saved us. It was while we were yet without strength that Christ's death availed for us.

Yearning over his helpless servant the centurion came pleading that Jesus might heal the sick man. The response of Jesus was immediate. "I will come and heal him," He said. But the centurion protested, declaring that he was not worthy to be so honored. "Speak the word only," he said, "and my servant shall be healed." The people said of the centurion, "He is worthy" (Luke 7:4); but he said,

"I am not worthy," for he knew his own heart too well to claim any personal merit. His was a sublime manifestation of implicit faith in the power of the Lord. Even as he, an officer in the Roman army, could speak with authority to those in subjection to him, so he was assured Jesus could command that the sickness depart and He would be obeyed. Such confidence rejoiced the heart of Jesus. In Israel He had not found such trustfulness. He saw in this an earnest of the great Gentile harvest yet to be gathered in, when believing sinners out of all nations should join with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in giving glory to God. But many of "the children of the kingdom"—those who by national birth were the seed of Abraham but lacked Abraham's faith—would be rejected and should go into the outer darkness, to be shut out of the joys of the kingdom for which they had waited so long. For them there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth: the one speaking of the grief they would suffer, and the other speaking of the resentfulness of their hearts, indicating that they would remain unrepentant.

The Lord then gave a message of assurance to the centurion bidding him go his way, for as he had believed so it was done to him. He returned to find his servant healed, for "In the word of a king there is power" (Eccl. 8:4), and God's anointed King was in the midst of Israel.

We have an illustration of the restlessness of sin which is like a fever in the soul, but which responds at once to the healing touch of the Saviour, in verses 14 and 15.

"And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. And He touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them."

"His wife's mother . . . sick of a fever." Peter was a married man, and the mother of his wife seems to have formed part of the family group. This lady was stricken with a fever and was tossing upon her couch in distress; but when Jesus came all was changed.

"He touched her hand, and the fever left her." There was healing in that touch of power. Disease fled before it, for He was the Lord of life. The restored woman at once sought to show her gratitude by service. "She arose, and ministered unto them." When Jesus rebukes the fever of sin, service becomes a joy and life a glad experience.

In all these instances we see the proof that our Lord Jesus is the all-sufficient One, in whom are infinite resources to meet every emergency. Nothing ever takes Him by surprise, and no need is too great to bring to His attention. His life on earth was the manifestation of divine love and compassion, giving to men an altogether new understanding of the goodness of God and His care for His children. And what He was on earth He is in

the glory: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8). He does not always exert His power in the same manner, but nothing ever alters His concern for His own. His was unlimited power. No case was too hard for Him. Unlike some who have founded religious cults upon the effort to relieve physical ailments, He made no distinction between cases brought to Him for relief. No matter what the disease or form of infirmity, He healed them all. In this way He demonstrated His creatorial power, and His compassion for mankind.

No doubt it was because the word as to these remarkable healings had gotten around that the people came from all the nearby districts, seeking deliverance from their many ailments. We next read:

"When the even was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils: and He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses. Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave commandment to depart unto the other side"—vers. 16-18.

"He healed all that were sick." No one applied to Him in vain. His heart was filled with compassion; and so He delivered all who came, no matter what the illness might be that was causing pain and suffering.

"Spoken by Esaias." The prediction of Isaiah (53:4) was literally fulfilled in His daily ministry

as He bore away the sicknesses and carried the infirmities of the people in His deep sympathies. It is a mistake to suppose that this refers to His atoning work on the cross. It was here on earth, as He moved about among suffering humanity, that He bore our infirmities, and took from men their diseases and pains. There is no such thought in Scripture as that Christ made an atonement for sickness, as He did for sin. Sickness is a judicial result of sin and does not call for atonement. It is true, however, that as a result of the work of the cross the believer's body will be redeemed and glorified when the Lord returns for His own. Then "this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:53). Until then our bodies are just as subject to sickness and death as those of the unsaved.

Having accomplished so many mighty works in Capernaum and its vicinity, we read, "He gave commandment to depart." His was a ministry not to a favored few but to all who were distressed. So He passed on to other needy groups.

As they walked toward the seashore to take the boat that was to carry them to the country of Gadara and the region of Decapolis He evidently discoursed with those who thronged about Him concerning discipleship, with the result that two men spoke up expressing their interest; one of whom offered an excuse for not deciding immediately to follow Jesus in full-time service. Of these we read in verses 19 to 22.

"And a certain scribe came, and said unto Him, Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head. And another of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow Me; and let the dead bury their dead."

"Master, I will follow Thee." The scribe who so glibly said this little realized what following the Master would really mean. He was moved by enthusiastic admiration of Jesus, but had no conception of the rejection He was to undergo.

"Not where to lay His head." He who had created all things was homeless in His own world and among His own people. To follow Him was to share His sorrows. Jesus would have no man make a sudden decision without counting the cost, for he who would follow Him must be prepared to tread His path of loneliness and rejection.

"Suffer me first to go and bury my father." We need not suppose that his father was dead, but this young man pleading the claims of natural ties as an excuse for not at once following Jesus. To speak of following Jesus on our own terms is to fail to realize that He is Lord of all. Are we seeking to make a bargain with Him, or have we yielded ourselves unreservedly to His authority? Note our Lord's reply to this man.

"Let the dead bury their dead." That is, let those who are dead spiritually attend to the disposal of the remains of the physically dead. The paramount thing in life is to follow Him.

In the following section, consisting of verses 23 to 27, we see the power of Christ manifested as Lord of creation. He who created the universe stills the winds and the waves. All nature is subject to His word.

"And when He was entered into a ship, His disciples followed Him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, inasmuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but He was asleep. And His disciples came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And He saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of Man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him!"—vers. 23-27.

"When He was entered into a ship." That is, to cross the sea to the eastern side, His disciples accompanying Him, to go from Capernaum to Gadara; Capernaum was on the north-west shore.

"A great tempest." Was it the prince of the power of the air who sought thus to destroy Him before His hour was come? No storm could sink the ship in which He sailed.

Although the sea of Galilee is but a small body, yet because of its position deep down between high hills, it is subject to sudden storms of great intensity, caused by shifting air-strata and heavy winds coming through the passes with tremendous velocity. These storms come up very quickly and often with scarcely any warning.

"Lord, save us: we perish." It was the fear engendered by unbelief that led the disciples thus to cry out. Faith would have enabled them to rest in

the fact of His presence with them. In another Gospel we are told that Jesus said to His disciples, "Let us pass over unto the other side" (Mark 4:35). This should have been the ground of their confidence. He did not bid them enter the ship possibly to be drowned in the lake, but *to go with Him to the other side*. Had they remembered these words their faith would not have failed.

"He . . . rebuked the winds and the sea." First He rebuked their unbelief. Then He rebuked the elements. Mark tells us that He gave a direct command to the boisterous winds and waves, "Peace, be muzzled," as one might address an angry dog. Immediately the elements were calmed and the raging storm ceased. The winds and the sea recognized the voice of their Master when Jesus rebuked them, for He who had been sleeping in physical weariness was the Creator of the universe.

"What manner of Man is this!" As yet they did not understand the mystery of the incarnation. It was as He wrought in power among them that their understanding was opened to know who He really was. Awed and relieved, they looked upon their Master in amazement, wondering at the manifestation of authority which they had witnessed. Realizing they were in the presence of One whom even the winds and the waves obeyed, they marveled as they considered His mysterious power and Personality.

In the country of the Gadarenes a remarkable series of incidents occurred which demonstrated our Lord's power over demons; but which failed to impress the people of that community at the time, although later the attitude of many of them was changed through the testimony of the delivered man out of whom the Legion was cast. We quote verses 28 to 34:

"And when He was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God? Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time? And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. So the devils besought Him, saying, If Thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And He said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw Him, they besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts."

"There met Him two possessed with devils (or demons), coming out of the tombs." Only Matthew mentions two demoniacs. Mark 5:2 and Luke 8:27 speak of but one. There is, of course, no contradiction here. There were two of these poor unfortunates, both of whom were freed by the Lord Jesus from the awful curse that had separated them from society and driven them out among the tombs, but there was one whose experience was particularly noticeable and whose healing made a very deep

impression upon the Gadarenes, or Gergesenes, as they are called by Matthew.

"What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God? Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time?" While there is a great mystery about demon possession, it is evident that these are fallen spirits under Satan's domination. They have not yet been confined in hell, but are able to control men and women to their ruin. They knew Jesus at once and recognized Him as the Judge who is to pronounce their final doom. From this they shrank and recoiled with horror.

Is demon possession possible today? Unquestionably it is. There are many authentic cases of this terrible affliction related by servants of Christ who have come in contact with it. Particularly is this true in pagan lands where Satan holds supreme sway. When the gospel comes in, the powers of hell rally to fight against the message of the cross. There are many instances of the casting out of demons, and the complete deliverance of those who have been under their power.

"An herd of many swine feeding." These unclean beasts were not considered fit for food, in accordance with Mosaic Law (Lev. 11:7). But they were apparently tended by degraded Jews who sought gain by selling them to the Gentiles. Such became the occupation of the prodigal (Luke 15:15). According to the Law, such a calling was absolutely illegal in the land of Israel.

"If Thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine." It would seem that demons seek embodiment in some way. If driven from the men in whom they dwelt, they pleaded to be allowed to take possession of the bodies of the unclean swine.

"The whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea." It was a well-merited judgment upon the unprincipled owners of the swine, when their stock-in-trade was thus destroyed. It is not necessary to be able to explain the incident itself, nor just what part the evil spirits had in it. What the message emphasizes is the enormous capacity of mankind for evil. Two thousand swine (Mark 5:13) could not contain the demons who had found domiciles in two degraded men!

"They that kept them fled, . . . and told every thing." The swineherds hastened in surprise and terror back to the town, where they related the strange things that had occurred, dwelling on the deliverance of the demoniacs and the destruction of the swine.

"They besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts." Angered because of pecuniary loss, and doubtless fearful of further ill effects if the Lord Jesus came to know more of their wickedness, the men of Gadara begged Him to leave at once. It was a pitiable thing to refuse the One who might have brought them untold blessing, but to the Gadarenes their swine were of far greater value than the souls of men.

Matthew does not mention that one of the healed demoniacs besought Jesus that he might be with Him; but the Lord had another plan for him: It was to bear witness to his friends at home of the mighty power of the Christ, who had set him free. This is the privilege and responsibility of all who are saved. If we know the Lord Jesus for ourselves, are we witnessing faithfully to others, that they too may experience His salvation? Mark and Luke give us the information concerning the demoniac who became the disciple of Jesus, and tell us of the way this man spread abroad the good news of the blessing Christ had brought to him. He carried the message throughout all Decapolis, the ten cities on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. When Jesus returned to that district some time afterward He received a welcome which was in marked contrast to the opposition formerly encountered (Mark 6: 53-56).

As we reflect on the various miracles recorded in this chapter our hearts may well be stirred to worship and praise while we dwell upon the compassion of Jesus for poor, afflicted humanity. And we remind ourselves that it was God speaking and acting in His Son throughout. God finds delight in ministering to the needs of His creatures, and in delivering them from the distressing circumstances that fill their souls with fear, and freeing them from the enthrallment of Satan, whatever form it may take. Because Jesus is God manifest in the flesh,

His works are the works of God, and ever manifest the divine interest in and attitude toward men. We need to learn to confide in Him more fully, and as we do, we shall know by practical experience how real and how definite is His concern for those who trust His love and count upon the exercise of His power. Jesus is the exact expression of the divine character (*literal rendering*, Heb. 1:3), and in His activities of grace we see God's heart revealed.

CHAPTER NINE

THE KING CONTINUES TO MANIFEST HIS POWER AND GRACE

WE have the credentials of the King set forth throughout both this and the preceding chapter, as noticed already. His works of power attested His Messianic claims. All His miracles were wrought, not for self-glorification, however, nor to have men hail Him as "some great one" (Acts 8:9), but to alleviate the ills of suffering humanity. It had been predicted long before that God's anointed King would open the eyes of the blind, unstop the ears of the deaf, cause the lame to leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb to sing (Isa. 35:5, 6). All this the Lord Jesus did, and more, ministering to needy people out of the loving compassion of His heart. Peter reminded Cornelius that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him" (Acts 10:38). We see this concern for afflicted humanity set forth in the present chapter. Yet we need to remember that this ministry was confined, with very few exceptions, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 10:6) as a testimony to the chosen nation that their long-looked-for King was in their

midst (Zeph. 3:15). But though they witnessed so many evidences of His divine authority, the leaders of the people steadfastly resisted His claims and spurned His testimony (John 7:48) though the common people heard Him gladly (Mark 12:37), but even among these there were many who believed only in a superficial way because they saw the miracles which He did (John 2:23). Faith must be in Christ Himself, not in the signs and wonders He performs. To recognize in Him a great teacher, prophet, or miracle-worker is not the same as receiving Him as Saviour and owning Him as Lord of one's life. The events recorded here and in the previous chapter did not follow one another in chronological sequence, but they are grouped together according to their moral order as testimonies to prove that Jesus Christ was the Messiah. They probably all occurred in the second year of His public ministry.

As the chapter opens we see our Lord, rejected by the Gadarenes, returning to Galilee, where He was soon in contact with some friends bringing a palsied man for healing. Mark and Luke tell us that this took place, not in the open country but in a house; and that the four who were assisting the sick man, finding it impossible to press through the crowd that thronged the door, went up onto the roof and opening up the tiles, or displacing the thatch, they let the palsied man down by cords to the feet of Jesus.

Here we are told that:

"He entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into His own city. And, behold, they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith He to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men"—vers. 1-8.

Upon returning to the north-western shore of the Sea of Galilee Jesus entered into a house in Capernaum where this incident took place.

"Jesus seeing their faith." It is evident that not only the palsied man but also the friends who brought him had fullest confidence that Jesus would grant healing in accordance with their plea. He responded at once, but in a way they had not expected, by saying, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." Thus He met the greater need first.

To certain of the scribes nearby this was blasphemy of the worst kind. It was a man arrogating to himself a divine prerogative. None but God could forgive sin. Who then was Jesus that He should presume to use such language?

He knew their thoughts and reproved them by asking, "Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?" So far as they were concerned one would be as impossible as the other.

Men are ever prone to consider physical ills as of greater moment than the sinfulness of their hearts, and so are far more concerned about obtaining and preserving bodily health than they are about being right with God. But our Lord placed the emphasis upon the state of the soul. He would have men realize the corruption of their hearts (Matt. 15:19) and their need of deliverance from the guilt and power of sin (John 8:34), that thus they might enter into a life of communion with God and be assured of His eternal favor (John 14:23). To Him physical ill was but the testimony to the fact of sin being in the world, and He was not content to deal only with the effect, but He ever sought to reach the cause.

But in order that they might know that the Son of Man had power on earth to forgive sins He turned to the palsied man and commanded him to arise, take up his bed and walk. As the Lord's critics looked on in wonder and amazement, the formerly helpless one sprang to his feet and walked off to his own house, healed and forgiven. The assembled multitude rejoiced and glorified God for so marvelous a display of His grace and power. This was what Jesus desired. He delighted to have men give honor to the Father, who was working in and through His Son.

In the next section we read of another man who was added to the chosen company of disciples who accompanied Jesus—that company to which Peter, Andrew, James, and John already belonged.

"And as Jesus passed forth from thence, He saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He saith unto him, Follow Me. And he arose, and followed Him. And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto His disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, He said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"—vers. 9-13.

"He saw a man, named Matthew . . . and He saith unto him, Follow Me." Matthew, also called Levi (Mark 2:14), was the tax collector of the port of Capernaum. Evidently, he had before heard and seen the Lord Jesus. Now the time for decision had come. Obedient to the call of the Saviour, he arranged immediately to close up his business, and become a disciple of Christ in full-time service. He became the author, under God, of this Gospel. ψ

"As Jesus sat at meat in the house." This was the house of Matthew, who gave a farewell dinner to his former associates before launching forth upon his new career. To this dinner the Lord Jesus Christ and his disciples were invited.

"Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" The legalist can never understand the grace of God to the undeserving and utterly lost. Accustomed to think of human merit as commending men to the Lord, they were shocked to think of Jesus Christ as fellowshiping with sinners.

"They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Our Lord used an illustration

which everyone could understand in answering the objection of these self-righteous critics. It is sick people who need a doctor, and He was the Great Physician who had come to minister to sin-sick souls.

"I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." Jesus directed the attention of these legalists to a declaration made by Jehovah through Hosea (6:6). It is far more to God to see mercy extended to the needy than to receive sacrifices and offerings. So Jesus had come, "not to call the righteous"—that is, those who supposed they had no need of mercy—but His mission was to sinners, whom He called to repentance.

The next four verses bring before us the drastic distinction between the principle of law, which we are told elsewhere prevailed until John the Baptist (Luke 16:16) and the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17).

"Then came to Him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but Thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast. No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved"—vers. 14-17.

"Then came to Him the disciples of John" with a question as to fasting. It is evident that many

who had been baptized by John had not fully committed themselves to Jesus but were waiting for clearer proof that He was the promised Messiah. They were troubled, because the abstinence taught by John, which was considered meritorious by the Pharisees, was not practised by the disciples of Jesus.

In reply He made it clear that as long as He, in Person, was with them there was no call for fasting; but in the coming day (as yet not understood by them) when He should be removed from them, fasting might well be in order. The bridegroom's presence calls for joy and gladness. His absence would bring that exercise of soul which would impress upon His followers the necessity of self-abnegation.

"No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment." He had not come to add something to the legal dispensation but to supersede it with that which was entirely new. To attempt to amalgamate the two principles of law and grace would annul the true meaning of both (cf. Rom. 11:6).

The new wine of grace was not to be poured into the skin-bottles of legality. Such an attempt would only destroy both. It is all-important that we realize this, for we see in Christendom today many teachers of the law who, as Paul says, are without understanding as to what they affirm when they try to impose legal principles upon those who are saved by grace (1 Tim. 1:5-7).

Two miracles are interwoven, as it were, in verses 18 to 26. Both are designed to manifest the power and compassion of the King who was in the midst of Israel though unrecognized by the great majority.

"While He spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped Him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay Thy hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did His disciples. And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind Him, and touched the hem of His garment: for she said within herself, if I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned Him about, and when He saw her, He said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour. And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise, He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed Him to scorn. But when the people were put forth, He went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land"—vers. 18-26.

"There came a certain ruler." The name of this man was Jairus (Mark 5:22). He was a leader in the local synagogue at Capernaum. He evidently believed in the claims of Jesus Christ and so besought Him to come to his help, for his little daughter was, as he put it, "even now dead;" that is, she was so ill he realized she was at the point of death, unless there was divine intervention.

"Jesus arose, and followed him." Moved with tender compassion, the Saviour at once started to the home of the ruler, and we are told that "so did His disciples."

"A woman . . . touched the hem of His garment." Afflicted with a constitutional disease, her very life ebbing away, this woman pressed through the crowd and touched the border of the Lord's robe, that blue fringe which was worn by every pious Israelite, in obedience to the Mosaic law (Num. 15:38-41; Deut. 22:12), and which marked them out as the subjects of the Holy One.

"If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole." She was confident that if she thus contacted Jesus she would be healed immediately.

"Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole."

The Lord recognized her faith and gave the assurance that because of this, all was as she had hoped. She was made perfectly whole.

"Jesus came into the ruler's house." In the meantime, the little maid had gotten apparently beyond all hope of recovery. The life had left her body, and the visit of Jesus seemed now to be useless. Already preparations were being made for the burial, and the hired mourners were beginning their lamentations. The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ was to change all this, for He gives the oil of joy for mourning (Isa. 61:3).

"The maid is not dead, but sleepeth." Was the little girl just in a coma, or was she actually dead? The consensus of opinion among most Christian scholars is that this was the sleep of death, but the fact that a different Greek word is used for "sleep"

here to that which is found in other passages where sleep and death are used synonymously, has led some to conclude that she was simply in a state of suspended animation. At any rate, she was dead as far as human power to help is concerned.

"He . . . took her by the hand, and the maid arose." Elsewhere we are told that He tenderly commanded her to arise, and as He took her hand she responded and came back to life, and was given food (Mark 5: 41-43; Luke 8: 54, 55).

"The fame thereof went abroad into all that land." From one to another the story went, and the people spoke with amazement of the wonderful event that had transpired. It was a testimony to the power of Jesus Christ, the great Prophet who had risen up in the land.

Two other instances are recorded in the section that follows which demonstrated the Messiahship of Jesus, but instead of these works of power convincing the stern, self-righteous Pharisees, they only gave occasion for the blasphemous charge that Jesus, Himself, was in league with Beelzebub the prince of the demons.

"And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed Him, crying, and saying, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us. And when He was come into the house, the blind men came to Him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto Him, Yea, Lord. Then touched He their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad His fame in all that country. As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a dumb man possessed with a

devil. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel. But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils"—vers. 27-34.

Recognized by two blind men as the promised Son of David, they implored mercy upon that ground.

Testing their faith Jesus put the question, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" Upon receiving an affirmative answer He replied, as He touched their eyes, "According to your faith be it unto you."

They immediately looked upon Him with eyes that saw His blessed face: their blindness was gone. We can understand how ready they would be to proclaim abroad the fame of Him who had wrought so great a work upon and for them. But He bade them, "See that no man know it." He did not desire to be known as simply a wonder-worker.

So exuberant were they that they could not contain themselves, but went throughout the district spreading the story of that which Jesus had wrought on their behalf.

We may wonder why Jesus bade them refrain from all this. The reason doubtless was that He desired people to be impressed by His message rather than His works. He was, while on earth, as we are told in Hebrews 1:3, the express image of the Divine Person: that is, the exact expression of the character of God. The compassion He manifested for distressed mankind shows out the heart of God as He looks upon the sorrow and suffering that sin has brought into the world. Wherever the Lord

went He undertook to deliver from these evidences of Satanic malice. His miracles witnessed to the truth of His Deity and bore testimony to His Messiahship. Faith in the miracles saved no one, however. But faith in Him who wrought them was then, as it is now, the means of salvation from sin and deliverance from its effects.

In the other miracle we see demonstrated again the authority of Jesus over demons. Let us remember that in the Gospel where we have *devils*, in the plural, it should always be *demons*.

A man was brought to Jesus possessed with a dumb demon, or a demon who so controlled the vocal powers of the poor abject wretch as to make speech impossible. Jesus immediately cast out the demon, and to the joy and delight of his friends, and the amazement of the multitudes, he who had been dumb spake. The people cried, "It was never so seen in Israel."

But the haughty religious leaders, determined to resist and refuse any and all evidence that Jesus was the Messiah, declared, "He casteth out demons through the prince of the demons." It was an ominous sign of that which the Lord of glory was to face: utter rejection by those who should have received Him.

For the time being He did not rebuke these blasphemers but went on quietly with His great ministry, as we are told in the closing paragraph of this chapter:

"And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest"—vers. 35-38.

These cities and villages into which Jesus went (ver. 35) were all in Galilee. With His disciples He passed from town to town, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, we are told, and healing diseases of every kind. This term, "the gospel of the kingdom," is an important one. It was the proclamation of the good news that God was about to set up His kingdom in this world. The kingdom was offered to Israel by God but only on condition of their repentance and acceptance of the King. As we know they failed in this, and the kingdom was taken from them and given to others who were ready to meet the proper requirements. There is, of course, a difference between "the gospel of the kingdom" and "the gospel of the grace of God;" yet they are not to be distinguished as two gospels, for we are told distinctly in Galatians 1:9 that to preach any other gospel than that which Paul himself carried through the world was to incur the curse of God. The gospel is God's message concerning His Son. It takes on different aspects at different times, but it is all the gospel of Christ. In Matthew, as we have seen, Christ is presented as the King: that is, the emphasis is upon His royalty rather than

upon His redemptive work, and yet the latter is not ignored, as we shall see in a later chapter; and in fact, at the very beginning of this Gospel the angels' declaration was, "He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). The different aspects of the gospel are, therefore, to be distinguished but not confused. They all have to do with the presentation of the Christ of God as the only remedy for the world's great need.

The heart of our blessed Lord was deeply moved as He beheld the multitudes with no one in Israel to guide them aright. They were like unshepherded sheep until He, the Good Shepherd, came to feed and care for them.

He directs the attention of His disciples to the great harvest-fields filled with precious souls needing to know the truth concerning Himself. Into this harvest-field they were to go forth and reap. He bids them pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers to gather in the ripened grain. Read in connection with the Lord's words at the well of Sychar we understand something of the deep concern that Jesus ever has for the salvation of lost men and woman. In John 4:35-37, He says, "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth."

These words may well be taken to our own hearts. He would have us look on the fields: go forth to sow and reap and to pray, that many more may be raised up to carry on the great work of world evangelization.

CHAPTER TEN

THE KING'S COURIERS

IN order to understand rightly the calling and mission of the twelve prior to our Lord's crucifixion, we need to bear in mind that the Lord Jesus Christ was presenting Himself to Israel as their promised King. God was dealing with them as a nation, giving them full opportunity to acknowledge the claims of His Son. The twelve were chosen as His messengers to the nation as such, and their ministry, like His own, was primarily to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (vers. 5, 6).

The twelve were disciples before they became apostles. That is, they were learners in the school of Christ before they were commissioned as apostles and sent forth as couriers of the King, to proclaim that the long-looked-for kingdom of the heavens had drawn nigh. Their commission is given in this tenth chapter. It differs considerably from that given at the close of this Gospel, after the King had been rejected, and when He was about to return to the Father. This earlier commission had to do with their ministry to Israel only. The later one embraced all nations.

As the King's messengers to the chosen nation they were to go forth counting upon the loyal sub-

jects of the King to provide entertainment for them and to further them on their way; hence they were to go without purse or scrip or other provision, as though for a long journey. If received in peace, they were to preach the gospel of the kingdom and heal the sick, as empowered by the Lord. If rejected, they were to declare that judgment was about to fall, and were to proceed on their way to other towns and villages. The Lord Jesus forewarned them of the ill-treatment that awaited them in some places, but declared that the Heavenly Father would watch over them. After the cross all this was changed, and they were commissioned to go into all the world and to make disciples of all nations. This commission has never been revoked, and is in force today, though it has never yet been fully carried out. If we do not see this distinction we are likely to become confused, for very opposite instructions are found in the Gospels as to the responsibility of the messengers in each instance. It is true that the great majority in Israel had no heart to respond to the message, but the circumstances were quite different. God had foreseen the rejection of His Son, and His sacrificial death was the very foundation of the divine plan of blessing for the world, but that did not lessen Israel's responsibility, as Peter declared later (Acts 2:23). It was meet that the offer of the kingdom should first be extended to Israel, for they were, by natural birth, the children of the kingdom. It was to them that the promises had been

given; and they looked forward for centuries to the coming of the King and the manifestation of His dominion over all the earth, with Israel as the chosen nation, through whom blessing would come to all the rest of the world (Isa. 60:1-16). When they refused to bow to the message as given by the Lord and His apostles, the kingdom was taken from them and given to another people (Matt. 21: 43).

“And when He had called unto Him His twelve disciples, He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; the first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat. And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. And when ye come into an house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city”—vers. 1-15.

The calling of the twelve apostles was the initial act of a new and wider ministry. Jesus had been training them for some time, and they were recognized as His disciples or pupils. Now He com-

missioned them to go forth two by two to announce throughout all Israel that the kingdom of heaven had drawn nigh.

"When He had called unto Him His twelve disciples, He gave them power (authority)." These twelve had been with Him for some time. Now He separated them from others of His followers, setting them apart as His authoritative messengers. In verse 2 they are designated, for the first time, "apostles;" that is, "sent ones," or missionaries. Their names are given in verses 2 to 4. Jesus had found them in various walks of life, and had summoned them to be His companions in preparation for the great work with which He was to entrust them. All save Judas Iscariot, that is, the man of Kerioth, proved faithful to their trust.

"Go not into the way of the Gentiles." The King must first be presented to Israel and the kingdom offered to them. It was not until Israel had rejected both, that the gospel was sent out into all the world and to all nations (Matt. 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24: 46, 47; Acts 1: 8).

"Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It was to seek these out that the twelve were to go forth, giving to Israel an opportunity to repent of their sins and to receive their King, and so be prepared to enter into His kingdom.

"As ye go, preach." Their message or proclamation was a brief one: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." For this kingdom the nation had been

waiting long. Now it was presented for their acceptance or rejection.

"Freely ye have received, freely give." Miraculous powers were granted to the King's couriers in order to accredit their proclamation. But they were not to misuse these things for their own enrichment. They were to give of what had been given them, not seeking any return for themselves.

"Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass . . . nor scrip . . . neither two coats, . . . for the workman is worthy of his meat." The Lord sent forth the twelve without silver or gold for their expenses, or extra garments to wear. They were the King's representatives, going to His own people, and so had a right to expect to be cared for by the faithful in Israel who were waiting for the King. As they went from city to city and village to village they were to inquire in each place who in it was worthy: that is, who was esteemed as a man of piety and righteous life, waiting for Israel's redemption. In his house they were to seek entertainment. If such was refused they were to pass on, and were to shake off the dust from their sandals as a testimony against that house. Those who received them would find blessing. Those who rejected them would be exposed to judgment—a judgment so severe that what fell on Sodom and Gomorrah of old would be light in comparison. This was because of the fact that light increases responsibility. They had privileges such as the people of the cities of the

plain never knew, and their guilt was therefore far greater if they refused to receive the King and dishonored His apostles.

It seems clear that the Lord's words concerning the afflictions with which these messengers were to be faced go far beyond what they experienced during the short time of their Galilean testimony, and were intended to prepare them for what they would be called upon to face when, after the Lord's crucifixion and resurrection, they continued to witness first to Israel, then to the Gentiles. On the other hand we need to remember that the Scriptures indicate a future witnessing to Israel by a faithful group of Jewish believers, the wise (or maskilim) of Daniel 12, in the tribulation period between the rapture of the Church and the revelation of the Son of Man at His second advent. During that dark hour of Antichrist's sway these verses will be the guide and comfort of the witnesses who will then go forth to herald the return of the once-rejected King.

"Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come"—vers. 16-23

"I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." Jesus would not have His followers under any illusion as to what was involved in representing Him among a people who had in the past slain the prophets and spurned their entreaties to return unto the Lord. The disciples were going forth to face hostile foes where they might have expected to find cordial friends. Under such circumstances how much they needed the wisdom that comes down from above.

When arrested and summoned before civil or ecclesiastical courts they need not be anxious or perplexed as to how they should defend themselves, for "in that same hour" it should be given them what they should speak through the Spirit of the Father speaking in them. The expression "the Spirit of the Father" is an unusual one, and does not necessarily imply the full truth of the indwelling Comforter, who was not to come until after Jesus was glorified. Therefore, the Lord uses this rather ambiguous term, but one which, when the new dispensation of the Spirit came, would still be applicable.

They were to be prepared for family misunderstandings and household feuds engendered by faithfulness to Christ. So bitterly is the world opposed to its rightful King that those who are loyal to Him will be hated of all men for His name's sake, and so they could expect suffering and persecution such as would turn shallow and unreal souls aside; but to

the one who endures to the end salvation is assured. This does not imply that we are saved by our own faithfulness or devotedness. All is of grace. But where there is a genuine work of God in the soul there will be final perseverance, whether in the days of the great tribulation yet to come or in this present evil age.

Nevertheless the disciple of Christ is not to court persecution or needlessly expose himself in a fool-hardy way to danger. If persecuted in one city he is to flee to another, even as Paul did in after years when he left Thessalonica for Berea on account of persecution, and later fled from Berea to Corinth and Athens, when the Jews sought to stir up the people of Berea against him.

The last sentence of this part of the Lord's charge is, as noticed already, difficult to apply unless we see that in the coming hour of tribulation there will be a noble band of witnesses acting upon this same commission. The calling of the Church has come in parenthetically for the present. When this special work of God is completed it will be translated to heaven, and the interrupted kingdom-testimony will be continued.

In verses 24 to 39 the Lord tells of the Father's care over all those who are content to be identified with Him in the day of His rejection.

"The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of His

household? Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh ~~at~~ his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me. He That findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it"—vers. 24-39.

"The disciple is not above his Master." A disciple is a learner. Humility becomes one in that position. As Christ's servants and disciples they are responsible to obey His Word. Why should they expect better treatment than that accorded their Master?

"They have called the Master of the house Beelzebub." According to Jewish thought, Beelzebub (a Philistine word probably) was the chief of the demons. There were those who, blasphemously, applied this name to Jesus.

"Nothing covered, that shall not be revealed." This is a solemn consideration. All hidden motives and actions will be brought into light in the day when God will judge the secrets of men (Rom. 2:16).

"Preach ye upon the housetops." That which they had learned of Jesus in secret, in hours of wonderful fellowship with the Prince of Teachers, they were to proclaim boldly in public places.

"Not able to kill the soul." The death of the body does not result in the death of the soul. After the body dies the soul lives on to be reunited to the body in the resurrection, and, in the case of the impenitent, cast into hell. In Scripture the terms "mortal" and "immortal" are connected with the body (Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:53). But this does not deny the fact that the soul lives after the body dies; and this is what is commonly meant when men speak of the immortality of the soul. Our Lord's words, in verse 28, are clear and definite as to this. There is that in man which disease cannot affect, which the assassin's weapon cannot destroy. Man cannot kill the soul. God will deal with the soul of man in His own infinite righteousness.

"Two sparrows sold for a farthing." A farthing was an infinitesimal coin; yet two sparrows, dressed and spitted, were sold in the markets for this amount. They were used as food by the poorest of the people. Nevertheless, God took note of every sparrow's fall.

"The very hairs of your head are all numbered." Nothing is too insignificant for God to note, and His care extends to the minutest detail of our lives.

"Of more value than many sparrows." God cares for all His creatures, but man has a special place in

His heart, and is valued above all other animate beings.

"Confess Me before men." Christ claims absolute authority over our lives. We are to acknowledge Him openly before others, and He will confess our unworthy names in the day when we are to appear before God.

"Him will I also deny." If we refuse to own Christ now as Saviour and Lord, He will deny us in the day of judgment.

"Not to send peace, but a sword." This seems like a strange statement in view of the angels' message at His birth (Luke 2:14). But He foresaw His rejection and knew that the conflict between good and evil must go on until His return. His servants must be prepared to fight valiantly against iniquity.

"To set a man at variance against his father." The claims of Christ are paramount to all others. His disciples must be prepared to encounter opposition even in their own homes and on the part of their nearest kindred.

"A man's foes shall be they of his own household." This was true not only as a result of the mission of the twelve in that day, but also it has been sadly fulfilled throughout all the centuries since.

"Not worthy of Me." If Jesus were less than God, how preposterous would be such claims as He makes here! He demands the supreme place in our hearts. We are to put love for Him before love to father or mother, or sister or brother.

"Followeth after Me." To take the cross is to acknowledge our identification with Him as the rejected One. A man carrying a cross was a man devoted to death. And we are called to die daily (1 Cor. 15: 31) in order that He may be glorified in us.

"He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it." To live for self is to fail to recognize the purpose of our creation. But if we give up all that men of the world value, for His name's sake, we gain eternally. Elsewhere the Lord Jesus Christ said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12: 24). These words form an admirable commentary on His teaching regarding saving and losing one's life. The corn of wheat "saved" rather than planted is really lost. That which is lost by planting is saved in the coming harvest.

The assured reward in store for all who receive Christ's messengers and aid them in their witness-testimony is next set forth:

"He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward"—vers. 40-42.

It is blessed to note how completely the Lord identifies His representatives with Himself; so that to receive one sent by Him is the same as to receive Him, and vice versa. To welcome a prophet as one

speaking for God means to share in the prophet's reward; and the same principle is true in connection with the reception of a righteous man. What is done for the servant is appreciated by the Master. Even a cup of cold water given to one of Christ's little ones will not fail of reward. He esteems all that is done for them as done unto Him. Who that knows Him would not serve such a gracious Lord with gladness of heart?

Obedience is the test of devotion. If we truly love our Lord we will be glad to yield all we are and have to Him for service. He has entrusted us who are saved with the message of His gospel. This does not mean that we are all called to be preachers or missionaries, but we are asked to confess Him before men that others may be drawn to Him as we have been. We shall find life at its richest and best if we yield to His call, no matter how great the cost may seem to be. A life laid down for His glory is a life saved. A life given to the service of sin or of self is a life wasted. No sacrifice should be too great for Him who gave Himself for us.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE GRACE OF THE KING

AS our Lord continued His gracious ministry it became increasingly evident that by far the great majority of Israel, the leaders and the people generally, were in no mood to receive His message and to acknowledge Him as the Anointed One sent by God to deliver them from their bondage, not only to the Roman authority but to sin and Satan. In this chapter we hear Jesus pronouncing woes upon the very cities wherein most of His mighty works were done. It would seem incredible, if we did not know something of the hardness of our own hearts until subdued by divine grace, that men could resist such clear and evident proof of the Messiahship of the Lord Jesus. But it is only when men bow in repentance before God that Christ is revealed to the soul. It has been remarked often that the same sun which softens the wax hardens the clay. So it is with the preaching of the gospel: some respond to it with gratitude and enjoy its blessings; others turn from it in unbelief, and so are hardened in their sins. "To the one," says Paul, "we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life" (2 Cor. 2:16). It

was so when the Prince of all preachers was here. There were those, chiefly among the poor and the outwardly sinful and degraded, who received the message eagerly and found life and healing. But the proud, self-righteous religionists, who did not feel their need of God's grace, spurned the message and the Messenger, even blasphemously declaring that the Lord Himself was an agent of Beelzebub, the prince of the demons.

After commissioning the twelve and sending them forth to preach the gospel of the kingdom Jesus left to go forth alone to minister in other cities. We read:

"And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding His twelve disciples, He departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities"—vers. 1.

After the apostles had left, two of John the Baptist's disciples came to inquire of the Lord whether He was indeed the Coming One or whether they should look for another. The Lord Jesus answered by demonstrating His power over disease and demons, and took occasion to give due recognition to John and his message.

"Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto Him, Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me. And as they departed Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken

with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft clothing are in king's houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear"—vers. 2-15.

As to whether doubts had entered the mind of His forerunner John, or whether he simply sent his disciples to the Lord Jesus Christ with their questions as to His identity with the One who was to come in order that their faith might be confirmed, we need not speculate. John was in prison at this time because of his faithfulness in reproving Herod for his wickedness in taking as his paramour Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. John's day of popularity was over. As he languished in the gloomy fortress of Machaerus (if tradition be correct) he may have wondered if in some way he had misunderstood the testimony regarding Jesus. Or it may have been to reassure some of his troubled disciples, that he sent two of them to Jesus to inquire whether He was indeed the One "that should come" or whether, like John himself, He was but the herald of Another.

In answer to these questions Jesus reminded them that all the credentials of the King were manifested

in power. The mighty miracles He wrought were to attest His claims: the blind were made to see, and the lame to walk; lepers were cleansed; the deaf were made to hear; even the dead were raised up. What greater signs could be looked for? To the poor the glad tidings of the kingdom were proclaimed. But it was a time of testing. There was no outward pomp or show such as might be naturally expected in connection with the advent of a King. Therefore faith in God and His Word was important. "Blessed," He declared, "is he, whosoever shall not be offended (or scandalized) in Me." It took real faith to see in the meek and lowly Jesus of Nazareth the royal Son of David, destined to rule all nations with the iron rod of righteousness.

After the departure of John's disciples Jesus took occasion to speak in highest terms of the Baptist and his testimony. What was it that had attracted the throngs to him? It was not because of any outward show of magnificence or grandeur. John did not appear in gorgeous robes or other costly array such as might have been found on royal attendants in kings' palaces. He came, Elijah-like, in poor clothing, and subsisting upon the simplest food. Yet, of all born of women up to that time, he was the greatest, because it was given to him to introduce the Messiah to Israel. But, great as his privileges were, the simplest and poorest member of the kingdom of heaven is greater by far. For though John pointed to the open door it was not given to him to enter into

the new condition of things which the kingdom suggests. He closed one epoch; Jesus opened another. "All the prophets and the law prophesied until John." For faith he fulfilled Malachi's prophecy that Elijah was to come before the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

Having said this Jesus exclaimed, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." It is so easy to hear with the outward ear but fail to receive the truth in the heart.

The Lord then brings out in vivid contrast the difference between John's ministry and His own, but shows that there was very little response to either.

"But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a Man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a Friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children"

—vers. 16-19.

"Children sitting in the markets." Jesus likens the people to whom the message had come to irresponsible children who could make a play of the happiest or the saddest experience of life, but had little realization of the import of either.

"Ye have not danced; . . . ye have not lamented." Whether a wedding or a funeral it was all the same. There was no response to either. Neither the glad note of the gospel nor the solemn call to repentance seemed to have any effect on the great majority of the people.

"John came neither eating nor drinking." John was an ascetic, a man of the wilderness, who denied himself all ordinary comforts. But they declared he was a demoniac.

"A Man gluttonous, and a winebibber." Jesus was a Man of the people. He moved freely among them and participated in their feasts. But His very geniality was misinterpreted. They accused Him of pampering His appetites.

In the section embracing verses 20 to 24 Jesus rebukes the cities which had enjoyed the greatest privileges but the majority of whose people persisted in their unbelief. We may well be amazed at the impenitence and hardness of heart of the residents in the cities where Jesus had done so many of His mighty works, but have our own hearts been any more ready to receive the truth than theirs?

"Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee"—vers. 20-24.

"They repented not." The very cities which had been most privileged by hearing His word and beholding His works of power, refused to change their careless attitude, and so continued in their sins.

"Chorazin . . . Bethsaida." These cities were situated near the northern end of the Sea of Galilee, the one a little to the west, and the other on the shore. Chorazin is today an almost unidentifiable ruin; Bethsaida is a very poor little village.

"More tolerable for Tyre and Sidon." These were Phoenician cities, noted for their wickedness, and destroyed centuries before. But their people are still awaiting the day of judgment. Note that there will be degrees of punishment according to the measure of light received and rejected.

"Exalted unto heaven, . . . brought down to hell (hades)." In privilege, Capernaum was blessed above all other cities of Galilee, for the Lord chose it as "His own city" and in it wrought more mighty works than in any other place. In this sense it was indeed exalted. But it was condemned to utter ruin, because it knew not the time of its visitation.

"More tolerable for . . . Sodom." Sodom had become a synonym for the vilest and most unnatural sin. But the people of Capernaum were guiltier, because they had much greater light and far more privileges, yet they persisted in their sins.

With what relief of mind we turn to the closing verses of this chapter! Though spurned by so many to whom His heart went out in pity and compassion, our Lord was not "sourèd," as we might have been, by the coldness and even ill-treatment with which an ungrateful people spurned His love and grace. He accepted all from His Father's hand, and con-

tinued to offer deliverance and blessing to all who would come to Him.

"At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light"

—vers. 25-30.

"I thank Thee, O Father." At the very time when our Lord was experiencing the bitterness of man's indifference and opposition, He turns in worship and praise to the Father, rejoicing that though the great ones in Israel rejected Him, the humble received His words.

"Even so, Father." It is the language of complete subjection to the Father's will. As the dependent Man on earth, He was wholly resigned to that which the Father had foreseen.

"No man knoweth the Son, but the Father." The mystery of the incarnation, God and Man in one Person, is insoluble and past human comprehension. But the Father may be known "to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." The Fatherhood of God, unknown by human wisdom, is revealed by the Son. He has made God known to those who receive His words, as the Father of all the redeemed.

"Come unto Me . . . and I will give you rest." Surely, none but God manifest in the flesh could

rightly use such language as this. The best man earth ever knew could make no such declaration. All others who speak as directed by the Spirit of God point men from themselves to Christ for rest of conscience and peace of mind. Jesus alone could say, "Come unto Me . . . and I will give . . . rest" to the burdened and heavy-laden. He has proved His Deity times without number by His ability to fulfil this promise.

"Take My yoke upon you . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls." All who are truly subject to Him find rest of heart in the midst of all the cares of life as they learn of Him, the meek and lowly One. A yoke is designed to curb the will and bring one under control. He who exchanges sin's heavy burden for the glorious yoke of subjection to the Lord finds it blessed indeed to serve so good a Master.

"My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." Many shrink from submitting to His yoke, fearing it may involve greater sacrifices than they are ready to make. But all who acknowledge His authority and blend their wills with His find they enter a rest such as the weary of this world never know.

The Two Rests. The rest that the Lord Jesus gives freely to all who come to Him is rest of conscience in regard to the sin question. The distressed soul, burdened with a sense of guilt, comes to Him and finds peace when he trusts Him as the great Sin-Bearer. The second rest is rest of heart. Adverse circumstances may rise up to alarm and fill the heart

with fear and anxiety, but he who takes Christ's yoke and learns of Him is able to be calm in the midst of the storm. He finds perfect rest as he trusts all to Him who sitteth over the waterfloods and is Lord of all the elements. These two rests are the same as the two aspects of peace presented in the Epistles. Rest of conscience is the equivalent of that peace with God which is the portion of all who are justified by faith (Rom. 5:1). Rest of soul is the same as that peace of God which passeth all understanding (Phil. 4:6, 7), and is enjoyed by all who learn to commit everything to the Lord.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE KING'S AUTHORITY DENIED

THE events recorded in this chapter bring us to the close of the first great division of this Gospel, in which the King and the kingdom were offered or presented to Israel. Here we find the leaders of the nation deliberately rejecting Jesus and definitely ascribing all His works of power to Beelzebub. Only in this way could they account for the great miracles Jesus wrought and yet refuse to see in them His credentials as the promised King.

In the first eight verses we have a most interesting and instructive incident recorded. Here Jesus declares Himself to be Lord of the Sabbath, by which He again attested His consciousness of Deity: for the Sabbath was Jehovah's witness to His creatorial power (Exod. 20:10, 11) and to the redemption of Israel from Egyptian bondage (Deut. 5:14, 15). It was distinctively "the Sabbath of Jehovah." The Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Jesus of the New, and He is Lord of the Sabbath, as of all else.

"At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and His disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto Him, Behold, Thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day. But He said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; how he entered into the house of God, and did

eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, That in this place is One greater than the temple. But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord even of the sabbath day"—vers. 1-8.

"Jesus went on the Sabbath day through the corn." Walking quietly in the country, the Lord and His disciples passed through a corn-field; and we are told that the disciples, being hungry, began to pluck the ears of corn and to eat. This was quite in keeping with the provision made in the law, for in Deuteronomy 23:25 we read, "When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn." This incident occurred on the Sabbath day however, and the Pharisees immediately took exception to it, exclaiming, "Behold, Thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath day." There was absolutely no prohibition in the law of Moses in regard to this, but in the traditions of the elders there were many added laws and regulations which made it at times almost impossible for the ordinary man to know whether he was violating one of them or not. Among these rules was the prohibition to gather fruit or grain of any kind upon the Sabbath day, and even to rub it out in the hand as the disciples were doing seemed to these Pharisees a violation of that which they regarded as sacred.

The Lord defended His followers, however, by pointing out that the meeting of man's need means far more to God than the obedience to legal restrictions. He cited the case of David and his men who were hungry, and they asked the high priest if they might be permitted to eat the shewbread which had been taken from the holy table before the Lord. Under ordinary circumstances it was not lawful for anyone to eat of this bread but the priests themselves. But when God's anointed king was rejected and his followers in distress their need was paramount to any legal prohibition.

The Lord also reminded His critics that the priests in the temple work on the Sabbath day and, therefore, might be said to profane it, but they were blameless in so doing.

He then added the remarkable declaration: "In this place is One greater than the temple." How little they understood His words. Everything in that temple, as far as it was arranged according to the Word of God, spoke of Him and His redemptive work; but though He had come in Person to what He Himself called His Father's house, they failed to realize who it was who walked among them. His words were not simply an announcement of His Deity, however, but rightly understood they should have made it clear to the Pharisees that man himself means more to God than any building, no matter how holy; or rules and regulations, no matter how well authenticated. Had they but pondered the words

of the prophet Hosea (6: 6), "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings," they would have understood this and not have condemned the disciples for doing that which, in itself, was perfectly innocent.

The remarkable asseveration of Jesus, as given in verse 8, can mean nothing less than that He claimed to be God incarnate. He said, "The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath day." No merely human person would have the right to use such language as this. But He who stood in their midst that day was One to whom all the Sabbaths of the law pointed, and He had absolute authority over them.

When we consider the next section we find our Lord again acting contrary to the prejudices of His enemies concerning the Sabbath.

"And when He was departed thence, He went into their synagogue: and, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked Him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse Him. And He said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days. Then saith He to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other. Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against Him, how they might destroy Him"—vers. 9-14.

Entering into a village synagogue Jesus beheld a man with a withered hand. A test question arose among those who were gathered there, leaving it to Him to answer. They asked, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days?" He turned the question back

upon them. To say "No" would seem to indicate that they were utterly indifferent to human sufferings; to reply in the affirmative would be to accuse themselves; so they did not answer. (See Mark 3: 4; Luke 6: 9).

He then put another question—one that would go home to many of them. "What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?" Possibly many of them had done this very thing on numerous occasions. Sheep to them constituted property, and property must be cared for even on the Sabbath day.

Without waiting for an answer, Jesus replied to His own questions by pointing out that a man is much better than a sheep, and it is lawful always to do good on the Sabbath days. He turned, therefore, to the man who was expectantly looking toward Him, and commanded him to stretch forth his hand. In an instant new life came into that withered member, and the hand was restored whole like as the other. One would think that surely this would have convinced even the most prejudiced Pharisees that God's King was in their midst; but instead of that, so bigoted were they that they went out and held a council against Him, endeavoring to devise some means by which they might destroy Him.

Jesus knew what was in their minds, and therefore withdrew Himself and went elsewhere.

"But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew Himself from thence: and great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all; and charged them that they should not make Him known: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Behold My Servant, whom I have chosen, My Beloved, in whom My soul is well pleased: I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He shall show judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory. And in His name shall the Gentiles trust"—vers. 15-21.

Great multitudes of the common people followed after Him. Many of them were sick, and we are told that He healed them all. But He charged them not to spread abroad the report of His marvelous power. He had not come, as we have noticed in an earlier chapter, to create astonishment in the minds of men by His wonder-working ability; He had come to manifest that meekness and lowliness which the prophet Isaiah predicted would be seen in Messiah when He appeared. The quotation given in verses 18 to 21 is from Isaiah 42:1-4.

Following these incidents we find our Lord manifesting once more His authority over demons.

"Then was brought unto Him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and He healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the Son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: and if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and

spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house. He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad"—vers. 22-30.

A crises is reached in connection with the King's presentation of Himself to Israel. He had given evidence after evidence of His Messiahship, but those who should have been the first to recognize Him were determined not to do so. Now once more He manifested His power over the unseen world by casting out a demon who had made the wretched man in whom he dwelt to be both blind and dumb. When Jesus cast out the evil spirit the man both spake and saw. The crowds that thronged about the Lord were amazed and cried out, "Is not this the Son of David?" They saw in the miracle the proof that Jesus was the King of David's line who had come to redeem Israel; but they were silenced by the Pharisees who exclaimed, "This fellow doth not cast out demons, but by Beelzebub the prince of the demons." This was the second time that such a charge had been made. It was evident now, however, that there would be no repentance: these religious leaders were bent upon the destruction of Him whom the people had just acclaimed "the Son of David." Jesus, who knew their thoughts and did not need that any man should tell Him what was in their minds, turned to them and said, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand." Now Satan is at the head of a great

kingdom of evil. So the Lord made the application that if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself. He put the question, "How shall then his kingdom stand?" There were those in that crowd related to some of the disciples, who had also been empowered by the Lord to cast out demons. So Jesus asked, "If I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your children cast them out?" They did not want to say of these what had been said of Him, but they themselves had made it clear that Jesus was either manifesting the mighty power of God, or deceiving the people by Satanic influence. They must decide which they would believe. He challenges them to recognize the true condition of affairs by saying, "If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God (which, of course, He did), then the kingdom of God is come unto you." It was this that He would have them understand: the King was there and the little group of His disciples were His acknowledged subjects; thus the kingdom in embryo was actually in their midst. Would they receive it, or spurn the privilege of entering into it?

No one could enter a strong man's house and spoil his goods unless he were able to overcome the owner. Jesus had met the strong man, Satan, in the wilderness and overcome him. Ever since He had gone about through the land of Israel spoiling his goods. Now the time had come for those who heard Him to take a definite stand: they must be either for Him or against Him; neutrality would

not do. Those who were not with Him, who did not proclaim themselves on His side, were really against Him; for all who would not gather with Him were but scattering abroad.

In the next two verses we have something that has troubled a great many people, and yet, if rightly understood, it ought to trouble no one except those who are determined to refuse the testimony of the Holy Spirit concerning the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come"—vers. 31-32.

This was a dispensational sin, and we may say definitely cannot be committed, at least in exactly the same way, by individuals today. Jesus had come in the power of the Holy Spirit, presenting Himself to Israel as their rightful King. His mighty works, as we have seen, accredited His testimony. The only way in which men could refuse to own His grace and yet recognize His power was by attributing all His mighty works to the devil. Those who did this gave evidence that they had sinned until their consciences were seared as with a hot iron. They had gone beyond Redemption Point, if I may use a well-known figure; not because God would not have been merciful to them if they had repented, but because they had so persist-

ed in their sin that there was on their part no evidence of nor desire for repentance. Had they simply spoken against the Son of Man, Jesus said it would have been forgiven them; but He solemnly added, "Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven, neither in this age, nor in that which is to come." He was not intimating, as the Roman Catholics tell us, that there is forgiveness for some in another world, though they leave this scene with sin still upon their souls; but the Lord was speaking of two ages: the age that was just closing, and the age to come, which is, properly speaking, the Millennium. The present age was hidden at that time in the mind of God, but even so one might apply His words to this age also, for those who deliberately refuse the testimony of the Holy Ghost concerning Christ could be forgiven neither in the Jewish age, nor in this or any other age to follow.

Many dear souls have tormented themselves, or have been tormented by the devil, with the awful thought that they are guilty of the sin here described; whereas deep in their hearts they fully recognize the Deity of the Lord Jesus and have no thought of attributing to the devil the power that wrought in Him.

In the next section Jesus uses perhaps the strongest language recorded of Him, as He addresses these hypocritical religious leaders who have determined to persist in their rejection of Him, no matter what the cost.

"Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned"—vers. 33-37.

He calls for a clean-cut distinction between evil and good. Every tree is known by its fruit. His life of holiness was the testimony to the reality of His claim. Their evil lives were the evidence of their corrupt hearts.

"O generation of vipers!" They were the brood of the serpent, and they manifested the nature of, that old serpent, which is the devil, in their attitude, toward the Christ of God. Out of the abundance, of their hearts their mouths spoke.

Thus our words indicate the condition of the inward man: a good man, made good by grace, brings forth from the treasure of his heart words that are good; an inherently evil man manifests his wickedness by the words that fall from his lips. In the day of judgment God will deal with men according to what they themselves have spoken. Account will have to be given for every word, and by these words they will be either justified or condemned.

A number of the scribes and Pharisees added insult to injury, we might say, by coming to the Lord and asking for a sign, which He refused to give. He directed their attention to events of the

past which would only make their condemnation the greater in the day when they would have to give an account to God.

"Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from Thee. But He answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here"—vers. 38-42.

One would think that their own self-respect would have kept the scribes and Pharisees from asking for another sign, after they had seen so many and rejected them all. In answer to their demand Jesus replied that it was an evil and adulterous generation which was seeking a sign. To such a generation no sign should be given except the sign of the prophet Jonah. Jesus referred to His resurrection from the dead which was soon to take place, but which, as we know, failed to convince these men of the folly and wickedness of their course.

Whatever others may say, Jesus had no doubts regarding the authenticity of the records of the book of Jonah, and He was God incarnate, who knew all things. He says that Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea-mon-

ster, and in this he becomes a sign of the Son of Man who was to be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth—that is, the grave. Moreover, our Lord authenticated the repentance of Nineveh. He declared that these men should rise up in the judgment with that wicked generation who refused His testimony and should condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and a greater far than Jonah stood before them.

He brought forth also another witness from the Old Testament, the Queen of Sheba, whom He calls the Queen of the South. She came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, because she had learned that he could reveal to her precious things concerning the name of the Lord, which her soul longed to understand. She did not consider a journey of perhaps a thousand miles too great in order to hear the wisdom of Solomon. But these deniers of the truth were unmoved, though Solomon's Lord Himself was in their midst. When at last they shall stand trembling in their sins before the bar of God the Queen of the South will appear to upbraid them because of their wilful rejection of light; whereas, she followed the gleam from the very ends of the earth in order that that light might be hers forevermore.

We next have a remarkable parable of unbelieving Israel's past, present, and future state.

"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and

when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation"—vers. 43-45.

The unclean spirit pictured here is the spirit of idolatry which was cast out of the nation of the Jews as a result of the Babylonian captivity. Since their return from Babylon they had been like an empty house swept and garnished. They were free from idolatry; but on the other hand, they had not received the Lord Himself to dwell among them. In a coming day this evil spirit of idolatry will take with himself seven other spirits even more wicked than he, and they will enter and dwell in the apostate nation. This will result in the recognition of the Antichrist, the Wilful King, as the Messiah, and so their last state will be worse than the first. The wicked generation that rejected Jesus will still be evident in that hour of tribulation.

As the chapter closes we see the mother and brethren of the Lord drawing near as He was speaking to the people. A messenger was sent to tell Him of this, and we note His answer:

"While He yet talketh to the people, His mother and His brethren stood without, desiring to speak with Him. Then one said unto Him, Behold, Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with Thee. But He answered and said unto him that told Him, Who is My mother? and who are My brethren? And He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother"—vers. 46-50.

Whether His mother failed in measure to comprehend the mystery of her Son we cannot say, but we do know that His brethren did not believe in Him until after His resurrection. They interrupted His preaching by sending one to announce their presence, evidently with the suggestion that He should cease ministering and come to them. But He stretched forth His hand toward those who were ready to learn from His lips, and said to them, "Behold My mother and My brethren!" And He added that all who did the will of the Father in heaven are His brethren, sister, and mother. It was the renunciation of all ties after the flesh. The break with Israel was practically complete: He was looking forward to an altogether new order of things.

48

49

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM

THIS chapter brings to us a new revelation in connection with the presentation of kingdom truth. We have seen in the preceding chapter how the leaders of the people of Israel crossed the dead-line, and refused the proffered kingdom by deliberately discrediting all the credentials of the King. They attributed His power (which they could not deny) to Beelzebub, and so committed the sin against the Holy Spirit for which there could be no forgiveness, either in that age or in the age to come. This resulted eventually in the setting aside for the time being of Israel nationally, and the introduction of a new order of things which God had foreseen from eternity, but which had not been declared hitherto. In its fulness this involved the revelation of the mystery of the Church as one Body called out from Jews and Gentiles which the time had not come to unfold. But as preliminary to that Jesus spoke of other mysteries which had been kept secret from the foundation of the world, the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

From this point on, in Matthew's Gospel, the term "the kingdom of the heavens" refers specifically, not to the final establishment of the kingdom

of God over all the earth, but to the mysterious, or rather, mystical form in which that kingdom was to be manifested after the King Himself had returned to heaven, and until His second advent in power and glory to root out of His kingdom all offences and destroy all who work iniquity.

Of this we have an outline in our present chapter. In these parables our Lord set forth the condition which He saw the kingdom would take on earth as a result of His rejection. This was all foreknown to God and provision was made for it. Christ, refused by the leaders of the nation of Israel made propitiation for sin by His sacrificial death upon the cross (Acts 2:23; 1 John 4:10), and then, as the rejected Man, left this scene, ascending to heaven, where He sits exalted at God's right hand. The kingdom of the prophets is in abeyance until His promised return to build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down (Acts 15:16); but during His personal absence the Holy Spirit has come in a new way as the Comforter, to enable His servants to preach the Word in convicting power (John 16:7-11). Wherever the gospel is carried it is the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11). As a result we see in the world today a great body of people who recognize in the Lord Jesus earth's rightful King, and give Him heart-allegiance. There are millions more who give Him lip-service and in an outward way own His authority, though their hearts are far from Him. These together

constitute the kingdom in its mystical form (ver.11).

The kingdom promised to Israel by the prophets depended upon the reception of the King by the chosen nation. In rejecting Him they lost their opportunity, and so the kingdom was taken from them (Matt. 21: 43). When they turn to the Lord, He will appear in glory, and all things that are written concerning the kingdom will be fulfilled. In the meantime, as the Word of the kingdom is proclaimed, there will arise a mixed group who profess to own the authority of the Lord Jesus. These constitute the kingdom in mystery. It is a wider sphere than the Church, inasmuch as it includes both true and false professors. The separation of the two groups will take place at the end of the age, after which the kingdom of the Son of Man will be established over all the earth.

The seven parables may be designated as follows:

1. The seed of the kingdom sown in the earth and its results.
2. Satanic imitation: the tares among the wheat.
3. The kingdom as a great world-church harboring evil as well as good.
4. The false church inserting the leaven of corrupt teaching into the food of God's people.
5. Israel, God's peculiar treasure, purchased with the world but hidden among the nations during the present age.
6. The Church the pearl for which the Lord impoverished Himself (2 Cor. 8: 9).
7. The condition of things at the end of the age.

With this outline in mind let us examine each parable separately. Notice that the series is divided into four, which were spoken in the open air by the seaside, and three, which were given to the disciples only, after they had entered into the house.

"The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto Him, so that He went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And He spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear"—vers. 1-9.

The first of this septenary series of parables is not spoken of as a likeness of the kingdom, as in the case of the other six, but when the Lord explained the parable to His disciples He said it was given to them to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, thus definitely identifying the sowing of the Word with the spreading of the kingdom, in its secret or mystical form, through the world. In verse 1 the Lord's action (He "went out of the house and sat by the sea side)" seems to be parabolic. This, in itself, appears to indicate the break with Israel which we have already intimated.

Multitudes gathered about Him, however, pressing closely to the water. He entered into a ship, probably Peter's fishing-boat, which Luke tells us

was once so used (Luke 5:3); and from this as a pulpit He addressed the multitudes standing on the shore. The hills at this particular locality rise gently from the shore, thus making a natural open-air arena or theater, where the voice would carry easily to great throngs standing on the shore or sitting on the hillside.

"Behold, a sower went forth to sow." The sower in the first instance was the Lord Himself. He went from place to place sowing the seed of the Word of God. It should be a matter of encouragement to all those who engage in the same blessed occupation that even when the Divine Preacher Himself was ministering the Word the proportion was only one out of four in whose heart fruit resulted from the Word that was sown; and even then there were different degrees as to the amount of fruit produced.

In verses 4 to 7 we read of the non-productive soil upon which the seed fell—the trampled wayside where the fowls of the air devoured the seed almost as rapidly as it was strewn. Then the stony ground where at first it looked as though there would be fruit because the seed appeared to take root, and the green sprouts came up only to be parched by the sun, to the disappointment of the sower. Other seed fell among thorns, which soon choked the tender shoots so that there was no fruit whatever.

That which fell into good ground took root, sprang up, and fructified: some producing one hundredfold, some sixtyfold, and some thirtyfold. This was the parable. For the moment the Lord made no application, but left it for His hearers to weigh His words as He exclaimed, "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

When opportunity arose and the multitudes had gone, the disciples came to Jesus asking for an explanation of the parable. This He gave them.

"And the disciples came, and said unto Him, **Why speakest Thou unto them in parables?** He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them: and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them. Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for awhile: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word: and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth

the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." —vers. 10-23.

To those who trusted Him and set value upon His words the Lord was ready always to explain anything which seemed difficult for them to apprehend. In response to the question, "Why speaketh Thou unto them in parables?" Jesus replied at once, "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." The word "mysteries" as here used does not necessarily mean something mysterious and, therefore, difficult to understand, but rather secrets which are revealed only to initiates. The Lord was ever ready to take into His confidence earnest seekers after the truth. He used the parabolic form for a double purpose. He desired to test His hearers, as to whether they really desired to know the mind of God or not, and also to illumine His discourses. Where people already had faith and had accepted His testimony up to a certain point He was prepared to give more; but where there was no real confidence in His message they would become more bewildered by the parabolic form of instruction than if He had spoken in plain language. Some have quibbled over this, as though it indicated on the part of the Lord Jesus a deliberate intention to blind the eyes and close the ears of those who listened to His words. It was really the very opposite. Those who are anxious to know the truth would come to Him as the disciples would, asking

for an explanation of what was beyond their comprehension. Those who were unexercised and indifferent would turn carelessly away and become even more unconcerned, because of not understanding the meaning of His illustrations. Jesus quoted from the prophecy of Isaiah (6: 9, 10) in which this very method was predicted. It was never God's desire to harden anyone's heart or to close anyone's eyes against the truth, but it is a principle that runs throughout the Word of God that the truth either softens or hardens. The very same sun that softens the wax hardens the clay; and so the very same gospel message which breaks down honest hearts and leads to repentance, hardens the hearts of the dishonest and confirms them in their path of disobedience.

Jesus pronounced a blessing upon the apostles, because they had eyes to see and ears to hear. Theirs was a place of peculiar privilege. Throughout the centuries that had gone many prophets and righteous men had looked forward in faith to Messiah's coming, and had longed to see what the followers of Jesus were then seeing and hear such teaching as that which He was giving, but this had been denied them. The Lord then proceeded to explain the parable. "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom," He said, "and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart." This is the explanation of the seed scattered on the

wayside, only to be devoured by the fowls of the air. Note that the message is called distinctly "the word of the kingdom," making it clear that it is by sowing the Word that the kingdom makes its way through the world. Satan and his emissaries are ever busy trying to annul the effect of gospel preaching. It is their sinister aim to fill the hearts and minds of the hearers with prejudice and unreasonable opposition so that they do not fairly weigh the message as it comes from the preacher's lips; thus there is no favorable response whatever. The Word heard with the outer ear only is soon forgotten.

In vivid contrast with these utterly indifferent ones we have next the stony-ground hearers. These represent those exuberant people who are ever ready to take up with almost any kind of religious propaganda, to listen to the proclamation of the gospel and its clearness without any depth of conviction or evidence of repentance. They profess faith in the Word, apparently receiving it joyfully, but because there is no root in them, nothing but an empty profession, they soon fall away, particularly when they find that the Christian way of life entails tribulation and persecution.

The stony-ground hearers are those who are also seen at first to accept the message, but have never really counted the cost of faith in Christ. They are not characterized by the single eye but are double-minded, occupied with the cares of this world and

seeking after wealth; the temporal responsibilities connected with these things choke the Word, and so there is no fruit.

In contrast with all these others we have the good-ground hearers, where the soil has been prepared by the plowshare of conviction; and the Word falling into an honest heart is received in faith, and the message is understood as the Holy Spirit opens it up. The result is that the soul is born again, and the life becomes fruitful for God. There are degrees of fruitfulness, however. All do not give the same evidence of devotion to Christ and appreciation of the truth; and so the Lord speaks of those who bring forth some an hundred-fold, others sixtyfold, and others only thirtyfold.

The second parable is definitely said to be a likeness of the kingdom of heaven. What we have pointed out already is very evident here: the kingdom of heaven is not heaven itself, neither is it, as used in this part of Matthew's Gospel, to be confounded with the coming glorious kingdom of our God and His Christ when all the world will be subjected to Jesus as King. It speaks of a mixed condition of things, such as has prevailed in Christendom ever since the beginning of the present age.

Tares, which are the children of the evil one, are mingled with the wheat, the children of God.

"Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was

sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn."

—vers. 24-30.

This parable is also explained farther on in the chapter. We now need only to take note of the fact that the Lord was portraying a state of things in which professors and true believers would be found together. The great difference between the two is that those who are genuine bring forth fruit; whereas the others are without fruit, and even are hurtful rather than helpful. The tares themselves are actually poisonous instead of being good for food. "His enemy," Jesus says, "came and sowed tares." That enemy, we know, is the devil. But when the servants of the householder came asking if they should root up the tares the answer was in the negative. Not until the time of harvest would the great separation take place.

The third parable is that of the mustard seed:

"Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof"—vers. 31-32.

We are not to understand from our Lord's words that the mustard seed is the most infinitesimal of

all seeds in the entire vegetable kingdom, but it is the least of all the seeds of the garden herbs; yet when it is grown it becomes the greatest of all the herbs, towering over all the rest, so that it forms a place of shelter. The parable was not explained so far as the record goes, but it is easy to understand it in the light of other scriptures. It speaks of the development of the kingdom of heaven into a great world power. Such dominions were frequently likened to large trees with spreading branches, as in the case of Babylon (Dan. 4); the Assyrian (Ezk. 31:3), and other similar powers. So that which began as a field of wheat developed, in the course of centuries, into the mustard tree. The professing church of God became a power to be reckoned with among the nations, but its branches sheltered all kinds of false professors and evil teachers. The birds of the air represent the hosts of evil, and these lodge in the branches of the mustard tree. It is a most graphic picture of what Christendom became throughout the course of centuries when the false church seemed to dominate the world.

One other parable was spoken by the Lord as He sat by the seaside. It is that of the leaven hidden in the meal. Perhaps of all the teachings of the Lord nothing has been more misunderstood than this. He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."

The general idea among Christians is that the woman here represents the Church; the three measures of meal, the world; the leaven, the gospel: as a result of which the whole world will be converted eventually. Nothing could be more contrary to the teaching of the Word of God than this. It is a solemn fact that after nearly twenty centuries of gospel preaching there are more unbelievers in the world today than there were when Christ commissioned the apostles to go forth and evangelize the nations. Scripture nowhere warrants us to expect to see a converted world before the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ. In order to understand this parable one needs to inquire as to the meaning of leaven. Throughout the Word of God leaven is used always in an evil sense. Of old the people of Israel were to put all leaven out of their houses during the Passover season, and the apostle Paul explains this when he says, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5:7, 8). Leaven, then, speaks of malice and wickedness, and the Christian is to put this out of his life. The Lord Jesus warned His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy and self-righteousness; the leaven of the Sadducees which is false doctrine and materialism; and the leaven of Herod, which is worldliness and political corruption. In

the Book of Leviticus (chapter 2) we have the meal offering, in which there was to be no leaven. This represents our Lord Jesus Christ's Humanity which was absolutely without sin. In the parable the woman is surreptitiously hiding the leaven in the meal offering. The three measures of meal certainly do not represent the world, but rather the truth of God concerning His Son. The woman is not the Church, as such, but is the false church—that woman, Jezebel, of whom we read in Revelation 2:20, who calls herself a prophetess, and teaches the servants of God unholy principles which are subversive of the faith. Is not this exactly what has been taking place during the past almost two millennia of Church history? "The mystery of iniquity" began to work in apostolic days, and it has spread throughout the centuries until today there is practically no great doctrine of Scripture that has not been perverted by false teachers.

With this fourth parable the Lord ended what we might call His public ministry for that occasion. He had opened up secrets which God had kept hidden until that time, even as it had been declared by Him prophetically in Psalm 78:2.

"All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake He not unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world"—vers. 34-35.

Dismissing the outdoor gathering Jesus entered the house, followed by His disciples. In this place,

of seclusion He uttered three more parables, as well as explaining that of the wheat and the tares.

"Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house; and His disciples came unto Him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear"—vers. 36-43.

The apostles came to Him a second time asking for further explanation. They asked regarding the tares of the field. He explained by telling them that He Himself was the Sower of the good seed; the field is the world. It is important that we remember this because of what follows. The field is not the Church, but rather that world out of which the Church was eventually to be gathered. "The good seed," Jesus said, "are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one." Here we have the result of the sowing: those who believe the gospel message are the wheat; those who accept the teachings of Satan are the tares, for the enemy that sowed the evil seed is the devil himself. He has ever been busy sowing the tares wherever servants of God have sown the good seed. But it is not for Christ's servants to attempt to destroy the tares during this age. Our

understanding is too limited. We might make the fatal mistake that Rome made of rooting up the good in order to destroy the bad. At the end of the age—it is not the end of the world He has in mind but the end of the present age—"The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire." Notice that the Son of Man sends forth *His* angels. What a definite proof of His Deity we have here! He is both Son of God and Son of Man in one blessed, adorable Person. The angels are His, and they do His bidding.

Then observe the mixed condition that prevails in the kingdom down to the end of the age. The angels gather out of His kingdom all things that afford cause for scandal. There will be false professors mingled with the true in the field—that is, in the world, down to the end of the age. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." This is the heavenly side of the kingdom into which the Lord shall gather His own in that day. Again the challenge comes, "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Link together the three parables which the Lord gave inside the house.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man,

seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth"—vers. 44-50.

In the fifth parable the treasure is not the sinner seeking after Christ, but the blessed Lord Himself who came from heaven to earth to find that which to Him was of inestimable value: namely, His own people Israel. In order to redeem Israel to Himself He died upon the cross, but they were not yet ready to receive Him as their King, and so the treasure was hidden in the field, and would remain hidden till He returned.

From of old, Israel was recognized as God's special treasure (Ex. 19:5). The Lord Himself is represented by the man who found and hid this treasure. At Calvary He sold all that He had and bought the field, which is the world (ver.38). At present the treasure remains hidden. When Israel turns to the Lord they will be manifested as Jehovah's peculiar treasure (Mal. 3:17, *R.V.*), and through them blessing will come to all the Gentile nations.

"The kingdom of heaven," is likened next "unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls." Again the seeker is Christ, who came from the throne of glory to this poor world, seeking for jewels to adorn His crown forever.

"One pearl of great price." This is the Church, which is of supreme value in His eyes, for which He gave Himself. At the cross He "sold all that He had, and bought it." There He literally impoverished Himself to purchase the Church as His own choice pearl (Eph. 5: 25; 2 Cor. 8: 9). Many think of salvation as the pearl and the sinner as the merchantman, but that is to invert completely the message of the gospel.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net." It is, literally, a dragnet. This illustrates the present work of the professing church when vast numbers of both saved and lost are gathered in from the waters of the nations (Rev. 17:15), and are numbered among the professors of faith in Christ.

"Gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away." When the dragnet is full it is drawn to shore, and the good and bad fishes are separated from each other.

"So shall it be at the end of the age" (*margin*). It is not the end of the world that is in view, but the consummation of the present age of grace, immediately preceding the ushering in of the age of the kingdom in full manifestation.

"Wailing and gnashing of teeth." The last expression shows that judgment does not necessarily produce repentance. When the final separation takes place the false professors will be cast away in judgment, which results in wailing because of their suffering, but gnashing of teeth because of their

hatred against God and His Christ (Ps. 35:16; Lam. 2:16).

Having set forth this remarkable panorama covering the entire present age, and reaching on even into the tribulation period, thus viewing its consummation at the second coming of the Lord, Jesus questioned His disciples as to how much they had really apprehended.

"Then said He unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto Him, Yea, Lord. Then said He unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old. And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, He departed thence"—vers. 51-53.

Though they declared they had understood these things it is evident they but feebly entered into them. But a groundwork had been laid in their hearts and minds upon which they could build in after days. So the Lord likened them unto scribes instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, who in days to come would be able to bring forth out of their treasure things new and old. With this Jesus closed that particular period of ministry and returned to Nazareth.

"And when He was come into His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this Man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? and His brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? and His sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this Man all these things? And they were offended in Him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house. And He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief"—vers 54-58.

"Whence . . . this wisdom, and these mighty works?" Even in His own country—that is, as Luke tells us, in the city of Nazareth (Luke 4:16-24), there were few who responded to the message of the kingdom. They heard His teaching and saw His miracles with amazement, but failed to recognize Him as the Messiah.

"Is not this the carpenter's son?" The answer is, No. He was the Eternal Son of God, born of a virgin, but brought up under the fostering care of Joseph, from whom He learned the trade of the carpenter.

"Whence then hath this Man all these things?" They were frankly puzzled. Jesus was so different from others of His townspeople. His wisdom and power were inexplicable from a merely human standpoint. Without scholastic training, He was more profound than the scribes.

"They were offended in Him." That is, they were stumbled by His lowliness and took offence when He intimated that their very familiarity with Him in past days, when they knew Him as a simple artisan, blinded their eyes to the fact that He was God's mouthpiece.

"Because of their unbelief." Even God Himself is straitened by man's unbelief. He who does for faith "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20), may be hindered in His working by stony-hearted opposition and unbelief.

The one great truth that this chapter in the life of our Lord demonstrates clearly is that unbelief on the one hand, or faith on the other, are not dependent on intellectual difficulties or logical arguments. The secret of both is the state of the conscience. Where one is determined to go contrary to what he knows to be right, he will continue in unbelief and refuse to submit to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. When one repents of his sins and honestly seeks deliverance from them, he will have no difficulty in believing the record God has given of His Son (1 John 5:11). It may be safely said, without fear of successful contradiction, that if one professes to have intellectual difficulties about believing the Bible, it is because he is living in some sin which the Bible condemns, from which he does not wish to be delivered, but in which he is determined to continue. Unjudged sin is responsible for lack of faith in the testimony of God.

It will be well to reiterate some thoughts already expressed as we conclude the study of this chapter. First let us notice the distinction between the kingdoms of God and of heaven. We are told that God's kingdom rules over all (Ps. 103:19; 22:28) and is from age to age (Dan. 4:3). This is called in the New Testament "the kingdom of God." The expression is never found in the older revelation. It takes on different forms at different times. During the present age it is designated in Matthew, and there only, "the kingdom of heaven." The

King is seen as rejected by men and having returned to heaven, from which place He directs His saints on earth, who go forth disseminating the Word of the kingdom, and thus causing a vast throng of mankind to own Him, at least outwardly, as earth's rightful King. When He returns He will gather out of His kingdom all who are unreal. Those who are genuine will have their part either in the heavenly or the earthly sphere of the kingdom of the Son of Man, which will be the aspect taken by the kingdom of God in the millennial age.

Men often speak of "building the kingdom." This is an expression in common use, but never found in Scripture. We are commissioned to preach the gospel to every creature, and when men believe the message they become members of the Church, the Body of Christ. As such they are in the kingdom of heaven also, but our primary object is to lead them to recognize Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

No one can enter the kingdom of God in reality except by new birth. But many profess allegiance to the absent King who have never yielded their hearts to Him. These are in the sphere of the kingdom, but are not actually of it. Let us be sure our faith and profession are real.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE KING'S AUTHORITY OVER ALL NATURE

THE first part of the present section is devoted to the pathetic account of the martyrdom of John the Baptist, but the balance of the chapter tells us of two miracles, both of which demonstrate the power of the Lord Jesus over nature: His multiplication of the loaves, and His walking on the water and controlling the elements.

Herod, who was somewhat interested at first in John the Baptist and his proclamation of the nearness of the kingdom of heaven, became indignant when his own vices were denounced by the fearless desert preacher, and so sought to silence him by shutting him up in prison, and eventually by an act of judicial murder. When he heard of the fame of Jesus, his uneasy conscience suggested that He must be John risen from the dead; but there was no sign of self-judgment or confession of his horrid iniquity. Jesus continued His wondrous ministry and everywhere His Messiahship was attested by marvelous signs, which must have convinced any honest seeker after the truth that He was all He professed to be. But the religious leaders stood coldly aloof or came out in positive opposition because of their unwillingness to humble themselves

before God. It was the "poor of the flock" (Zech. 11:11) who heard Jesus with gladness and were blessed by His gracious ministrations. These glorified the God of Israel for sending His Anointed One into their midst.

"At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him. For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod. Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger. And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her. And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother. And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus. When Jesus heard of it, He departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed Him on foot out of the cities. And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and He healed their sick"—vers. 1-14.

"Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus." This Herod was as corrupt as any of his ancestors—a monster of iniquity living in unblushing adultery with one who was lawfully the wife of his own brother. To the ears of this vile and licentious ruler came tidings of the wonder-working power of Jesus, filling him with terror.

"This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead." Superstitious, as most immoral creatures

are, Herod was sure that the stern prophet of the wilderness, whom he had delivered over to an undeserved death, must have come back from the grave.

"Put him in prison for Herodias' sake." A wicked woman was the direct cause of the death of John. Her hatred of the man who dared to condemn openly the grossness of her sins could be satisfied only with the execution of her accuser.

"It is not lawful for thee to have her." It took courage indeed for John thus to point out Herod's wickedness. Like another, Nathan (2 Sam. 12: 7), he drove home the king's guilt, but in so doing he forfeited his life, for Herod, unlike David, refused to repent of his iniquity.

"The multitude . . . counted him as a prophet." Herod would have no hesitation about immediately destroying John because of his faithfulness, but he was afraid that he might incur the enmity of the people generally, who looked upon John as the successor to the prophets of old. Instead of immediately executing John, therefore, Herod shut him up in prison.

When Herod's birthday was celebrated the shameless daughter of the infamous Herodias came in before the king and his attendants, and pleased them by what was evidently a lascivious dance. The old tyrant was so delighted with this that, in his enthusiasm, he promised with an oath to give the dancer whatever she might ask. After conferring with her

wicked mother she came boldly into the presence of the king with the request that he give her John Baptist's head in a charger. Corrupt as he was, Herod was sorry, for he realized that John had done nothing worthy of death, and doubtless his initial anger had cooled to some extent by this time; but having declared on oath that he would grant the girl's request, and this before all his courtiers, he had not the hardihood to acknowledge his folly. He commanded, therefore, that John should be beheaded. The gruesome evidence that the execution had been carried out was brought in on a great platter and given to the damsel, we are told, who presented it to her mother. One can imagine how Herodias gloated as she looked upon the severed head of the man whom she considered her enemy, because he had been bold enough to tell her the truth and to charge her with the infamy for which she would yet have to give an account unto God.

The incestuous relations of these two godless rulers had become a public scandal. It needed a man with the boldness of John the Baptist to say, "It is not lawful for thee to have her." He was martyred because of his faithfulness, but his reward is sure. Herod went from bad to worse until he died in his sins, a wretched victim of his own vices. Herodias, vain, wilful and unclean, died as she had lived, unrepentant and wicked to the last. They stand out as warnings to all who would tamper with impurity. After John's death, Jesus did not travel

about in Herod's tetrarchy, but remained in that of Philip.

To the broken hearted disciples of John this was indeed a terrible tragedy. They took up the body of their master and reverently buried it. And then we read that they "went and told Jesus." There is something very precious about these last words. They went to Jesus in their trouble and distress, assured of His deep understanding and loving sympathy.

Upon hearing of the death of His predecessor the Lord took ship and went to a desert place apart, we are told; and a great multitude, out of the various cities near the northern end of the lake, followed Him. The Lord Jesus, beholding them, was moved with compassion toward them and manifested His kingly power by healing those who were sick.

"And when it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat. And they say unto Him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. He said, Bring them hither to Me. And He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, He blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children"—vers. 15--21.

This is the only miracle performed by the Lord before His crucifixion which is given in all four Gospels. It is very evident that there is some

special lesson in it which God would have us learn. The hungry multitude, the perplexed disciples, and the grace of Christ are vividly portrayed. In Psalm 132:15 we hear Messiah speaking by the Spirit, saying, "I will satisfy her poor with bread." So God's Anointed One took the five loaves and two fishes and so multiplied them that abundant provision was made for five thousand men, besides women and children.

We can understand the concern of the disciples who came to Jesus as the evening drew on, beseeching Him to send the multitude away before the darkness fell, in order that they might go into the villages and buy themselves food.

This was not what the Lord had in mind, however. He said, "They need not depart; give ye them to eat." To the twelve this was a most amazing commission. With what were they to feed so many? After looking about they explained that they had found but five loaves and two fishes. These, we are told elsewhere, were provided by a lad who had brought them with him, doubtless as his lunch. Jesus said, "Bring them hither to Me." When the small provision was placed in His hands He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and looking up to heaven He blessed the food and brake it, and then distributed it to His disciples, and they passed it on to the multitude. All were fed and satisfied. After the repast twelve baskets of fragments remained. We might say there was one

basket for each of the apostles after all the rest had received what they desired. It was but a picture, however, of what the Lord Jesus is doing constantly, for it is He who multiplies the seeds sown in all the corn-fields on earth, so that as a result of the small amount placed in the ground abundance is provided to satisfy the throngs who are dependent upon bread for their food.

The next miracle demonstrates the Lord's power over the elements in a somewhat different way to that which we have seen recorded in a previous chapter in which He stilled the storm.

"And straightway Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a ship, and to go before Him unto the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth Thou art the Son of God."

—vers. 22-33.

This is a beautiful dispensational picture. In verse 22 we read how Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a ship and to go before Him back to the other side of the lake, while He dismissed the mul-

titudes. The disciples in the ship without the personal presence of Jesus set forth, dispensationally, the circumstances in which the Church of God was to be found after the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus. He who had been with His disciples during the days of His flesh would no longer be manifestly present among them, but they would be left to make their way alone, as it were, across the troubled sea of earthly circumstances, looking forward to the time when they would again behold their Saviour.

He Himself went up into a mountain apart to pray. This suggests His present ministry on behalf of His own people—He has gone up on high where He ever liveth to make intercession for us.

While He prayed on the mountain top those in the ship were in real trouble, for their little vessel was passing through a severe storm and was tossed with the waves, and as far as its occupants could see it was likely to be lost. The people of God have been frequently placed in such circumstances during the time that the Lord has been ministering on high in the presence of the Father, and God's dear people have often thought themselves forsaken and forgotten, but His eye has ever been upon them.

In the fourth watch of the night when the darkness was still great and the wind contrary, He looked down from the heights and saw them in their distress; and, to their amazement, He came walking upon the sea to give them the assistance they needed.

As they beheld Him they were distressed rather than comforted, and they cried out in fear, "It is a spirit;" that is, a ghost. But in response to their startled cry came the voice they knew so well, the voice of Jesus Himself, saying, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."

Ever impetuous but devoted to his Lord, Peter cried out, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water." In response Jesus said, "Come." Without a moment's hesitation Peter went down over the side of the ship, and doubtless to his own amazement—if he thought of anything at the moment save Christ who was before him—he found himself actually walking upon the water as though upon firm ground. All was well as long as he kept his eyes fixed on Jesus, but when he turned to behold the boisterous waves, fear filled his heart, and he began to sink at once. As the waters were rising above him he cried out, "Lord, save me." "And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" What Peter should have remembered was that he could no more walk on smooth water than on rough waves, except as sustained by the power of the Lord Himself, and that power is just as great in the storm as in the calm. Jesus and Peter entered the little boat, and immediately the wind ceased. They had witnessed such a display of omnipotent power that all the dis-

ciples fell down before the Lord and worshipped Him, saying, "Of a truth Thou art the Son of God."

Returning to the land of Gennesaret, which was east of Capernaum and north of the lake, word that Jesus was again in that country quickly spread abroad, and a great multitude came to Him, bringing with them many that were diseased that He might heal them.

"And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place had knowledge of Him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto Him all that were diseased; and besought Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole"—vers. 34-36.

It is very evident that the testimony and the works of Jesus had impressed the people of Gennesaret, with His grace and ability to deliver them from their distressing ailments; and they came from all the country round about, in order to lay their sick ones at His feet. Like the poor woman of whom we have read, they felt that if these troubled ones could only touch the hem of His garment they would be healed, and we are told that it was indeed true for as many as touched His garment were made perfectly whole. The blue border speaks of Him as the Holy One of God, the heavenly One, who had come down to earth for man's redemption. To contact Him meant life and health.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE KING DENOUNCES HYPOCRISY

WE read next of the King's rebuke of many who were opposed to His claims as Lord and the kingdom He announced. There was a remnant whose hearts were opened to the truth and who gladly received our Lord as the promised Messiah. But it was difficult for many to see in this quiet, lowly Man of Nazareth that which answered to their expectations of a great world-ruler who would deliver the Jewish nation from the Roman yoke and make them again a great people, such as they were in the days of David and Solomon. Their conceptions of the kingdom were utterly carnal, because they were merely natural men who knew nothing of spiritual realities. Consequently, they failed to realize that ere the prophecies of a restored Israel would be fulfilled there must be repentance on the part of the nation and a definite return to God individually and collectively.

"Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do Thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But He answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He

that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. And He called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man"—vers. 1-11.

The question raised by His critics had to do with a certain ceremonia: baptizing of the hands, which all orthodox Jews were supposed to go through before partaking of food. This was something far more than simply cleansing the hands in order that they might be free of impurity as one was about to sit down to a meal; it involved quite a lengthy ceremony, and so the Pharisees put the question, "Why do Thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?" That is, they ignored their regulations. As was so often His custom, the Lord answered by putting a direct question to them, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" He then cites that commandment of the law which begins, "Honour thy father and mother;" and also the judgment of the law concerning those who cursed father or mother, as found in Exodus 21:17. While professing to honour the Word of God they really made it of none effect whatever by one of their own traditions, whereby they made it possible for a man to ignore the needs of his parents and refuse to

be responsible in any way for their support, if he dedicated his goods to Jehovah by saying to his parents, "It is Corban"—that is, "a gift." Then the parents were supposed to have no claims upon the goods, thus they were dishonored rather than otherwise; and so the commandment of God was made of no effect. It was spoken by the prophet Isaiah (29:13), "This people draw near Me with their mouth (they made a great profession of faith in Jehovah), and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their heart far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the precept of men." They did not yield heart-allegiance to Him. That worship which they professed to give to Him was empty and formal, for instead of obeying the Word of God they substituted the commandments of men.

Turning from the Pharisees to the multitudes who were gathered about, and had heard His words to those who were seeking to find fault in Him, Jesus addressed the larger throng, bidding them give special attention to the fact that one is not defiled by what he eats. It is not food going into the mouth that makes one unclean, but that which comes out of the mouth, "for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (chap. 12: 34). Unclean and unholy words defile the speaker, not mere neglect of regulations concerning one's preparation to partake of food. It is evident that the Pharisees were very indignant at the way in which the Lord had dealt with them, but instead of toning down the truth in

any way the Lord Jesus only affirmed more definitely that which He desired to impress upon them.

"Then came His disciples, and said unto Him, Knowest Thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But He answered and said, Every plant, which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. Then answered Peter and said unto Him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man"—vers. 12-20.

It was undoubtedly a disappointment to the disciples to have the Pharisees, the religious leaders, scandalized by the teaching of their Master. They probably hoped that these men had come as honest inquirers, who might be led to receive and enter into the kingdom. They were people of importance in the community, and it must have seemed a pity to some of the apostolic band that such should be stumbled and turned away; but the Lord answered, "Every plant, which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." In other words, only those who were subject in heart to God and His Word would abide as disciples of the Lord; the rest, no matter how encouraging their attitude might be at first would eventually turn away. As to these one could only let them alone; they were determined upon their evil course and could be considered only as blind leaders of the blind. Those who followed

them, accepting their teaching, would be destroyed with the teachers themselves in the day when God dealt with them.

Peter raised a question regarding what the Lord had already said about defilement. With his natural Jewish prejudices he had doubtless thought more of physical defilement than of that which was spiritual, and so he besought the Lord, saying, "Declare unto us this parable." He considered the words of Christ to be parabolic rather than literal. Jesus explained very definitely the meaning more fully, while gently reproving Peter for his lack of understanding. He pointed out that no man's soul is defiled by that which he eats. Food passes through the process of digestion in the body, but does not affect the spirit or the soul of the man. On the other hand, those things that come from the heart which are expressed often in speech do indeed defile the man, for they have to do with his whole course of thinking and, therefore, make his very mind and spirit unclean. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts." It is these unholy things which defile a man; merely eating with un-washen or unbaptized hands could not defile anyone. The Lord thus traces everything back to its source. We read in the Book of Proverbs (4:23), "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7).

Following this conversation, first with the Pharisees and then with Peter, Jesus left that particular

scene, and went up into the northern part of the land to the very border of Gentile territory. Here a notable miracle was wrought on the daughter of a Gentile woman.

"Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me. But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour"

—vers. 21-28.

Tyre and Sidon were cities upon which God's judgment had already been poured out because of their wickedness and uncleanness, but they had been rebuilt, in measure, and re-inhabited—not exactly the original cities but on contiguous territory. From this region came a Canaanitish woman who had heard of the fame of Jesus, and felt sure He would relieve her daughter's terrible condition. She came crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon." Doubtless to her surprise, and perhaps to that of others, Jesus made no reply whatever. It was not rudeness on His part, for He was the Holy One of God, but it was in order to teach her a much-needed lesson. As Son of David He had come to minister to Israel and to reign eventually as King

on the throne of David. As such, for the present, a Gentile woman had no claim upon Him; and so He answered her not a word. She continued to plead until the disciples became annoyed and begged Him to send her away. He simply replied, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." This must have seemed for the moment a rebuke to the poor, anxious mother; but instead of turning away in despair she bowed down before Him as a worshiper, pleading, "Lord, help me." He replied, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to the dogs." It was a hard saying, but it was meant to manifest the true attitude of her soul. She responded in humility and faith, exclaiming, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." "The dogs." Here she used a diminutive—the little dogs, the puppies. That was all she asked, some few crumbs of blessing which could be well spared since He had dealt so bountifully with Israel.

The heart of Jesus rejoiced to see such an evidence of confidence linked with lowliness of spirit. He granted her request immediately, saying, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." And we are told that her daughter was healed instantly. From that very hour the demon was driven out.

"And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto Him, having with them those

that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and He healed them: insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel"—vers. 29-31.

"Jesus . . . went up into a mountain, and sat down there." Having completed a circuit from Capernaum through the northern part of Galilee and Iturea (which was the tetrarchy of Philip, the husband of Herodias), Jesus returned to the region of the Sea of Galilee, and ascended a mountain with His disciples.

"Great multitudes came unto Him." As soon as they knew He was once more in their vicinity, crowds of people thronged the roads and ascended the mount on which He sat, bringing with them their sick and maimed friends. He met them all in grace, and healed every one, thus demonstrating again His Messianic authority (Isa. 35: 4-6).

"They glorified the God of Israel." As these country folk saw their friends and relatives delivered from dumbness, lameness, blindness, and various diseases, they were convinced in their own hearts that God had visited His people, and they glorified Him as they recognized in these mighty works the credentials of Him who was to be the Deliverer of Israel. It was the people who felt their need and longed for deliverance from sin and its effects who received with joy the gospel of the kingdom as proclaimed by Jesus.

In the closing part of the chapter we read of another occasion on which the Lord Jesus fed a great multitude with what at first seemed a very small supply. This time it was four thousand men; whereas before there were five thousand, besides women and children.

"Then Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with Me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way. And His disciples say unto Him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. And He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full. And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children. And He sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala"—vers. 32-39.

Once more we see the heart of the blessed Lord going out in compassion to a hungry multitude. On this occasion they had been waiting upon His ministry for three days, in which time they had evidently used up all their own provision. He was disinclined to "send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way." It seems strange, after the former experience, that the disciples should have ever raised the question, "Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?" The Lord had already proved His power to multiply loaves and fishes, and one might think that they would have counted on His manifesting the same

ability at this time, but strangely enough, they seemed to have forgotten what He had done in the past.

In answer to His question, "How many loaves have ye?" they replied, "Seven, and a few little fishes." As before, He commanded the multitude to sit down upon the ground. Then taking into His hands the small amount of food which the disciples had, He gave thanks and brake both the loaves and the fishes, and distributed to the disciples, in order that they might give to the multitude. We read that "They did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full." Two different words for baskets are used in the accounts of the feeding of the two groups: in the first instance, where the Lord fed the five thousand, the word translated "baskets" means a wicker traveling-basket, such as people carried with them for small articles when on a journey. The word used here means a hamper, a large market-basket, such as was commonly used by those who went out to buy provision for the household. This time there were seven of these large baskets filled with the broken bread and fish to provide food for the entire apostolic company for perhaps another whole day.

Just how many people partook of the Lord's bounty that day we have no means of knowing. The records tell us there were four thousand men, besides women and children. There might not have been

a great many of the latter classes; yet undoubtedly there would have been a number of women who had come with their husbands, and children who had accompanied their parents.

Sending the multitude away the Lord took ship to the coasts of Magdala, the region in which Mary Magdalene had lived, and from which she took her name.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM

WE now come to another great turning point in Matthew's Gospel. Hitherto the Lord has been dealing entirely with matters relating to the kingdom of heaven. Now for the first time He speaks of the Church, though not entirely as dissociated from the kingdom, but rather as connected with it in the new phase it is to assume after His rejection and His ascension to heaven. In Peter's great confession we have the sure foundation upon which the Church was to be built. The earthly kingdom, or, rather, the heavenly kingdom to be built on the earth, is to be founded upon the truth that Christ is the Son of David (2 Sam. 7:12, 13). The nations of the world are to share in the blessings of that kingdom because Christ is the Son of Abraham, the Seed in whom all peoples shall be blessed (Gen. 22:18). But the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ is built upon the precious truth that He is the Son of the living God.

To say that Peter is in any sense the rock upon which this divine edifice, built of living stones, rests, is to deny what he himself teaches in the second chapter of his first Epistle (vers. 4-7). Paul, too, adds his testimony that there can be no other foun-

dation save Jesus Christ Himself (1 Cor. 3:11). This is that foundation of the apostles and prophets to which he refers in Ephesians 2: 20.

Before we come to consider the revelation given in regard to these things there are two sections of the chapter which demand our attention: first, our Lord's rebuke of the Pharisees and Sadducees who came asking for a sign from heaven.

"The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired Him that He would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And He left them, and departed"—vers. 1-4.

These Pharisees and Sadducees were violently opposed to one another in regard to almost every doctrine of the Scriptures, but they were united in their deliberate rejection of the Lord Jesus, God's promised King. Being familiar with the prophets they knew that certain signs had been indicated therein which were to take place before the manifestation of the Messiah; so they came to Jesus, without any desire to know the truth, but simply as tempting or testing Him, asking that He show them a sign from heaven. They meant a sign indicating that the Messianic age was close at hand. Jesus rebuked them for their unbelief. They were quite able to read the signs of the heavens in regard to matters

of weather or climatic conditions, but they were absolutely unable to discern the signs of the times. Had their eyes been opened they would have realized that all the miraculous works of Jesus were in themselves the signs of the age to come and told of the presence of the King. Messiah was in their midst. No other sign would be given to them until the sign of the prophet Jonas. He does not explain here what was meant by that sign, but He tells us in 12: 40, "As Jonas was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." So that the sign of the prophet Jonas would be the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Alas, when that day came, even that miraculous sign failed to convince these legalistic, hypocritical gainsayers; they were shut up to unbelief and hardness of heart.

"And when His disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread. Which when Jesus perceived, He said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that He bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees"—vers. 5-12.

After the Lord's colloquy with these religious leaders the disciples came to Jesus, indicating that

they had forgotten to take bread. In His answer to them He brought in a warning which is not only important in itself, but also helps to serve as a key as to the meaning of leaven in Scripture, as we have seen in our study of chapter 13.

When the disciples acknowledged that they had forgotten to bring bread with them, Jesus said to them, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." His followers did not understand what He meant by this, and thought He was warning them against accepting bread from these false teachers. They said among themselves, "It is because we have taken no bread." When Jesus perceived how they were reasoning He rebuked them, saying, "O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?" Then He reminded them how readily He had provided bread for the five thousand and also for the four thousand, and how much had been left over in each instance. In view of this, they should have realized that He was not speaking of material bread which He could supply so abundantly, but He was warning them to beware of the leaven, which is explained in verse 12, as "the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." The leaven of the Pharisees is explained in Luke 12:1 as hypocrisy. With this was coupled self-righteousness. The leaven of the Sadducees was false doctrine: they denied the authority of all the Old Testament except the books of Moses, and they did not believe in spiritual realities. Such

evil teachings work like leaven, spreading throughout any company beginning to tolerate them; hence the warning of the Lord to beware of them.

Now we come to Peter's great confession of Christ as the Son of the living God.

"When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am? And they said, Some say that Thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then charged He His disciples that they should tell no man that He was Jesus the Christ"—vers. 13-20.

"Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?" Speculation was rife as to the actual identity of Jesus, and whether He was only what He seemed to be or possibly a reincarnation of another. The Lord wished to put His disciples on record as to their apprehension of the mystery of His Person (1 Tim. 3:16). The question was not asked for His own enlightenment, but because He desired to elicit a clear, definite confession from His followers, as He was soon to go with them to Jerusalem, where He was to be crucified. It was all-important that they should know Him in the reality of His Divine-Human Personality.

"Some say that Thou art . . ." They at once began to tell how various ones supposed Him to be John the Baptist, risen from the dead, as Herod had thought, or Elijah, who was to herald "the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Mal. 4: 5, 6); or Jeremiah, who many supposed was to reappear and was to fulfil the great prophecy of Isaiah 53, basing this on Jeremiah 11:19 as explaining Isaiah 53:7; or "one of the prophets," possibly "that prophet" whose coming Moses had predicted in Deuteronomy 18:18.

"But whom say ye that I am?" Had they learned, through observation and the Spirit's illumination, who He really was? This definite question called for a clear, positive confession, and it was this He desired to obtain from them.

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Peter spoke for them all, though no one of the rest seems to have had the boldness to declare his faith openly. Christ and Messiah are synonymous. Both mean "the Anointed." It was the title given prophetically to the coming Deliverer (Isa. 61:1). Of old, prophets, priests, and kings were all anointed. Jesus holds the three offices, for all of which He was anointed by the Spirit of God (Acts 10:38). In His human nature He is the Son of David, the Messiah, the Christ. As to His divine nature He is the Son of the living God.

It is all-important that men have a right understanding of the nature and Person of our Lord Jesus

Christ. Only as He is recognized by faith as the Son of the living God, co-equal with the Eternal Father, do we dare trust our souls to Him as our Saviour. There is an unbridgeable gulf between the highest of all created beings and the Creator Himself. The Church of Christ is not founded on any mere man, no matter how holy, enlightened, or devoted he may be. It rests securely upon the revelation of the truth so clearly declared by Simon Peter. And just as the Church is built upon this blessed reality, so does the salvation of each individual soul depend upon the fact that God became Man in order to give Himself a ransom for our sins.

"Flesh and blood hath not revealed it." Not by mere intuition, or by logical reasoning had Simon Peter come to this conclusion. It was God the Father who had enlightened his understanding and revealed to him the truth as to the Person of the Lord and His divine Sonship (Matt. 11: 27).

"Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church." "This rock" is Christ (1 Cor. 10: 4). He it is on whom the Church is built. Peter means a stone, or a piece of a rock. He was to be built into the Church. The Church was not to be built on him. Against the true Church, built upon Christ as the Son of the living God, "the gates of hell (hades) shall not prevail." No effort of Satan and his hosts can avail to destroy the Church or to stay the progress of its testimony. The only real hindrance comes from within the Church itself as other scrip-

tures show. Note, He does not say, "I have been building," or "I am building;" but, "I *will* build." The assembly, that which He calls "My Church," was still in the future. The building of this spiritual temple did not begin until after He had ascended to heaven, and the Spirit of God came as the promised Comforter. In this house Peter was to be a living stone. The name given him by Jesus means a stone, a piece of rock. But on "this rock," that is, this great truth just enunciated, His Church was to be built. Christ, not Peter, is the Foundation-Rock on which the Church is built.

"The keys of the kingdom of heaven." Having spoken of the Church, Jesus reverts to the kingdom, whose course He had previously outlined in the parables of chapter 13. The keys of this kingdom were entrusted to Peter. Note, He did not give Peter the keys to heaven. Such a notion is the grossest superstition. A key is designed to open a door. On Pentecost Peter opened the door of the kingdom to the Jews; in Cornelius' house he opened the door to the Gentiles.

"Tell no man." This may seem strange. But as it was now evident that Israel had rejected Him, it was not the time to proclaim His Messiahship and declare that He was the Christ. When He was raised from the dead Peter declared this truth with power (Acts 2:36).

From this time on the Lord began to speak more and more concerning His ultimate rejection by the

Jews, His sufferings and death, and His subsequent resurrection. But His disciples were very slow to comprehend what He meant; their minds were still set upon the coming kingdom, and they could not imagine the King being put to death.

"From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee. But He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works"—vers. 21-27.

"From that time forth." A new period of our Lord's ministry had begun. Henceforth He stressed His rejection and approaching death, to be followed by His resurrection.

"Be it far from Thee, Lord." Now we have a solemn example of how easily one who has been divinely illuminated may fall into serious error if acting on merely human principles.

"Get thee behind Me, Satan." What a poor rock Peter would have been on which to build the Church! He became unwittingly the mouthpiece of Satan when he advised Jesus against going to the cross. It is strange that anyone could teach in one breath

that Peter was the first Pope, and in the next that the Pope is infallible; for, while he was a most devoted and earnest man, Peter blundered perhaps as badly as any of his brother-apostles, not only during the days of our Lord's humiliation, but also after His resurrection and ascension to heaven. Paul tells us how he had to withstand him to the face because he was to be blamed for dissimulation and the fear of man, thereby compromising the liberty of grace (Gal. 2:11-16).

"Let him deny himself." The path of discipleship is one of constant self-abnegation. The Lord was preparing His followers for the responsibilities that would be theirs when His prophetic words concerning Himself were fulfilled. They would be called upon to ignore fleshly claims and to take up the cross, which meant accepting the place of rejection with Him, and thus they were to follow in His steps.

He who would think to better his condition by avoiding persecution for Christ's sake, and so to save his life would really lose it, but he who was ready even to lay down his life for Christ's sake would keep it unto life eternal. Death in this world would be only the introduction to everlasting glory. It would be worth nothing if one were able to gain even the whole world and yet in so doing lose his soul. The soul is really the life, the self. To lose the soul, therefore, is to miss the purpose for which one has been created. Man was made, as the Shorter Catechism declares, to glorify God and enjoy

Him forever. He who makes it his object to accumulate wealth, or the favor of a Christless world will lose out and find himself at last bereft of everything that is of any worth whatever. Note the question, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" It does not say, as one might imagine it would, "What shall a man *take* in exchange for his soul?" but, "What shall a man *give* in exchange for his soul?" Man's soul is forfeited. What can a man give in order to redeem it? He has nothing to give. If he continues in his sin his soul will be lost forever, but if he turns to Christ he will find redemption in Him. When He comes the second time as the Son of Man in the glory of His Father with His angels then He will reward each one according to his works.

The closing verse should really be the first verse of chapter 17. Whoever edited the book and divided it into chapters and verses made the break in the wrong place. When Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom," He was referring to the great event which followed "after six days," the Transfiguration, which we know from the words of the Apostle Peter presented the kingdom in embryo for the confirming of the Father to the disciples.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE GLORY OF THE KINGDOM

IT seems a great pity, as intimated in our closing remarks in the previous chapter, that its final verse was not made the opening one of this seventeenth chapter. In the corresponding accounts in both Mark and Luke our Lord's announcement is linked directly with the transfiguration scene. It is, in fact, the key to a right understanding of this glorious vision which was intended to be a representation of "the kingdom of God come with power." This is confirmed for us by the Apostle Peter, who, in his Second Epistle, says, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty . . . when we were with Him in the holy mount" (2 Pet. 1:16, 18). There the Saviour appeared in that glory in which He will be manifested when He returns to take His great power and reign (Rev. 11:17). The two heavenly saints who appeared with Him in glory depict two groups of believers, who will share the kingdom with Him. Moses represents those who, having died, will be raised in glorified bodies, and Elijah depicts all believers, who at the Rapture, will be

caught up to heaven without passing through death (1 Thes. 4:13-18). The three favored apostles who beheld His glory and heard the Father's voice, speak of Israel restored to the Lord in the latter day and so entering into the blessing of the kingdoms. The scene at the foot of the mountain illustrates the effect of the second advent, binding Satan and giving to the troubled nations deliverance from his power.

Besides this dispensational picture, we have also a very blessed moral and spiritual application. Occupation with the glorified Christ is the preliminary to service for Him in a world where Satan's antagonism is manifested to all that God is doing. This is overcome only by dependence upon Him as indicated by prayer and fasting. No man is competent to meet Satan in his own strength. Prayer is the expression of dependence upon God, which alone gives victory. Fasting is the evidence of such concern for spiritual blessing that desire for that which satisfies carnal appetite is held in abeyance.

"And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. And behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only"

—vers. 1-8.

"After six days." The Lord Jesus Christ had intimated a week before that some would not taste death till they beheld the kingdom of God come with power. Now He took Peter and James and John up into a high mountain (Mt. Hermon) where He was to give them a vision of the kingdom as it shall yet be displayed.

"Transfigured before them." It was a metamorphosis, a change from within; the glory of Christ's eternal Sonship shone out through the veil of His flesh so that the disciples might have ocular proof of His true character as Immanuel—God and Man in one Person.

"There appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him." These two men of a past dispensation represented, as mentioned above, two groups of believers: one, those who die before the coming in of the kingdom; the other, those who will be changed and caught up, without passing through death, at the Lord's return for His own, preparatory to the bringing in of the millennial glory (John 11: 25, 26). They also speak of the Law and the Prophets, both of which bear witness to Christ's atoning death, whereby God is able to provide a righteousness for men who have none of their own (Rom. 3: 21, 24, 25). We learn the subject of their discourse in Luke 9: 30, 31. They were occupied with our Lord's redemptive work, soon to be accomplished.

"Let us make here three tabernacles." Peter's suggestion came without real consideration. He was so overwhelmed with the glory of the vision that he would fain remain on the mount in such wonderful company. But he erred in putting Moses and Elias, eminent servants of God though they were, on a par with Jesus, the Son of God become flesh.

"This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." A cloud shut out the Old Testament worthies, and Jesus was left alone. The Father's voice spoke from heaven the second time, attesting the perfection of His Son and His delight in Him, whose voice they were bidden to heed.

"The disciples . . . fell on their face, and were sore afraid." Awed by what they had seen and heard, the three fell prostrate as worshipers, in the presence of God as seen in the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Jesus . . . said, Arise, and be not afraid." Reaching forth His loving hand, our Lord touched each disciple reassuringly, and bade them stand up, fearing nothing. He would have His own feel at ease in His presence, for, though He is Lord of all, He is our Kinsman-Redeemer, who assumed our humanity, apart from sin, in order to bring us to God.

"They saw no man, save Jesus only." There could be no thought of three tabernacles now, for Moses, the law-giver, and Elijah, the restorer, had vanished away, and the Lord Jesus alone remained, He who is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13: 8).

Jesus is not a mere Man who, by dint of spiritual enlightenment and surrender to the Father's will, became more divine than any other man. He is God the Son, one Person of the Eternal Trinity, manifested in the flesh and thus the one Mediator between God and man. Peter's confession and the Father's voice after the Transfiguration tell the same blessed story. Jesus had to be who He was in order to do what He did. None less than the Son of God could make propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:10).

The vision passed, but Jesus remained. When the morning came He led His disciples down from that mount of special privilege to face the appalling effects of sin in the valley below, for the time had not yet come for the kingdom to be displayed in universal power and glory.

"And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of Man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that He spake unto them of John the Baptist"—vers. 9-13.

"Tell the vision to no man." Foreseeing His rejection Jesus commanded the chosen three to say nothing to anyone of what they had seen on that never-to-be-forgotten time, until after He should rise from the dead. The cross must come before the kingdom.

The perplexed disciples asked their Master, "Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?" For this these teachers of the law had good authority, for in Malachi 4: 5, 6 it was plainly declared, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." The kingdom follows the great and dreadful day of the Lord. It is in fact a continuation of that day, after its preliminary judgments shall have ended. What then of Elijah? Was he to be looked for first?

Jesus replied, "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things." But He explained that he had come already and his testimony had been rejected and he, himself, put out of the way: They "have done unto him whatsoever they listed." And even as they had treated the forerunner, so would they treat the Son of Man.

"Then," we are told, "the disciples understood that He spake unto them of John the Baptist." He had come in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17) to prepare Messiah's way.

It seems clear from the prophetic scriptures that a similar Elijah-testimony will be given in the dark days of the great tribulation before the manifestation of the Lord in judgment. The vision of the

two witnesses in Revelation 11 would appear to confirm this.

As they talked together they came upon a great multitude of troubled people, as depicted in the next few verses.

"And when they were come to the multitude, there came to Him a certain man, kneeling down to Him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to Thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? Bring him hither to Me. And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting"

—vers. 14-21.

Having descended to the plain after the night of vision, they found a distracted father, who had brought his demon-possessed son to the other nine disciples, pleading with them to help. But they were out of touch and, although commissioned to cast out demons (10:8), found themselves powerless in this particular case. Disappointed in the servants, the distressed father recognized the Master as He came toward them, and began at once to implore Him to free his son from the demon. Kneeling, he besought the Lord to have mercy upon him and heal his boy, explaining that he had brought him to the disciples, and they could not cure him. One can understand how poignant was the father's grief

and how distressed he was when the disciples could not help; but in expectancy of heart he turns to the Lord Jesus, pleading, as many other fathers since have pleaded, for the deliverance of sons who have come under the power of the evil one in various ways.

"Bring him unto Me." After rebuking the nine for their lack of faith, Jesus called for the boy to be brought to Him. His heart was moved by the father's plea. Turning then to the demon-possessed youth Jesus rebuked the foul spirit who departed from the boy, and he was cured from that hour.

On the mount, the disciples had been taken into God's confidence and given a foreview of the kingdom to be ushered in with power and majesty at our Lord's second advent. In the plain, they beheld anew something of the ravages of sin and Satan, under which this poor world suffers and groans still, and from which it will be freed completely only when Christ returns. But all down through the present age of evil the Lord Jesus is the One who hears the prayer of faith and gives deliverance to those who put their trust in His Word. No case is too difficult for Him. His disciples are often powerless because of unbelief and failure to recognize their own inability to work apart from Him who commissions them to represent Him in this scene.

When alone with the Lord, away from the multitude, the perplexed disciples inquired why they had been unable to expel the demon in this case. The

answer was, "Because of your unbelief." Again the Lord declared that if they had faith even as a grain of mustard-seed mountains of difficulty could be removed, and absolutely nothing would be impossible to them. But true faith and self-indulgence are never found together; therefore, He added, "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." The flesh and its appetites must be kept in subjection in order that faith may flourish. Moreover, there must be a real sense of dependence on God of which prayer is the continual expression. May we not see in these words of the Lord the reason for many of our unanswered prayers?

Again Jesus forewarned the disciples of what He was soon to experience, but although their hearts were grieved they did not grasp the full significance of His words.

"And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: and they shall kill Him, and the third day He shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry"—vers. 22-23.

The Galilean ministry of the unrecognized King was soon to come to a close. He foresaw all that would befall Him at the hands of man, but He looked beyond with prophetic eye to His resurrection when God was to bring Him back from the dead. So often had He spoken of this and so plainly that it seems incredible that the disciples should have failed to comprehend His words. Yet so it was. Not until all had been fulfilled did they recall and understand that of which He had spoken so definitely.

The incident with which the chapter closes reveals another aspect of Peter's impulsiveness, and yet of the Lord's wondrous grace.

"And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your Master pay tribute? He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto Him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for Me and thee"

—vers. 24-27.

The tribute money referred to here was the half-shekel of silver which, in Exodus 30, was commanded to be paid as the redemption money at any numbering of the people. In the course of time it had come to be considered and levied as a poll-tax for the support of the temple services. The collectors of this tax came to Peter and inquired as to whether Jesus paid it. Without consulting his Master, Peter answered in the affirmative. When he entered the house in Capernaum a little later (probably his own home) Jesus anticipated him and put the question, "What thinketh thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?" Peter answered unhesitatingly that it was of strangers. Now only a little time before Peter had confessed Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the living God. Therefore, He was under no obligation to pay this particular tax;

so He declared, "Then are the children free." But in His concern for others, that none might be stumbled who did not understand who He really was He bade Peter go to the Sea of Galilee and cast a hook and take up the fish that should be caught, and He added, "When thou hast opened his mouth thou shalt find a piece of money: that take and give unto them for Me and thee." It is not necessary to suppose that the coin was miraculously created at the moment, but rather that it had fallen into the water, and the fish attracted by the glittering object had attempted to swallow it, but the shekel had stuck in its gullet; and so when Peter drew it to land the money was there as Jesus had said, and could be used to silence all criticism. Was Jesus at this time so poor that He had no other money wherewith to pay this tax? Possibly so, or perhaps He chose this method to impress upon Peter the fact that He was Lord of all creation.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

IDEAL SUBJECTS OF THE KINGDOM, AND DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH

TWO things are brought into juxtaposition in this chapter: the kingdom in its spiritual aspect, and the Church yet to be brought into existence by the Lord after His death and resurrection, but seen here in its local aspect as an assembly of believers responsible to maintain principles of righteousness, and therefore to deal in discipline with refractory or trespassing members who refuse to repent.

The kingdom section includes verses 1 to 14.

"At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in My name receiveth Me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye,

rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven. For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost. How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish"—vers. 1-14.

Not yet delivered from the desire for prominence in the coming kingdom, when heaven's authority shall be established over all the earth, the disciples came to Jesus with the question, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" It is a question that no truly noble soul would ever ask, or about which he would be concerned. But devoted as these disciples were they could not seem to get away from the thought that the kingdom was to be a place and a time for flesh to assert itself, although the Lord had rebuked them for this on former occasions.

This time He answered both in word and by an object lesson. He called a little child. The wee one responded and came to Him without hesitation, we may be sure. Setting him in the midst Jesus said solemnly, "Verily, I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." In other words, the true subjects of the kingdom are the meek and lowly who hear the voice of Jesus and come at His call, content with the place of His appointment. The greatest in the kingdom will be the one who is

willing to take the lowest place, thus proving himself a follower of Him who came from the glory of God to be a servant in this scene of suffering and sorrow.

To receive a little child in His name is to receive Him, because He identifies Himself with all who trust Him. He is not only the Saviour of those who, because of wasted years in sin and debauchery, realize their need of forgiveness and cleansing, but He is also the Saviour of the little ones who, in their comparative innocence, are attracted to Him because of His tender interest in them.

Whether absolutely true in detail or not, there is much truth in general in the oft-told story of the stern-visaged minister who was preaching a sermon on "The tears of Jesus." He is said to have exclaimed, "Three times we read that Jesus wept, but we never read that He smiled." A little girl below the pulpit cried out, forgetful of where she was, "Oh, but I know He did!" Shocked at the interruption the minister asked, "Why do you say that, my child?" Now thoroughly frightened as she realized all eyes were upon her, she replied, "Because the Bible says He called a little child and he came to Him. And if Jesus had looked like you, I know the child would have been afraid to come." She did not intend to be rude. It was a child's frankness, but it told a wonderful truth. Children were never afraid of Jesus, and He was always ready to bless and acknowledge them.

Nor did He ever speak more sternly to anyone than to whoso should cause one of these little ones to stumble, who believed in Him. For such, it were better that a millstone be hanged about his neck and he cast into the depths of the sea. Such stumbling-blocks He foresaw, but He warned His hearers not to be among them. Better to mutilate oneself by cutting off a hand or a foot than to be guilty of using either physical member to point or lead one of these children astray. To do so was to be exposed to the fire of Gehenna—eternal judgment. In the same way He speaks concerning the eyes which, alas, have often led vicious and lascivious men to look wickedly upon childish innocence.

Because the Father has a special interest in the children, and in heaven their guardian angels always appear before His face, all are warned never to despise these little ones. Possibly by "angels" here, however, we are to understand the spirits of departed children. Both views have been held by godly men, and it may be best not to be too dogmatic regarding it, for unquestionably both are true in fact, whichever may be intended here.

When speaking of adults in Luke 19:10 Jesus said, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Here as He speaks of children He simply says He came to save them. While members of a lost race, they have not wandered wilfully into paths of sin; so they do not need to be sought.

The parable of the lost sheep, gone astray on the mountain of sin, follows, for it is not only to save the children that He came. There is rejoicing in heaven, where myriads of saints are safely gathered, over one such wanderer recovered and saved. But if this be so—and it is—how much more the joy when one is saved in early childhood, and so never wastes long years in rebellion against God.

Verse 14 gives the assurance that all children dying ere coming to years of accountability are forever saved through the work of Christ. It is not the Father's will that any of them perish; and inasmuch as their wills are not set against the will of God we may be certain they are with Christ in the Father's house.

On the occasion when Peter made his great confession the Lord had spoken for the first time of the Church which He was to build. Now He gives instruction concerning discipline and godly order in that Church, which, while one throughout the world, was to be manifested locally as distinct assemblies in various places.

"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them"—*vers. 15-20.*

In some of the best manuscripts the words "against thee" are omitted after "trespass", so that there may be more involved than trespass against one individual. "If thy brother shall trespass." He who recognizes this and is concerned about it is instructed, not to blazon it abroad, and so to defile others who might not otherwise know anything of it, but to go to the offender privately and speak to him about the matter, endeavoring to bring him to repentance. This was in accordance with the law of Moses which commanded, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him" (Lev. 19:17). In Galatians 6:1 we are told, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." To so act toward an erring one is to fulfil the Lord's admonition, "Ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). To apply the water of the Word to an offending brother's feet is the duty of the one who is cognizant of the offense. This principle is applied in both the old and the new dispensations.

But if the wrongdoer is stubborn and wilful and shows no disposition to put things right, one is to take one or two more brethren and see him again. These witnesses are to hear and give their judgment according to the facts presented. If they agree that wrong has been done they are to join with the first

in seeking to bring the recalcitrant brother to own his sin and seek forgiveness. If this does not avail, and the trespasser is adamant and refuses to accept their admonition, the matter is for the first time to be put before the local assembly, which will hear the case, and if convinced of the righteousness of the plaintiff, the accused one is again to be admonished to own his wrong and endeavor to put things right. If he refuses to hear the Church he is to be put under discipline and treated as an outsider—as a heathen, or worldling, and a publican.

It is only in this place that we get these words of which Rome makes so much: "*Hear the Church.*" They do not call upon us to bow to the teaching of the Church as such, but in an instance of the kind here dealt with the man under discipline is responsible to accept the judgment of the assembly. Nowhere is the Church as such said to be the authoritative teacher. On the contrary, the Church is commanded to hear what the Spirit says through the Word.

The binding and loosing of verse 18 is illustrated in the Corinthian Epistles. It has to do with Church, or assembly, discipline. When Paul commanded the Corinthian assembly to put away from themselves the wicked person—the incestuous man—in 1 Corinthians 5, he was binding his sin upon him until he should repent. When, in 2 Corinthians 2: 5-11, he instructed the assembly to forgive this man upon evidence of his repentance he was loosing

him. Such actions, when in full accordance with the Word of God, are bound in heaven.

Verse 19 suggests something even higher than this. Suppose a case where human judgment is at fault, and the saints are in utter perplexity. They may appeal to the Lord Himself for light and help. Wherever two agree, or symphonize, as the word really is—that is, where even two come to God in prayer in harmony with His Spirit and with one another, He will act for them, doing according to His will in the Church on earth as that will is done in heaven. For every local assembly of believers gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus may be assured of His presence in the midst. This does not refer to some one special group claiming more intimate association with Christ than others, but the Lord's presence is predicated for every company gathered in His name, no matter how small that company is. What comfort is this in a day of ecclesiastical ruin and yet of great religious pretension!

The rest of the chapter deals particularly with forgiveness in several different phases.

The whole problem is easily solved for the Christian. We are to forgive as God in Christ has forgiven us (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13). From the kingdom standpoint, however, forgiveness is based upon the repentance of the offender. Christ's disciples are to maintain an attitude of forgiveness at all times and toward all men. But they are to bestow

that forgiveness upon the one who says, "I repent" (Luke 17: 3, 4). To fail to do this will bring the unforgiving one himself under the chastening hand of God in government, as seen in the parable of the obdurate servant who refused the plea of his fellow-debtor for mercy. This principle abides even in the dispensation of the grace of God, for grace and government go on together. No one is more responsible to show grace to others than he who is himself the object of grace. Much of the chastening that we as Christians have to undergo can be traced to our hard and oftentimes relentless attitude toward those who have offended us. We would save ourselves much sorrow in the way of disciplinary dealing on the part of our Father (Heb. 12: 6-11) if we were more careful and considerate of others.

"Then came Peter to Him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee

all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall My heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses"—vers. 21-35.

"How oft shall . . . I forgive him?" Peter had not risen to the true conception of grace which God had shown toward him, and which he was to manifest toward a brother.

"Until seventy times seven." Seven is the perfect number. Our Lord raises this, as it were, to its highest power. Our forgiveness is to be like that which God has given to us. Seventy times seven may seem like an impossible number of offenses to forgive, but have we not all exceeded that number many times in our relations with God?

"A certain king, which would take account of his servants." In this parable the disciple is viewed as a subject of the kingdom, under the government of God, who, though He is our Father, exercises corrective discipline over His people (1 Peter 1:17).

"One . . . which owed him ten thousand talents." This was an immense sum, whether the talents were of gold or only of silver. It suggests one who has been guilty of great offenses against the divine government.

"He had not to pay." The offender is morally bankrupt. No man can ever make up to God for the wrong he has done. "His lord commanded him to

be sold." According to the law then prevailing, the insolvent debtor could be sold into slavery.

"Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." While no man could meet the full demands of God's holy law, yet the attitude of this debtor is one of penitence and repentance.

"The lord of that servant . . . loosed him, and forgave him the debt." Even so does God deal with His erring servants when they face their sins in His presence and own the claims of His righteous government. Observe, it is not the case of the forgiveness of an unsaved man that is here before us, but a servant of God who has grievously failed.

"One of his fellow-servants . . . owed him an hundred pence." It was a very trivial sum, as compared with the other great debt. No man can possibly offend any of us to anything like the extent that our sins have offended a holy God. "Pay me that thou owest." To demand full satisfaction of a brother who has wronged me, when God has dealt so graciously with my greater offense, is to act inconsistently with the principle of grace.

"His fellow-servant . . . besought him." He takes the same attitude toward his creditor that the other had taken toward his lord, and he should have had the same consideration.

"He would not: but went and cast him into prison." The creditor was obdurate and not only refused forgiveness, but also cast his fellow-servant

into the debtors' prison, doubtless hoping his friends would come to his aid and pay the debt.

"His fellow-servants . . . told unto their lord all that was done." Shocked by such conduct, the unworthy creditor's evil action was reported to his lord by those who were aware of the facts of the case.

"O thou wicked servant!" The indignation of the master was stirred by the perfidious conduct of the one toward whom he had extended such clemency.

"Delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due." Governmental forgiveness may be revoked, as in this instance, where the recipient of it forfeits all title to consideration because of his inconsistency afterward. Observe that it is not that eternal forgiveness which God bestows upon the believing sinner that is here in view, but the forgiveness of one already in the kingdom who has grievously failed.

"So likewise shall My heavenly Father do . . . if ye . . . forgive not." It is the Father who deals with the members of His own family, and who will not overlook harshness or lack of compassion on the part of His children toward their erring brethren. There are many of God's children who are under disciplinary correction all their days, simply because there is some one whom they will not forgive. Let us search and try our own ways as to this matter.

Those who have entered into the kingdom by new birth (John 3: 5) are all forgiven sinners who stand

before God on the ground of pure grace. Nevertheless, as children in the family of God, they are subject to the Father's discipline and are under His government. The moment our responsibility as sinners, having to do with the God of judgment, ended, our responsibility as children, having to do with our Father, began. In this new relationship we are to display the activities of the divine nature, and therefore are called upon to act in grace toward any who may offend us. If we fail to do this, we shall be sternly disciplined in order that the government of God may be maintained in His own family.

Different Aspects of Forgiveness. If we do not distinguish the various aspects of forgiveness as set forth in the Word of God, we are likely to be in great confusion of mind because of God's disciplinary dealings with us after our conversion to Christ. When He saves us He forgives us fully and eternally, and will never, as Judge, remember our sins again (Heb. 10:17). But as His children, we are to confess our sins whenever we fail, and He gives restorative forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Certain governmental results, however, may follow these failures, which are not to be construed as indicating that God has not pardoned, but He would teach us by discipline the heinousness of sin in His sight (2 Sam. 13, 14). Forgiven ourselves, we are to forgive our brethren who sin against us (Col. 3:13). Members of the Church who offend against God's righteous principles are to be disciplined, but forgiven when they

give evidence of repentance (ver. 17; 2 Cor. 2:7).

Degrees of Guilt. Our Lord's teaching shows us clearly that there are varying degrees of guilt in regard to sin. All sin is wickedness in the sight of God. But the greater one's light and privileges, the greater is his responsibility. Consequently, the sin of one who knows God's Word and has enjoyed years of fellowship with the Lord is far worse than that of one who is comparatively ignorant and immature. Degrees of punishment vary accordingly. See Luke 12:47, 48; John 13:17; Rom. 2:12; James 4:17; 1 John 5:17.

In the following instances we see the government of God exemplified:

Jacob—He deceived his father (Gen. 27:18-24); his sons deceived him (Gen. 37:31-35).

Moses—He failed to glorify God at Meribah (Num. 20:11); God refused to let him go into the land (Num. 20:12).

David—He sinned in the matter of the wife of Uriah (2 Sam. 11:1-26); the sword never departed from his house (2 Sam. 12:9, 10).

The Corinthians—They dishonored God at the Lord's Table (1 Cor. 11:20-22); sickness and death of many resulted (1 Cor. 11:30).

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE NEW LAW OF THE KINGDOM

HAVING broken with Israel after the flesh for the time being, during which period the kingdom predicted by the prophets is in abeyance, Jesus proceeded to speak with authority concerning matters which would require definite information for the guidance of His followers during the intervening years while the mysteries of the kingdom were being unfolded.

Leaving Galilee He proceeded toward Jerusalem, going down through Perea on the east of the Jordan.

"And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, He departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan; and great multitudes followed Him; and He healed them there"—vers. 1-2.

By the expression "the coasts of Judea" we are to understand the land bordering on Judea. As He moved majestically on toward His death He continued to exercise His grace and power toward all who came to Him for physical healing, thus demonstrating the fact that He was in very truth the Anointed of Jehovah (Acts 10:38), although unrecognized by the religious leaders and the rulers of the nation.

Some of these proud, haughty Pharisees came to Him and raised a question in regard to divorce,

which gave Him opportunity to make clear the new order that was to prevail among those who should be subject to His authority in the days to come.

"The Pharisees also came unto Him, tempting Him, and saying unto Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And He answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto Him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. His disciples say unto Him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. But He said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it"—vers. 3-12.

The question asked by the Pharisees was designed, evidently, to put Jesus in opposition to the law of Moses; but in answering them He went back of the Sinaitic or Levitical enactments to the original institution of marriage, which was to be the rule for His disciples in the future.

The Pharisees asked, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" So lax were the teachings of some of the more liberal rabbis as to this, that a man could disown and divorce his wife upon the slightest pretext. Jesus referred them to

what was written in Genesis 2: 24. "He . . . made them at the beginning . . . male and female." This is the divine ideal: one man for one woman in the sacred relationship of marriage. The entire human race sprang from the first pair thus created by God, typifying, as the marriage ceremony so aptly puts it, the mystical union that exists between Christ and His Church (Eph. 5: 31, 32).

"They twain shall be one flesh." Observe, it is not "they three," or five, or any other number, but simply "they twain." Anything other than this is a perversion opposed to the original intent of the Creator.

"What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Thus, at the very dawn of human (and family) history, we have the inviolability of the marriage contract revealed, as according to the will of God. He who breaks this union disobeys the Word of the Lord.

Naturally His opponents asked, "Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?" Jesus explained that this was a temporary provision which Moses was authorized to allow because of the callousness of men's hearts. It was to protect the woman from the hardship of endeavoring to carry on in a home where she was unloved and unwanted and might be subjected to cruel treatment. Far better to send her back to the home of her parents than to make of her a slave to the capriciousness of an unkind husband.

But now that Israel's destined King and Redeemer had come, He declared that "whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication (or unchastity), and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." In these words Jesus affirmed the sacredness of the marriage relationship. It is intended by God to be a union for life. The subject believer will never break it. If one violates the tie by unchaste behavior—that is, by illicit relations with a third party—the innocent one is free to divorce the unfaithful one and to marry someone else.

Many have questioned this interpretation of our Lord's words, but they admit of no other meaning. To say, as some have done, that the Lord was referring to fornication committed before wedlock (as in Deut. 22: 13, 14, 20, 21), and that it has no reference to such sin committed after marriage, would be to put a premium on marital unfaithfulness, as though it were less evil than the same kind of iniquity committed by those not yet married. To support this theory it has been affirmed that the word "fornication" refers only to sexual impurity on the part of single people. But 1 Corinthians 5 negatives this. The incestuous man there was living with his stepmother, and he is charged with fornication.

While therefore affirming the high and holy character of marriage according to God's Word, Jesus

does not put on the innocent divorced party the burden of going through life alone, because of the unfaithfulness of a wicked partner.

Another explanation has been put forth in order to nullify the very clear teaching given by Jesus as to this: namely, that He spoke as under the law, and that therefore the exception here mentioned does not apply in this dispensation of grace. Those who hold to this view forget that while Jesus came under the law, "the law and the prophets were until John." The preliminary teaching of the new dispensation was given by Jesus, for "grace and truth came by (Him)" (John 1:17).

He was laying down the principles in regard to marriage and divorce which were to prevail from that day on. This perplexed and troubled the disciples, who said that if these things were so it would perhaps be best not to marry at all, as it seemed to put such heavy restrictions on the natural propensities of human nature.

The Lord acknowledged that all men cannot receive this saying, but it is for them to whom it is given—that is, to those who are ready to be submissive to the will of God, recognizing the sacredness of the marriage relationship, or for others who, as Paul said in a later day, had such self-control that they could keep themselves pure though unmarried. Such were as eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. But Jesus would put no one under bondage as to this. It was for him who was able to receive it.

It is well to remember that the real object of marriage is to bring forth children, and so to establish a godly home which is a marvelous testimony for Christ in the midst of a corrupt world. "Home" to millions is one of the sweetest words in the English language. What memories it evokes! What stirring of the hearts, and what thanksgiving to God are aroused as we recall the joyous home circle and dwell upon the impressions made there upon our young minds. For, though we may have wandered far since, home is still the most sacred place we have known on earth. Yet vast numbers of people have never known its mystic spell. And in many languages of earth there is no word which is the exact equivalent of our word "home." Few pagan tribes have any synonym for it. They speak of a house, a dwelling-place, or a shelter; but to them home, as we understand it, is something of which they know nothing. Yet "God setteth the solitary in families" (Ps. 68: 6), and established homes for mankind long before the rise of governments and before the Church was brought into existence.

It takes more than four walls and comfortable furniture to make a home. Home, in the truest sense, is where love rules. The ideal home of Scripture is an abode, whether it be a pilgrim's tent or a grand mansion, where the family dwell together in love and harmony, each delighting in the company of the others, and all seeking the good of the whole. Such homes were found in Israel when all the rest of

the world was steeped in idolatry, and where fear ruled instead of love. Christ lifted home life onto an even higher plane, making it a place of deepest spiritual fellowship as well as tender love. The Christian home is a scene where father, mother, and children enjoy together a sense of the divine favor and protection, and where the whole family honors Christ as Saviour and Lord. From such a home the voice of prayer and praise will rise up as a continual sacrifice day by day.

The loosening of the marriage tie and the lowering of the home ideals are perhaps the two greatest evils of our times. Divorces are increasing at an alarming rate as people come more and more to disregard the teaching of Scripture as to the sacred character of marriage, and to give free rein to inordinate affections and selfish desires. The children are the worst sufferers in the breaking up of the home. We are sowing the wind as a nation, and we are destined to reap the whirlwind unless we turn to God in repentance and seek to walk in humble obedience to His Word.

At the rate in which divorces are increasing in this and other lands family life will soon be a thing of the past in the majority of cases, as far as the unsaved are concerned. The children of God should avoid any complicity in this evil thing by implicit obedience to the teaching of our Lord in regard to the intended permanence of the marriage relationship.

After this somewhat lengthy digression we must pass on to consider the next incident, which follows in beautiful moral order;—the bringing of the children to Jesus for His blessing.

"Then were there brought unto Him little children, that He should put His hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And He laid His hands on them, and departed thence"

—vers. 13-15.

It betokened real faith in the grace and power of the Lord, when the parents brought their little ones to Him, beseeching Him to lay His holy hands upon them and to bestow a blessing upon them. To the disciples this seemed an unnecessary intrusion upon the time and consideration of their Master, and they attempted to restrain those who thus came desiring Him to take such kindly notice of their offspring.

Jesus interfered immediately, however, and encouraged the parents by saying, "Suffer (or permit) little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." He had shown and declared earlier that, because of their simple faith, children are the ideal subjects of the kingdom. Here He reaffirms this, and by these words gives encouragement to all parents everywhere who believe in Him, to bring their little ones to Him, confident that His blessing will be upon them, as parents endeavor to bring the children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

After laying His hands upon them Jesus left that place to go on toward Jerusalem where He was to lay down His life as a sacrifice for sin.

In order to understand the next incident aright we need to distinguish carefully between salvation and discipleship. God's salvation is absolutely free. It is offered to men on the principle of pure, unmerited grace. But discipleship is on quite another basis. It literally costs all that one has—the loss of all things (Phil. 3: 7, 8; Luke 14: 33). No one can be a true follower of Christ who does not take up his cross—that which speaks of death to the flesh—and follow the Lord Jesus in His path of rejection by the world and devotion to the Father's will.

It is a poor thing when Christ has merely the first place in one's life. He is intensely exclusive, and asks that we give Him full control of our entire being. No one, however closely related, is to be permitted to come between us and allegiance to Him (Luke 14: 26, 27). So fervent should be our love for Christ that our affection for our dearest friends or relatives will seem as hatred in comparison, if they would seek to turn us aside from the path of devotion to Him.

To the flesh, this may seem to be a hard and almost unkind demand, but the truly surrendered soul finds a deeper joy in thus yielding all to Him who has bought us with His blood, than in living to please one's self. Many have resisted for years the call to such a life of wholehearted allegiance, only to

learn at last that they have lost out immeasurably by refusing to own the claims of the Lord Jesus to the exclusion of all else.

To take up the cross and follow Him in His path of rejection by the world may appear to involve sacrifices too great for flesh and blood to endure, but when the surrender is made and the cross accepted, we find, as the saintly Rutherford expressed it, that "that cross is a burden such as fins are to a fish, or wings to a bird."

"And, behold, one came and said unto Him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And He said unto him, Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but One, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto Him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto Him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow Me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. Then said Jesus unto His disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When His disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible"—vers. 16-26.

"Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" The question involves one's ability to earn eternal life by doing. This young man had not yet learned his own utter sinfulness and absolute helplessness.

"There is none good but One, that is, God." In addressing Jesus Christ as "Good Master," the young man evidently meant to do Him honor, but Jesus points out the fact that only God is good. All men are sinners (Rom. 3:12). Therefore, if Jesus were only a Man, He would not be good, in this absolute sense. If truly good, then He is God. After this solemn declaration, the Lord Jesus took the inquirer up on his own ground. The law promised life to those who kept it (Lev. 18:5; Gal. 3:12). So the Lord answered, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." This declaration was designed to show the man his inability to obtain life on that ground, for if conscience were active, he would realize he had violated already the law.

"He saith unto Him, Which?" This was clearly an attempt to evade the full force of the Lord's words. In reply, Jesus quoted five of the principal commandments and concluded by summing up all of those that refer to our duties to our fellow-men by quoting from Leviticus 19:18, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." It would indicate an unawakened condition of soul if one could face all these and plead not guilty.

If men would seek to gain eternal life by doing good, the law challenges them to perfect obedience. Because all have sinned, it is not possible for anyone to be justified by the deeds of the law. The law speaks with awful force to an awakened conscience,

giving one to realize the hopelessness of ever obtaining eternal life by human merit.

"All these have I kept from my youth up." No doubt these words came from a sincere heart, but they give evidence of lack of real exercise of conscience. Who, knowing himself, could so speak? Outwardly, the life may have been blameless, but if conscience had been active there would have been confession of sin. It was the smug self-righteousness of one who prided himself on his own morality and did not realize the corruption of his heart. The question, "What lack I yet?" in itself indicates how complacent he was—how self-satisfied.

"If thou wilt be perfect, sell . . . and give . . . and follow Me." Jesus so spoke in order to jar him from his ill-founded confidence. How could anyone, who was content to be wealthy, profess to love his neighbor as himself while needy, poverty-stricken people were suffering on every hand. To become a disciple of Christ—to live for others—and thus to lay up "treasure in heaven," had no attraction for this one who talked so glibly of complete obedience to God's commandments from his youth up.

In calling upon the rich inquirer to sell all he had and give to the poor, in order that he might have treasure in heaven, our Lord was seeking to make manifest both the deceitfulness and selfishness of the human heart. The challenge to forsake all and follow Christ was a call to yield wholly to His authority, thus to become a disciple in deed and in truth.

"He went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." It has been well called *The Great Refusal*. Whatever admiration this man had for the Lord Jesus Christ, whatever inward yearning there was after the spiritual life, all were weaker than his love for his wealth and the place it gave him in the social circles of his day. His "great possessions" stood between him and the salvation of his soul. They meant more to him than the knowledge of life eternal.

"A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." As we have seen already the kingdom of heaven is not heaven itself. It rather implies the recognition of and subjection to heaven's authority while here on earth. It is hard for those, to whom God has entrusted great wealth, to hold everything they possess as a stewardship, which they are responsible to use for His glory. It was not merely the salvation of this young man's soul that was at stake: Christ was pointing the way to true discipleship.

"His disciples . . . were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?" They naturally thought it would be easier for those in comfortable circumstances to follow Jesus than for the poor and needy, but throughout the history of Christianity it has often been the poor of this world who have been richest in faith.

"With God all things are possible." It is only the omnipotent power of God that leads any man, be he

rich or poor, to trust in Christ as Saviour and yield obedience to Him as Lord. Every conversion, and every consecrated life is a miracle of grace. Whether men be wealthy or poverty-stricken, or among the fairly comfortable middle classes, as it were, it is only when they have been convicted of their lost condition by the Holy Spirit that they ever turn to Christ for deliverance. In Him all class distinctions vanish, and all stand on one common ground before God.

Just what it was that led the rich young man to talk with the Lord Jesus we are not told. He may have felt within his soul that here was One who spoke with all authority and had therefore the title to claim submission to His words. But he evidently had no sense of his own need as a sinner. He thought of Jesus as a teacher, not as a Saviour. So he was not ready to put Christ first in his life, and, like many thousands since who were somewhat attracted to the Lord Jesus, he went pensively away when he learned the conditions of discipleship.

The Right Use of Wealth. It is not sinful to be rich. It is sinful to make riches the ground of overconfidence, and to enjoy the comforts that wealth can give while forgetting the sufferings of the poor and needy. When God commits wealth to any man it is as a stewardship entrusted to him to be administered for the glory of Him who gave it. It is the love of money, not money itself, that is evil (1 Tim. 6:10). Money may become the means of untold

blessing if used in subjection to Christ (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

The disciples had been silent on-lookers and listeners during this colloquy between their Lord and the rich young ruler. But now that the young man had turned away to go on in his selfish course Peter spoke up on behalf of them all, and expressed the concern upon their hearts as to what the final result would be of their own renunciations for Christ's name's sake.

"Then answered Peter and said unto Him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first"—vers. 27-30.

"We have forsaken all, and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore?" It seemed to be a natural question, and in one sense it was. In the eyes of the world they had forfeited all hope of riches or advancement. They had risked everything on the belief that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Yet He had spoken darkly of rejection, suffering, and death. For what were they to look in the days to come?

In reply Jesus assured them that when the kingdom was fully displayed, in the days of earth's regeneration, or new birth, they who had been identified with Him in His rejection would be honored and

recognized in a very signal manner: It was to be given to them to sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. In saying this He did not overlook the predicted apostasy of Judas, but it had been arranged in the counsels of God that Matthias was to take his place. Paul's apostleship later on was of an altogether different order. He was not numbered with the twelve, but was the chosen instrument to make known the mystery of the Body of Christ in which no distinction is made between Jew and Gentile, as he tells us in Ephesians 3.

But not only were the twelve sure of reward but also Jesus declared that, "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or . . . lands, for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life." No one ever lost out by excessive devotion to Christ. Whatever has to be renounced for His name's sake will be repaid abundantly, both in this life and in the next. Many there will be who profess such renunciation of worldly profit for His sake who will, like Demas, fail of reward because of unfaithfulness. Others who might not seem to have endured much for Him but were true at heart in the time of His rejection will be recognized in that day. Thus, the first should be last and the last first.

When Christ fills the soul's vision, it is easy to forsake all else for His sake. But until He is known, first as Saviour, then as Lord, things of earth still seem to be of far greater worth and importance than

the things of eternity. Not until one has learned the lesson of his own sinfulness and good-for-nothingness, will he turn to the Lord Jesus alone for deliverance and be prepared to own His authority in every sphere of this earthly life. Love for Christ makes self-surrender easy. Love of self makes it impossible.

The contrast comes out clearly as we consider the great refusal of the rich young ruler, and the devoted allegiance on the part of the apostolic band, who had left all to follow their Lord, in spite of much misunderstanding and failure.

CHAPTER TWENTY

KINGDOM STANDARDS

THIS chapter opens with a parable of the kingdom designed to show that service for the Lord is to be rewarded according to opportunities embraced, not simply for the amount of work accomplished.

"For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen"—vers. 1-16.

As this is a likeness of the kingdom of heaven in its mystery form, the householder necessarily re-

presents the Lord Himself. The laborers are those who hear His call for service in the great harvest-field.

With those first engaged the master agrees for a penny—that is, a denarius—a day. While this seems a very small amount—a silver coin a little less than our twenty-five-cent-piece in size—it was the regular wage for day-laborers at that time, and had much greater purchasing power than any similar piece of money today. The agreed payment was, therefore, eminently fair, and all that these men would have any expectation of receiving.

As the day wore on the husbandman went to the market place on four other occasions: the third, sixth, ninth, and even the eleventh hours, answering to our 9:00 o'clock A. M., 12:00 o'clock noon, 3:00 o'clock P. M., and 5:00 o'clock P. M.—just an hour before the close of the day. Each time he hired any available laborers, telling them he would do what was right by them as to payment for work accomplished. Notice the reason the eleventh-hour workmen gave for unemployment: no man had hired them. They were ready to work but opportunity had not come their way. When it did come they complied at once with the request to go and work in the vineyard.

After the toil of the day all were called to receive what was considered their due. To the surprise of the entire company those who had wrought but one hour received a full day's wage, and those

in each group were paid the same. Those who had worked all day took it for granted they would receive a larger sum, and when only a denarius was forthcoming they registered a complaint on the ground that they had borne the burden and heat of the day; yet those who came later were made equal to them. They overlooked the fact that they had accepted the agreement to labor for a denarius a day. The lord of the vineyard made this clear, insisting that no wrong was being done to them inasmuch as he had kept his part of the bargain. It was his liberty to reward the others as he chose to do. He paid according to their needs and according to their readiness to embrace the first opportunity that came to them.

The principle is clear and is emphasized by the words, "So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen." All are chosen who heed the call, so none can blame the employer if they are not given the opportunity to serve.

The lesson for us is evident. Every disciple of Christ is expected to act upon His bidding and to heed His call for service. At the day of manifestation every man shall be rewarded for his own work according to its character and not merely for the amount of time put in. Jesus Himself did not live long, but He lived deep; and in His three-and-a-half years of service He accomplished far more than anyone else in a long life. In this, many of His followers have imitated Him.

It is sad to observe that, even after hearing this parable, the disciples were still concerned as to who should be greatest in the kingdom.

"And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify Him: and the third day He shall rise again. Then came to Him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping Him, and desiring a certain thing of Him. And He said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto Him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on the left, in Thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto Him, We are able. And He saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on My right hand, and on My left, is not Mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. But Jesus called them unto Him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many"—vers. 17-28.

"Going up to Jerusalem." The teaching and healing ministry of Jesus was rapidly coming to an end. He had now steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, where He was to make the supreme sacrifice on our behalf.

"They shall condemn Him to death." The religious leaders, blinded by their selfishness and self-righteousness, were to add to all their other sins that

of delivering Jesus up to the death of the cross. So far could mere religiousness, apart from spiritual life, carry its devotees.

"The third day He shall rise again." Again and again our Lord definitely foretold His resurrection on the third day, yet it seemed to *make little impression* on the minds of His disciples.

"The mother of Zebedee's children." That is, the mother of James and John. She evidently expected Jesus to proclaim Himself as the promised Messianic King in Jerusalem and she was ambitious for her children that they might have two of the best portfolios in the new government. Mark tells us that James and John themselves concurred in her request (10:35).

"The one on Thy right hand, and the other on the left." She felt her sons were deserving of special recognition and, like many a mother since, she would endeavor to push them forward, lest others should gain the choicest offices and they be overlooked.

"Ye know not what ye ask." He was to be rejected and crucified. To share with Him would mean to take the same path—to be spurned and hated rather than to be honored and praised.

"My cup . . . and . . . the baptism that I am baptized with." They were to participate in His cup of sorrow and to have part in His baptism unto death. As to recognition later on, when He should reign in righteousness, it was the Father who appointed His associates.

Christ's Cup and Baptism. He referred to the cup of rejection and hatred He was to drink, and the baptism of death He was to endure. To a certain extent all His disciples share in both of these. There is another sense in which none but He could go through them. The cup of judgment which He drained to the dregs for us, and the baptism of the divine wrath against sin which He endured upon the cross were His alone.

Those for Whom It Is Prepared. The displayed kingdom of God upon earth will be the sphere in which His saints will reign with Him. In that kingdom each one will be rewarded according to the measure of his devotedness during the time of association with our Lord in His rejection. To them the Father has decreed that precedence shall be given in that day of glory.

"The ten . . . were moved with indignation." Angered at the temerity of the other two, the rest of the disciples nevertheless all cherished similar ambitions. They felt that an attempt had been made ahead of themselves to get possession of the best places.

"They that are great exercise authority upon them." In earthly kingdoms, men grasp for power and are honored by those beneath them because of their ability to rule and to subject others to their will. It is the very opposite in the kingdom of God. In the world the great man is the one of determined will and effective initiative who can triumph over

his fellows. But in the kingdom of Christ, true greatness is characterized by intense lowliness and a readiness to serve rather than rule.

"It shall not be so among you." In the heavenly kingdom it is meekness and unselfish service that have the pre-eminence. To prefer others before oneself, to minister in grace rather than to rule in power, is to exemplify the spirit of our Royal Leader. There is no room for earthly pomp or worldly glory in the circle of Christ's followers. To seek for personal advancement and to endeavor to lord it over one's brethren is thoroughly contrary to the spirit of Him who became Servant of all, though He created the universe. The spirit of a Diotrephes (3 John 9) is far removed from the spirit of Christ and should be avoided by all His servants, but that of an Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25-29) is an example which all may well emulate.

"Chief among you." Where there is rivalry, not to be great but to be little, not to be highest but to be lowest; where service is at a premium and worldly ambition is frowned upon, there the spirit of Christ is manifested and the principles of His kingdom are exemplified.

"To give His life a ransom for many." Here our Lord tells us exactly why He came into the world. He did not leave the glory that He had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5) in order to seek for greater glory in this scene. He came to serve mankind, and that, not only in ministering to temporal or even spiritual needs day by day, but also

to redeem us from sin and its penalty by giving His life for us, dying a sacrificial death, to make propitiation for sins (1 John 4:10).

Our Lord Jesus Christ has given to mankind a new ideal. He has shown us that the truly great man is the one who seeks not his own good, but the blessing of others. Even here on earth the unselfish life is the most satisfactory one. To Baruch of old the message came, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not" (Jeremiah 45:5). This runs contrary to the pride and self-assertion of the natural man: "Men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself" (Psalm 49:18). But after all is said and done, the truth abides that "for men to search their own glory is not glory" (Proverbs 25:27). Our Lord, who, because of His very nature, had every right to assert Himself and seek recognition and honor from the men whom He created, chose to take the place of Servant of all. He humbled Himself to become Man, but that was not enough. As Man, He took the servant's place, and at last gave Himself up to death for us in the sacrifice of the cross, that He might redeem us to God. He has glorified and exemplified the dignity of service and self-abnegation in such a way as to give an altogether new standard of greatness. He has stained the pride of all earthly glory (Isaiah 23:9) and shown it to be mere selfishness, and thus opposed to that which has the approval of God. To serve, not for present gain, but to bless and help others, and thus to express our gratitude to God for

His grace and love so freely bestowed upon us in Christ Jesus, should be the laudable ambition of all who know Him as Saviour and Lord.

The things that are highly esteemed among men are often thoroughly opposed to the mind of God (Luke 16:15). It is the ambitious, energetic man, who presses to the front, striving to excel his fellows, who has the admiration of men of the world, who suppose that present gain is the great thing to be desired. But Jesus taught us that it is the meek who inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5). The "terrible meek," one has called them, who are content to be passed over and to be unnoticed by men, but to whom the approval of the Lord means more than all else; these are they who overcome the world by faith (1 John 5:4). They can afford to relinquish present advantage, for they know they shall find a sure reward at the judgment-seat of Christ.

The Lord and His disciples were now well on their way toward Jerusalem. They had entered the city of Jericho. It was there, as Luke tells us, that Jesus met Zacchaeus, whose whole life was changed by coming to know Christ; and there two blind men receive their sight.

"And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, Thou Son of David. And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, Thou Son of David. And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you? They say unto Him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him"—vers. 29-34.

To the casual reader there seems to be a discrepancy between the accounts given here and in Mark, and that given by Luke. The latter tells us that, "It came to pass, that as He was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging;" whereas both Matthew and Mark tell us that this incident occurred as they departed from Jericho. There is no confusion, however, if we understand Luke as telling us that Bartimaeus sat by the way side begging as Jesus drew near to Jericho, but the other two Evangelists inform us that the actual healing took place as He was departing from that city, after having visited the house of Zacchaeus.

These seeming discrepancies in the Gospel records make it more certain that there was no collaboration on the part of the different writers, but that each related the incident according to information which he had and as guided by the Holy Spirit. It is a well-recognized principle in taking testimony in court that where several witnesses use exactly the same language it is evident that they have been in consultation together or instructed by a lawyer as to what they should say. The same story may be related with minor differences which, upon full investigation, do not conflict with each other at all but emphasize the viewpoint of the one giving the testimony.

Matthew tells us here that there were two blind men sitting by the way side; whereas Mark and Luke

speak of only one, and that one named Bartimaeus. There were two. The Holy Spirit guided Matthew from any error in regard to this, but it is very clear that Bartimaeus was the stronger character of the two, and the one upon whom attention is focused in the accounts of Mark and Luke.

Learning that Jesus was passing by, these blind men cried out, saying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Thou Son of David." This was a recognition of His Messiahship on their part. They believed Him to be in very truth the promised Son of David who would give sight to the blind and perform other marvelous works.

The multitude, we are told, rebuked them, calling upon them to be quiet, as though Jesus was not to be troubled by poor wretches such as they. But they refused to be silenced and cried out the more, pleading with Jesus for the help they needed so badly. He stood still and called them to Himself and tenderly inquired, "What will ye that I shall do unto you?" He knew well what they wanted, but He always likes to have people tell Him what is on their hearts. Without a moment's hesitation they replied, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened." In His infinite compassion Jesus granted their request: He touched their eyes, we are told, and immediately they received their sight, and followed Him in the way. While the great and the mighty in Israel refused Him, these two, who for years had been blind mendicants, recognized Him as the rightful King of Israel and gladly owned Him as such.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

THE KING IN JERUSALEM

THE so-called triumphant entry of our Lord into Jerusalem—at the beginning of the last week of His earthly ministry, which was to culminate in His death and burial and to be followed by a glorious resurrection—was in partial fulfilment of Ps. 118, where He is presented as the rejected Stone, eventually to be made the Head of the corner; but first accepted by a few who cry, “Hosanna” (“Save now”), and, “Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Ps. 118: 25, 26). But instead of the Kingdom being set up then, the next thing was His crucifixion, when He was bound, as it were, like the sacrificial animals, to the horns of the altar (Ps. 118:27).

Doubtless, those who welcomed Him into Jerusalem, as He rode upon the ass down the slopes of Olivet and into the Holy City, thought the hour of His triumph had come, and they believed that He was about to assert His royal authority and begin His beneficent reign over Israel and the subjected nations, making Jerusalem the capital of a regenerated world. All this shall indeed be in God's appointed time, but He had other work to accomplish first. So the entrance into the city amid the plaudits of the populace was but preliminary to His death upon a Roman cross, where He was to make propitiation

(rather than reconciliation) for the sins of the people (Heb. 2:17, *R.V.*). For Him, as we have seen already, there could be no Kingdom without the cross.

That the welcome He received was sincere, we need not question. His own words in answer to the criticism of the chief priests and scribes make that clear (Matt. 21:16). But those who thus rejoiced in His coming to them little realized the true state of affairs, nor did they understand the predictions of the prophets: how Christ must first be rejected and suffer many things before He could enter into His glory (Luke 24:25-27).

"And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto Me. And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set Him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. And when He was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee"—vers. 1-11.

Every move that the Lord Jesus Christ made, as He went through this world, was in exact accord with the prophetic Word and therefore in obedience

to the Father's will. As He entered Jerusalem, He knew that, not the Kingdom, but crucifixion was to be His portion in the immediate future. But nothing turned Him aside from His path of perfect submission to the One who had sent Him. He adorned every position that He took. His matchless perfections were manifested in everything He did. He accepted the praise of the children and of the older ones, who hailed Him as David's Son, with the same grace that enabled Him to endure the cold, cutting criticism of His enemies. To Him the one paramount object of His life was to glorify the Father.

How His heart must have been stirred as He drew near to the city—once called holy, but now so polluted by sin and characterized by a form of godliness without power. The hour had come when He was to present Himself as King, and in preparation for it He sent two of His disciples into a nearby village to procure an ass and her colt.

Evidently, the owners of these beasts were among those who knew Jesus and recognized His claims, for they acknowledged immediately His right to take the beasts for His use at this time.

Zechariah had prophesied that the King would come into His royal city "riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (Zech. 9: 9). All this was fulfilled literally as Jesus came down the slope of Olivét and into Jerusalem riding upon the unbroken colt. The disciples spread some of their own garments upon it as a saddle, and seated the Lord Jesus

Christ upon them. It is significant that this humble creature was more subject to Him—its Creator—than men whom He had come to save.

"A very great multitude spread their garments in the way." It was a truly Oriental setting. Part of the throng carpeted the road before Him with their robes, and others cut down palm branches and strewed them on the path He was to take, thus acclaiming Him as their rightful King.

"Hosanna to the Son of David." This and the words following, as we have noted already, were quotations from the Psalm of Triumph, the 118th, in which His royal subjects acclaim their King, "Great David's greater Son." The complete fulfilment of the Psalm awaits His second advent, as He Himself predicted later (Matt. 23 : 39).

"All the city was moved, saying, who is this?" The singing and rejoicing were heard throughout all Jerusalem, and the populace, stirred with wonder, inquired as to who it was whose entrance to their city had caused such an ovation. It was a repetition of what had taken place centuries before, when Solomon was welcomed as king (1 Kings 1:38-40). He of whom Solomon was but a type was now among them; yet many knew Him not.

"This is Jesus the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." With fervent faith, the rejoicing multitude declared Jesus to be a prophet. They were, doubtless, for the most part, Galileans themselves, who had become convinced that He was all that He claimed to be.

The children and others who welcomed Jesus so vociferously were acting in full accord with the Word of God when they acclaimed Him as the true Son of David, who is yet to reign in Zion. As on so many other occasions, the chief priests and scribes, though familiar with the letter of the Word, proved themselves altogether out of touch with this momentous occasion.

Zechariah's Prophecy. It is interesting to note how the two advents of our Lord are linked together in this passage (Zech. 9 : 9, 10). In verse 9 we see the King riding into His earthly capitol, presenting Himself to the people as their rightful Ruler. But although verse 10 follows this so closely, the events depicted in it will not be completely fulfilled until He comes again. It is then that He will speak peace unto the nations, and His dominion be set up over all the earth.

The 118th Psalm. This Psalm deals largely with the time when the Lord will arise for the deliverance of Israel, when all their trials will be ended and they shall enter into the blessedness of that rejoicing and salvation which will then be found in the tabernacles of the righteous (ver. 15). But all this blessing depends upon the One who was first to be bound as a sacrifice to the horns of the altar. It was settled in the purpose of God from eternity that there could be no Kingdom till after the work of the cross was accomplished. While the welcome that Jesus received was quite in keeping with the

divine plans, those who would have crowned Him as king at that time had to learn that He must first suffer many things, be crucified, and rise from the dead. In God's due time the remainder of the prophecy will have a glorious fulfilment.

Upon entering the city Jesus proceeded to visit the center of all Jewish worship and to exercise His authority there as He had done on an earlier occasion, as related by John (2:13-17).

The cleansing of the Temple implied, on the part of Jesus, the assertion of His authority as the Son of the Father, whose house had been so grossly defiled.

"And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple; and He healed them. And when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying in the temple, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased, and said unto Him, Hearest Thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?"—vers. 12-16.

"Jesus went into the temple of God." To Him, that temple was His Father's house. It was the place where, of old, Jehovah had set His name. But it had become defiled and polluted and was turned into a place of merchandise under the guise of assisting the many pilgrims who came from all parts of the world to keep the annual feasts, or set times, of Jehovah (see Lev. 23).

"My house shall be called the house of prayer." This was the divine purpose, as declared by Isaiah the prophet (Isa. 56 : 7). In the coming day of the Kingdom, when Jerusalem becomes, in truth, the worship-center of the world, a new temple will arise, to which all nations shall resort. The one which then stood on Mt. Moriah had become "a den of thieves," dishonoring to God and a stumbling-block to men.

"The blind and the lame came to Him in the temple." He who was the Lord of the temple was there to manifest His delivering power. Those who were suffering from various physical infirmities sought Him out, "and He healed them" in His grace and compassion.

"The chief priests and scribes . . . were sore displeased." These proud, haughty legalists were scandalized by the very goodness and lovingkindness of Jesus. The plaudits of the grateful populace were as gall and bitterness to them. When they heard the people crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they had no thought of joining in this glad recognition of Him, whose works of power bore witness to the divinity and authority of His message (John 5 : 30), but they were indignant that such honor should be paid Him.

"Hearest Thou what these say?" They blamed Jesus for permitting the people to address Him as the Son of David, which was equivalent to acknowledging Him as their Messiah, and so they called on

Him to rebuke the multitude. But Jesus refused to heed their angry criticisms and referred them to a passage in the Psalms, which exactly fitted the case: "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise" (Psalm 8 : 2). In their honesty and simplicity, the children and the common people, whom the self-righteous leaders despised, proved they had been taught of God, and so honored Jesus Christ as the Sent One of the Father, who had come into the world to be the Redeemer of Israel.

As the evening drew on Jesus left the city and went out to Bethany. So far as the record goes He did not spend a night in Jerusalem until He was arrested and taken to the house of Caiaphas. He may have found lodging with His friends, Lazarus, Martha, and Mary, or in some other convenient place.

"And He left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and He lodged there. Now in the morning as He returned into the city, He hungered. And when He saw a fig tree in the way, He came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away! Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive"—vers. 17-22.

The home in Bethany was very dear to the heart of Jesus. We may well imagine that He was in close touch with the little family there during these closing nights of His stay upon earth.

Each morning He wended His way with His disciples to the city. As they went in on the second morning Jesus saw the fruitless fig-tree, and pronounced a solemn judgment upon it. The fig-tree is the well-known symbol of Israel (or rather Judah) nationally: a fig-tree planted in a vineyard. When Jesus came there were the leaves of religious ceremony but no fruit for God. So they were given up to judicial barrenness for all the present age.

The fact that this tree was covered with leaves would naturally imply fruit, for the figs appear before the leaves in most varieties of these trees. Jesus knew well the facts of the case, but He chose to go to the tree to search for fruit in order to make of it an acted parable. There are three fig-tree passages that are definitely linked together and give us a dispensational picture of God's dealings with the Jews: Luke 13: 6-9; Matthew 21:17-20; Matthew 24 : 32, 33.

When the Lord was on His way back to Bethany in the evening the disciples noted with amazement that this tree which had been so verdant and fair to look upon, although utterly fruitless in the morning, was dried up and withered. Expressing their wonder at this Jesus took occasion once more to impress upon them a lesson as to the importance of faith. Again He used the same illustration as before (17 : 20), of the mountain being cast into the sea in response to faith as a grain of mustard-seed, adding the definite and soul-heartening declaration that "all things,

whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

This is not to be understood as an assurance that God will grant every request we make, or give us whatever we ask. To pray believingly implies that we pray in accordance with the revealed will of God, and that we do not regard iniquity in our hearts. But where one is right with God Himself, and his prayer is in faith because in accord with the known will of God, the divine response is sure.

When teaching in the temple on another occasion Jesus was challenged by the religious leaders regarding His authority to act as He did. We read:

"And when He was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto Him as He was teaching, and said, By what authority doest Thou these things? and who gave Thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell Me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; He will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And He said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things"
—vers. 23-27.

These priests and elders acted often on very dubious authority, but they questioned the right of Jesus to cleanse the temple of those who had made it a "den of thieves," and to teach the people as He did.

Following the custom He had so often used in dealing with cavilers such as they, Jesus replied by putting a leading question to them. What about John's baptism? Was it of divine origin or was John acting from a purely human standpoint?

Realizing they were trapped in their own crookedness and dishonesty they replied by saying, "We cannot tell." They knew that if they admitted John was sent by God they would be unable to explain why they had not believed him, which would have involved receiving the One whom John had declared was the promised Messiah. On the other hand, if they dared to deny John's heavenly commission it would stir the ire of the populace against them, and they would lose their influence over the people, for these generally believed John was a prophet of the Lord.

When they admitted their ignorance or inability to answer, Jesus calmly replied, "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things." To attempt to convince them would be but wasted time, for, as we often say, "There are none so blind as those who will not see."

The chapter closes with two parables, both designed to show the seriousness of refusing immediate compliance with the testimony and the demands of the Lord.

It is a terribly dangerous thing to trifle with the mercy of God. Little did the Jewish leaders realize that they were sealing their own doom in rejecting Jesus, the one sent of God to bring them into fulness of blessing if they had received Him. They lost their opportunity because they were blinded by self-interest, and so they failed to recognize their Messiah when He came in exact accord with the

scriptures of the prophets which they professed to reverence. Mere knowledge of the letter of the Word saves no one. It is those who believe in the Christ of whom the Book of God speaks who are made wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3 : 15). To reject Him is fatal.

It is a solemn theme indeed with which we are now to be occupied. Who can portray adequately the perils of rejecting Christ? God has used some of the most striking figures imaginable, to warn us of the dire fate that awaits the one who spurns His grace and refuses the Saviour.

The fruitless fig-tree, cursed by Jesus, represented the religious nation which bore no fruit for God and so was rejected, and has been ever since dried up, as it were, from the roots. The parable of the two sons contrasts the legal self-righteous leaders of the Jews, who pretended to an obedience they did not carry into execution, with that of poor sinners, both Jews and Gentiles, who have heard and obeyed the word of the truth of the gospel. That of the vineyard tells of God's care for and patience with His earthly people until they fulfilled their own Scriptures in rejecting His Son. The story of the marriage feast emphasizes the same truth and shows how the door of faith was to be opened to the Gentiles, but warns against mere profession, which can mean only judgment at last, as in the case of the man who refused the wedding garment.

"But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him"—vers. 28-32.

"A certain man had two sons." They portray two types of men: those who give lip-service, and those who are genuine in their interest in spiritual realities.

"He . . . said, I will not: but . . . repented." In this lad we see the wilful son, persisting in disobedience until subdued and brought to repentance by divine grace.

"He answered . . . I go, sir: and went not." This had been the history of the legalists in Israel from that day when at the base of Sinai they said, "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient" (Exod. 24: 7), but whose after-course was one of insubjection to God throughout (Rom. 2: 24).

"The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." It is the self-confessed sinners who feel their need of grace, and who, turning to God in repentance, enter through new birth into the kingdom (John 3: 3, 5).

"John came . . . in the way of righteousness." He came proclaiming the righteous demands of God upon His creatures and calling to repentance those

who had failed to attain to this standard. The legalists turned indifferently away, but needy sinners obeyed.

The parable of the vineyard had both a backward and a forward application. It traced God's ways with Israel in the past and their rejection of His messengers, and looked on prophetically to what was to be accomplished in the next few days when Jesus Himself was to be repudiated by His own people and delivered up to death.

"Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: and when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder"—vers. 33-44.

"A certain householder, which planted a vineyard." The householder was God Himself. The vineyard was Israel (Isaiah 5: 1-7). The husbandmen were the leaders in Judah who were responsible to guide the people aright.

"He sent his servants." These were the prophets who came from time to time as Jehovah's representatives to press His claims upon the people.

"Beat one, and killed another, and stoned another." Thus had Israel and Judah treated those who came to them in the name of the Lord (Acts 7: 52).

"He sent unto them his son." How vividly does this portray the grace of God in sending the Lord Jesus! He was in Palestine as the representative of the Father (John 6: 38; 7: 28, 29), but He knew well they would spurn Him as they had persecuted the prophets that went before.

"This is the heir; come, let us kill him." The rejection of Christ by His own people was the fullest possible expression of the hatred of the natural heart, moved by Satanic malignancy, toward the God of all grace (Acts 2: 23).

"They caught him . . . and slew him." It is useless to try to absolve the leaders in Jewry of the crime of delivering our Lord up to death (1 Thessalonians 2: 2, 14, 15). Actually it was the Gentiles who crucified Him, but potentially it was the Jews who killed Him. Both are implicated in the greatest crime in all history, the murder of the Christ of God (Acts 4: 26, 27).

"What will he do unto those husbandmen?" Foreseeing their treatment of Himself, Jesus put the question directly to those who had followed the para-

ble thus far. He would have them pronounce their own condemnation.

"He will miserably destroy those wicked men." Without realizing it, they declared what God was about to do. Their words were fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem and the settling aside of the Jew in favor of the nations of the Gentiles.

"The stone which the builders rejected." Jesus called their attention to the definite prophecy of Psalm 118:22. He Himself was the rejected "Stone." But in His resurrection God was to make Him the head of the corner in the new temple of living stones He was about to erect.

A Jewish legend explained this verse by declaring that at the building of Solomon's Temple a stone was sent up from the quarries at the very beginning for which the workmen could find no place, so it was thrown down into the valley below Mount Moriah—"The stone which the builders rejected." Later they sent word that they were ready for the cornerstone, but the masons declared it had been sent up already. Finally someone recalled the disallowed stone, and a search in the valley brought it to light, and it was hoisted up to the mount again, and made the head of the corner.

"The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Israel after the flesh was to be put aside. The kingdom for which they had waited so long was to be lost to them forever. A new and elect nation,

a regenerated Israel, shall possess the kingdom eventually. Meantime the grace of God is going out to the Gentiles.

Christ is the Stone of salvation; He is also the Stone of judgment. The Jews stumbled over Him and were broken (Isaiah 8: 14). Some day He will come again, as the Stone falling on the image of Gentile power to grind it to powder (Daniel 2: 34, 35).

There could be no doubt in the minds of our Lord's hearers as to the application of the parable.

"And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard His parables, they perceived that He spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitude, because they took Him for a prophet"—vers. 45-46.

Recognizing a picture of themselves in the unfaithful husbandmen, the Pharisees gave no evidence of repentance, nor of a desire to obey the Word of God. Instead, they seemed to become even more determined in their opposition to Jesus, God's Anointed One, the Heir who had been sent by the Father in grace to call them to the path of obedience and to the recognition of their own responsibilities as leaders in Israel. Had they dared they would have "laid hands on Him" and endeavored at once to put Him out of the way, but again they were deterred by their fear of the multitude who believed Him also to be a prophet. Such is the incorrigible evil of the natural heart unless subdued by divine grace!

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE KING AND HIS OPPONENTS

IN this striking parable which our Lord spoke to the people of Jerusalem toward the end of His ministry, shortly before His going out to the Garden of Gethsemane and from there to the judgment-hall and to the cross, He gave a remarkable dispensational outline of the way God is dealing with men in this scene. It is another parable of the Kingdom of Heaven. It has to do with the sphere of profession, and tells us of what was to go on during the time of the absence of the Lord.*

"And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the

*Having recently preached on this parable I am venturing to make use to a great extent of stenographic notes taken at that time.

guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen"

—vers. 1-14.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son." The "certain King" is God; the Son is Christ Himself; the marriage is the union of believers with Christ, those who put their trust in Him and are thus united to Him. The marriage supper is really the gospel feast—the feast of good things which God has provided for all who will accept His gracious invitation. But observe, the feast is prepared by God for the joy and glory of His own beloved Son. The thought was in the heart of God, and He expressed it by sending the Lord Jesus Christ into the world to save us from our sins. We read that the king "sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come." This first invitation was to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, bidding them come to the marriage feast which the king had prepared. They refused the gracious invitation. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John 1: 11).

The question has been asked often by Jewish people, "If Jesus is really the Messiah, as you say He is, why is it that Israel has been suffering all these years instead of being blessed?" The answer is: He came to save Israel, but when they refused

Him the invitation was extended to the Gentiles. The king sent his servants to call the people of Israel; they had an invitation to the marriage, but they would not come. Jesus said, "Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life" (John 5: 40). They would not enter in and partake of the feast which had been spread. To accept the invitation one must trust Christ for himself.

In the next verse we read, "Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage." Now notice, this is the second invitation, a most urgent one, extended to the same people, telling them that were bidden that the feast was ready. Still they would not come. The king said, "Go again and call them!" After the Lord Jesus ascended to heaven we find Peter and the other apostles, in the early chapters of the Book of Acts, pleading with Israel to repent of the rejection of Christ and turn to Him and trust Him, confessing Him as their Saviour. A few accepted Him, but the great majority spurned Him and actually persecuted His servants. We read, "But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise." Is there anything wrong in owning a farm? Anything wrong in being a merchant? Not at all; unless it keeps you out of heaven! If you get so occupied with your farm, or so taken up with your merchandise that you can-

not lift your eyes above the earth, then there is something tragically wrong with it. Things which are proper in themselves may become wrong if we put them in place of Christ and the gospel. These men to whom the message came, said, "We have too many other things about which we must be concerned: we have our farms to work, merchandise to sell. We cannot consider the king's invitation."

We read, "And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them." There were some who were simply indifferent, and others were positively antagonistic. These actually murdered the servants. Even in those early days hundreds of God's dear people were put to death by those who spurned His message.

Some one reading this may say, "Well, I am not against Christ; I have nothing against the Church, nothing against Christianity. The only thing is I am not really interested. I have too many other things to occupy my mind." You are just like the first class—those who "went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise." Others may be antagonistic to Christ. But notice this: both classes failed to get into the marriage feast. Whether one is simply indifferent or actually antagonistic to the gospel of God, the end will be the same. The question found in Hebrews 2: 3, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" has never been answered. In order to be lost forever it is not necessary to be opposed to Christ. It is not neces-

ary to say definitely, "I reject Jesus." Just neglect Him and you will never get in to the feast. "The road of by-and-by leads to the house of never." You may say, "Some day when conditions are different I am going to think about my soul." But alas, while you are waiting for a more convenient season the end of life may come, and you will find yourself shut out in the darkness forever.

In the next verse we read, "But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city." After Christ had been rejected and crucified, God still waited for some forty years for Israel to repent, but they would not. Then He sent forth His armies. *His* armies? Yes. He is the God of hosts; He is the God of armies. And when a nation has sinned against Him to such a degree that He must deal with them in judgment, He sends the armies of some other people to visit judgment upon them. In this instance it was the Roman armies which He permitted to invade the land and destroy Jerusalem. The final destruction of that city was the fulfilment of the words of the Lord Jesus, "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (24: 2).

The Father thinks so much of His Son that when men deliberately reject and spurn Him, God's indignation is stirred. In His dealings with Israel He really caused Jerusalem to be destroyed, and the

people have been scattered ever since all over the world. They have shown themselves to be unworthy of eternal life.

Is God then going to have an empty banquet-hall? Will there be no one who will accept His invitation and be present for the glory of His Son? Oh, no! God is going to see that His wedding feast is furnished with guests, and He will find them in the most unlikely places. We read, "Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage." Now we see the gospel going out to the Gentiles. Israel had their opportunity; they had an invitation to the feast, but they refused to accept it. So God says to His servants, "Go out into the hedges and the highways; go out among all classes everywhere. No matter what the condition in which men may be, no matter how unclean, no matter how vile and sinful, bid them to the marriage feast; invite them to come in!" And so we read that the servants "went out into the highways, and gathered all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests." It is a graphic picture of what has gone on for the last nineteen hundred years. God's servants have been going from land to land, from city to city, and out into the uttermost parts of the earth. They have been going everywhere inviting poor, lost men to come to the marriage feast which God has pre-

pared for His Son. Many have accepted the invitation. But oh, how many there are among the Gentiles who have rejected Christ and refused to come! Are you one of these? You may have been born in a Christian home and heard the message all your life. Perhaps the first name you learned to pronounce, after learning to say "father" and "mother," was the name of Jesus; and yet you are still unsaved, still in sin and without Christ. Oh, the unspeakable danger in which you stand, for it is written in the Word of God, "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Proverbs 29: 1). Now God is waiting in grace to save you. The invitation is extended. Will you come? Will you take Christ for yourself? Tomorrow the door may be shut.

Some people profess to accept the gospel invitation and yet never really trust Christ as their own Saviour. We read, "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment." Now according to Eastern custom we are informed that when a great personage made a marriage feast for someone in his family, he himself provided suitable garments to be worn by the guests when they sat down to the banquet. Everyone had an opportunity to don a wedding garment. So today God provides a robe of righteousness which all are obligated to accept and wear. You may say, "I am not fit for Him and for heaven; I

am not fit to be numbered among the redeemed." My dear friend, it is because you are not fit; it is because you are a sinner that you are invited to come, and it is He who makes you fit. Will you trust Christ as your Saviour? "All the fitness He requireth is to feel your need of Him." Lack of fitness is therefore no excuse. When sinners come in repentance, trusting in Christ, then He clothes them with the garment of salvation, with the robe of righteousness. This is the wedding garment which makes one presentable at the marriage supper.

There was one man at this feast who professed to accept the invitation, but he did not avail himself of the wedding garment. This man was like many who say today, "I do not think I am so bad. I do not need a Saviour; I am good enough as I am"—men who are trusting in their own righteousness. We read in Romans 10: 3, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

I can visualize this man coming in. There were the king's servants handing out robes to the guests as they entered the door. But when this particular man came he said, "I do not think I need to bother with that robe. I just bought a new outfit, and I do not think I need anything else; I am quite presentable just as I am." "But the king himself has provided this robe. He wants all to wear one," the

servant would reply. The man insists, "Oh, I do not think it will make any difference in my case; the king will be satisfied with me just as I am." And the servant allowed him to pass in. The time came when the guests were gathered at the table. The king comes in, and looks over the guests. He sees this man without a wedding garment, and asks, "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless." He had accepted the invitation to the feast, but had refused the wedding garment so graciously provided. He is like many who join the church but do not receive Christ as their personal Saviour. This shows what will take place some day. When the King looks over the guests He will inquire, "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? How did you dare take your place among those who profess faith in My Son when you are not really born again? How did you dare associate yourself with a Christian company when you were never saved?" This is what it means. And in that day no one will dare offer a word of excuse. Oh, I fancy a little while before, this man was quite ready to explain to the king's servants. He made a good case for himself, but when it came to facing the king he was speechless. You may be relying upon your own good works for your soul's salvation; you may be resting on the fact that you have joined some particular church, perhaps in childhood, and you think that will get you into heaven;

or you may be relying on the facts that you were baptized, and take the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as we call it, or that you have reformed your life, and are no longer living the way you used to live; but "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4: 12), except the name of Jesus.

Saul of Tarsus at one time refused the wedding garment. He thought he was fit for God without it, and thought that he did not need Christ; he had a righteousness of his own. But on the Damascus road he found out that all his righteousnesses were as filthy rags. He caught sight of Christ in glory sitting at God's right hand in heaven, and he exclaimed, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Philippians 3: 7-9). That is the wedding garment—the righteousness of God by faith, which is offered to all; but is upon only those who believe in Christ. Are you wearing the wedding garment? If the King came in to see His guests tonight, would He say to you, "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" You would have noth-

ing to say; you would be speechless. Oh, would it not be best to take your true place in repentance before God and receive Christ as your Saviour? Confess to Him now, "I have not been born again; I am still in my sins with all my religious profession; I am a lost sinner needing a Saviour." If you will make this confession and turn to Him, He is ready to save you.

"Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen." Do you say, "I may not be among the chosen"? You never will be unless you heed the call. The invitation is the call. How many are chosen? Those who respond to the call, those who accept the gift of righteousness, those who trust Christ. Millions are called, but thousands are chosen because the great majority refuse to take God at His Word.

Will you take Christ as your Saviour now? You are called; will you be among the chosen? Will you yield your heart to Him? He waits for your answer. If you refuse you have only the misery and wretchedness of the outer darkness to which to look forward. This means banishment from the King's presence in eternal woe.

That this parable made no impression upon the sin-hardened hearts of many of our Lord's hearers is evident by what followed immediately.

"Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle Him in His talk. And they sent out unto Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that Thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest Thou for any man: for Thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest Thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye Me, ye hypocrites? Show Me the tribute money. And they brought unto Him a penny. And He said unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto Him, Caesar's. Then saith He unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left Him, and went their way"—vers. 15-22.

As we read these verses we marvel at the manner in which the Lord exposed the hypocrisy and deceitfulness of the leaders in Judea, who were very punctilious about the niceties of will-worship, but who knew nothing of divine love welling up in their souls. He who is Truth incarnate was in their midst; yet they sought only to make Him out, if possible, an offender against the law of God and their own customs, in order that He might be discredited before the people, and that their own wickedness in rejecting Him might be excused. But He turned the light upon them, making manifest the evil which they tried to cover by a cloak of religiousness.

They sought "how they might entangle Him in His talk." There was no reality with these religious leaders. They endeavored to set a trap for Jesus, hoping he would incriminate Himself in some way so they could hold Him up to the scorn of the people or report Him to the governor as a rebel against Roman authority.

"The Herodians." These constituted a pro-Roman party in Jewry, who were venal and corrupt and thoroughly worldly-minded. These joined with the professedly pious Pharisees, and came tempting Jesus. "Master, we know that Thou art true." It was a subtle effort to flatter the Lord Jesus and to inveigle Him into saying something which could be used against Him.

"Is it lawful to give tribute . . . or not?" This was a vexed question in Judea. The Pharisees generally answered in the negative, the Herodians in the positive, though both obeyed the law.

"Jesus perceived their wickedness." He "knew what was in man" (John 2:25; 16:30), and so discerned at once the hypocrisy of these crafty questioners.

"Show Me the tribute money." Jewish Palestinian coins were not used for this purpose, but special Roman currency, which was of far greater value.

"Whose is this image and superscription?" These coins bore the emperor's likeness and a Latin inscription of his name and rank.

"Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." In these words Jesus definitely answered their question by showing that the people of God are responsible to Him in things spiritual, but must be obedient to the powers that be in things civil and national.

"They marvelled, and left Him, and went their

way." They perceived the rightfulness and the wisdom of His reply, but they evinced no desire to become His disciples. Wilfully they turned away from Him to follow their own devices.

To stress the first part of the words of Jesus, "Render . . . unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's," while forgetting the last part, "unto God the things that are God's," is to miss altogether the truth He was insisting upon. Are we as much concerned about loyalty to God as we are about loyalty to the country to which we belong and the government under which we live?

It was the materialistic Sadducees who next attempted to put Jesus in opposition to the law of Moses, and to entangle Him in a discussion as to the possibility of the physical resurrection of the dead.

"The same day came to Him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked Him, saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at His doctrine"
—vers. 23-33.

It is questionable whether such an incident, or series of incidents, ever actually occurred as that

which these men put before Jesus. The whole story may have been an imaginary one, designed to cast ridicule upon the doctrine of the resurrection. According to them one woman had been the wife in turn of seven brothers, each one taking her after the brother next older than he had died. Finally, the woman was said to have died, after she had outlived them all. The question raised was, Of whom would she be the wife in the resurrection? Doubtless this seemed an unanswerable question to these cunning deniers of the reality of life after death and a final resurrection. It was designed to show the absurdity of the doctrine of the Pharisees, which Jesus Himself proclaimed as true, as far as this subject was concerned.

But the Lord met them in such a way as to silence their objections, and that from the only part of the Scriptures which they recognized as inspired, the Torah, or the five Books of Moses. He declared their question was based on ignorance of the Sacred Writings and of the power of the omnipotent Creator. Then He cited Jehovah's words to Moses when He revealed Himself at the bush that burned with fire but was not consumed. There God said, "I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:6). He did not say, "I *was* the God of these patriarchs while they lived on earth." He was their God at the very time He spoke to Moses, centuries later. He is not the God of the dead (that is, of men com-

pletely obliterated by death) but of the living, for all (even though dead as far as their bodies are concerned) live unto Him. And this necessarily involves a future resurrection, for God had made promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob which were never fulfilled in their past lives on earth, but shall be fulfilled when they rise again from the dead.

For this the Sadducees had no answer, and the listening multitude were astonished at the manner in which these supposedly astute theologians had been silenced.

It was now the Pharisees' turn to interrogate Jesus. The question put by their chief spokesman was really antagonistic in character. It was designed to draw out the Lord in order to see how far His teaching coincided with that of the law of Moses, or whether it was in opposition to it.

"But when the Pharisees had heard that He had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked Him a question, tempting Him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets"—vers. 34-40.

"He had put the Sadducees to silence." Jesus had silenced these materialists by teaching the resurrection of the dead, which the Sadducees denied, but the Pharisees believed.

"A lawyer . . . tempting Him." This man, evidently an expert in the law of Moses, sought to

confuse and bewilder Jesus by a question which many of the Jewish authorities had debated for centuries, as to the relative importance of each of the Ten Commandments.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," Jesus replied by quoting from Deuteronomy 6:5. If God is loved supremely no one will violate anything He has commanded. This covers particularly the first table of the law, which sets forth man's duty to God.

"The first and great commandment." To violate this is, therefore, in the legal dispensation, the greatest of all sins.

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This was a quotation from Leviticus 19:18, and covers all of the second table, for "love worketh no ill to his neighbour" (Romans 13:10). He who loves mankind in this way will not violate any of the laws that have to do with the rights of others (Romans 13:8, 9).

"On these . . . hang all the law and the prophets." Where love reigns all else will be as it should be, for no one who truly loves God and his neighbor will intentionally wrong either (Matthew 7:12). All the law and the prophets hang therefore upon these two commandments cited by Jesus, for every sin that we might possibly commit is either a wrong done to God Himself or to our fellow-men. The salvation provided for us is first of all an atonement, or propitiation, to meet all our sins, and then a re-

generation to enable us to love God and our neighbor so as to cease from sin.

When the heart is right with God, and He is loved supremely, man too will be loved unselfishly, and so the whole life will be ordered in obedience to the divine Word. Love delights to serve the one loved, and thus it preserves from all that would grieve God or injure one's neighbor. But no natural man has ever thus fulfilled the law. The selfishness that is inherent in our very natures renders this impossible. When renewed by divine grace, the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). Our Lord's teaching was designed to convict of sin and to make manifest the need of regeneration. Man has become alienated from God through the fall. When born again by the Word and the Holy Spirit, he receives eternal life. It is the very nature of this new life to love, because it is divine (2 Peter 1:4). Therefore love becomes the controlling principle of the life of the man in Christ. Walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit, the righteousness of the law comes to fulfilment in Him (Romans 8:4), and he finds it as easy to love God and his neighbor as before it was easy to live in selfishness and ill will toward others. A new power dominates him. This is the positive evidence of the new birth (1 John 3:14; 5:1,2).

Having thus answered all the questions put to Him, Jesus turned the tables upon His adversaries by asking two of them:

"While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He? They say unto Him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool? If David then call Him Lord, how is He his Son? And no man was able to answer Him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions"

—vers. 41-46.

"What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?" These are questions that will not down. After nearly twenty centuries since Jesus asked them they are as pertinent as ever, and still demand honest answers from every man to whom the message of the gospel comes. For that gospel is concerning Him who is both Son of God and Son of David (Romans 1:1-4). According to the Scriptures the Christ—that is, the Messiah, Israel's promised King—was more than man. "His goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting," so declared Micah when he foretold the place where He was to be born (5:2). According to the Second Psalm Jehovah owned Him as His Son. Many other scriptures attested the same thing—scriptures that were well known to these Pharisees. Ignoring the passages that indicated His divine paternity however, they answered, "The Son of David."

This was true, but it was not all the truth. So Jesus directed their attention to Psalm 110 where David himself speaks of Messiah as his Lord, saying, "The *LORD* said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." It is well known that "LORD" in small

capitals in our English New Testament stands for Jehovah. The second word for Lord means "Master." So David, looking forward in the Spirit to the exaltation of his Son sees Him seated on Jehovah's right hand, and owns Him as his Lord. How could this be explained? The Pharisees had no answer, nor did anyone after this dare ask Jesus any more questions.

It is a solemn thing to be so determined to take one's own way that the heart refuses to bow even to the plainest words of Holy Scripture.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

THE KING'S INDICTMENTS

WHILE the Lord Jesus came not to condemn the world but to save all who would believe in Him, He expressed Himself in terms of great severity against those who, while professedly the guardians of the Scriptures, lived hypocritically and opposed the truth that He proclaimed, thereby misleading their unwary followers. Yet so long as they were the readers of the law in the synagogues He would have the people take heed to the Word of God which they professed to honor, but to be careful not to imitate the corrupt lives of those who expounded it to them.

"Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to His disciples, saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi: for One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for One is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for One is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted"—vers. 1-12.

The term "Moses' seat" indicates the place that the Pharisees and the scribes occupied as the recognized teachers of the law given by Moses. When they read and explained its precepts their hearers were responsible to obey, not because of any inherent authority vested in them, but because of the truth they made known. But He drew a marked distinction between their words and their ways. They expounded and preached to others what they did not attempt to practice themselves. It is a terrible thing for those who occupy the place of preachers or teachers of the Word when they simply traffic in truth that has never affected their own lives.

These leaders in Israel formed a kind of clerical caste who were most outspoken in denouncing the sins and frailties of the people in general, but they themselves were simply complacent as they gave punctilious attention to the outward signs of religion. They knew nothing of genuine piety and holiness of heart and life.

They were not concerned about the approval of the God they professed to honor, but were constantly looking for men's applause. It is always a snare when one feels he has a certain reputation of godliness to maintain before his fellows. It is so easy to succumb to the temptation of trying to appear more devoted than one really is. The only right thing is to live before God and to be utterly indifferent to men's praise or blame.

The Pharisees sought to attract attention to their religiousness even by their garb. Wearing the broad phylacteries that seemed to indicate greater reverence for the Scriptures than others, and with the fringes on their garments conspicuously enlarged they delighted in the reverence accorded them; so that they were given the seats of honor at the appointed feasts and in the services of the synagogue; while in public places generally they were greeted with their highly prized titles of "Rabbi, Rabbi!" Who can fail to see in all this a picture of what is very common today in many ecclesiastical circles?

Against all this outward show of piety Jesus solemnly warned His disciples, "Be not ye called Rabbi." They were not to seek honorable recognition from their fellows but were to realize that Christ Himself was their Teacher, or Master, and they were but brethren—all of one great family. As born from above they were to call no man father upon earth, for God Himself was their Father. Is it not strange that this definite command is so flagrantly disregarded by those who call their so-called priests, *Father*?

Because of the readiness with which His disciples were inclined to seek honor one over another, Jesus repeated the admonition, "Neither be ye called masters: for One is your Master, even Christ." The word really means "leader," but was generally understood as teacher or master.

Certainly Jesus did not mean that His followers were to despise the gifts He gives—among which are teachers, though a different word is used—which are to be owned and valued by the saints as given for their edification. But we are not to have men's persons in admiration because of worldly advantage.

On the part of those thus entrusted with a special ministry there should be no self-seeking, but service in love, as following Christ's own example. For he who exalts himself will be abased in due time, even as he who humbles himself shall be exalted by the Lord who values all service that is done with a single eye to His glory.

Eight woes follow, uttered by the Lord in judgment upon the religious leaders whose spirit and behavior were so opposed to their profession. The first woe is found in verse 13:

"But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."

This judgment is pronounced because of opposition to the Word of the Kingdom, in which they had no interest, and they endeavored to hinder others who might become concerned. It is a very serious thing to stand in the way of anyone who might otherwise be prepared to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

The second woe was against those who used a profession and outward appearance of piety as a cloak.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation"—vers. 14.

Solomon tells us that the prayer of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord (Proverbs 28:9). How much more when such prayer is used to build up a reputation for godliness while actually living in hypocrisy.

The third woe is against proselytism, when they themselves were so unreal.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves"—vers. 15.

It is characteristic of sectarians generally that they are far more concerned about obtaining adherents to their special beliefs than winning lost souls for Christ. Those thus perverted become ardent advocates of the system with which they identify themselves, and as a rule trust in their association for ultimate salvation, so entering into a worse state than before they were proselytized. It is harder to reach and awaken the adherent of a false cult than to bring a godless worldling to see his lost condition and his need of salvation.

The fourth woe is against those who use vain and profane oaths.

"Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but

whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by Him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by Him that sitteth thereon"—vers. 16-22.

One of the most striking evidences of anyone's illogical reasoning is when he lays greater stress upon secondary things than upon those of major importance. These blind guides, as Jesus called them, put more emphasis upon the gold with which the temple building was enriched and adorned than upon the sanctuary itself; so that with them to take an oath on the gold of the temple meant more than to swear by the sacred building in which God had dwelt of old.

In the same spirit they put the offering above the altar in holiness; whereas it was the altar that sanctified the gifts placed upon it. That altar typified Christ, and the gifts and offerings represented various aspects of His work. But He had to be who He was, the Eternal Son of God become flesh, in order to do what He did. To swear by the altar was therefore to swear by all that was placed upon it, and to swear by the temple was to swear by Him who dwelt therein, even as to swear by heaven (a most frequent thing) is to take an oath by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it. All such oaths were forbidden very definitely by the Lord on a former occasion (Matthew 5: 33-37).

The fifth woe was pronounced on those who were inclined to over-emphasize trifling details of the law while utterly ignoring the weightier matters with which it dealt.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel!"
—vers. 23-24.

To tithe even the cheapest of herbs was quite right in itself, but to lay special stress upon this and advertise it as though indicating remarkable scrupulosity, while neglecting matters of a far greater importance, indicated a conscience that was unexercised and a spirit insubject to God. He would have those who professed obedience to His law careful to exercise discernment and mercy and faith. He who is thus exercised will not neglect things of less weight and importance.

The sixth woe was against those who set a great value upon ceremonial cleansings, while overlooking the importance of a clean heart and a pure life.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also"—vers. 25-26.

They were likened to a housekeeper who was very careful to have her cups and other vessels clean outwardly, while inside they were filthy and uncleansed. God desires truth in the inward parts.

Where the heart is purified by faith the outward behavior will be in accordance with it.

The seventh woe is somewhat similar, but is an even stronger condemnation of the toleration of hidden corruption while pretending to godliness and devotion.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity"—vers. 27-28.

These hypocrites were like beautifully adorned and whitened tombs which appear pleasant and often majestic in the sight of men, but are full of decaying bodies and of all uncleanness. Such are they who appear to be righteous before men but within are full of dissimulation and lawlessness.

The last woe, making a complete octave of denunciation of hypocrisy, was pronounced upon those who honored the memory of the former prophets while refusing to obey their words.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"—vers. 29-33.

How characteristic was the glaring error of these pretenders to appreciation of the faithful testimony of men of God in past centuries! Just as the de-

scendents of those who vilified Martin Luther in his day and generation now vie with one another in lauding his genius and intrepidity, or the children of those who detested the stand taken by Abraham Lincoln are often loudest in his praise, so these Pharisees honored the memory of Isaiah whom their fathers sawed asunder, or Jeremiah who was imprisoned in a filthy dungeon by the religious leaders of his times, or Zechariah, slain between the porch and the altar by zealous contenders for that which the prophet denounced. Yet there was no evidence that these scribes and Pharisees accepted and acted upon the admonitions of those whose sepulchres they garnished, but they showed by their attitude toward the King in their midst that they were of the same spirit as their ungodly fathers.

While boasting that if they had been alive in the days of old their response would have been different, their present behavior proved the opposite. It was for them to fill up the measure of their fathers in the final rejection of the Lord of glory.

Condign judgment therefore awaited them. Their words and their behavior proved them to be a generation of vipers, the seed of the serpent—that old serpent which is the devil and Satan—how then could they escape participation in his judgment?

The Lord then sums up the guilt of that unbelieving generation and pronounces its doom:

“Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute

them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation"—vers. 34-36.

Messenger after messenger had been sent by God to Israel, but they had spurned and rejected them all. They would do the same to those who rebuked their sins and hypocrisy. Morally they were no different from those who had shed the blood of all the righteous from Abel to one of the last of the prophets. Their hearts remained unchanged and their consciences seared; therefore, the ire of God must be vented upon them.

Although God could not do otherwise, consistently with His holy character, than to deal with them in judgment because of their wickedness, the heart of the Lord grieved over them and longed even yet for their deliverance. Pathetic indeed is the lament with which He concluded this most solemn discourse.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord"—vers. 37-39.

Jerusalem, the city of the great King, knew not the time of her visitation. He who would have saved and brought in the promised Kingdom blessings, was in their midst and they knew Him not. Had they only turned to Him in repentance He would

have sheltered them from judgment as a hen protects her chickens from the hawk seeking to destroy them. But they would not receive Him. They were responsible, therefore, for their own condemnation.

Because they rejected Him, He rejected them nationally for the present time. They should not see Him henceforth until they were ready to own Him as their King, crying in the words of the 118th Psalm with which "the poor of the flock" had greeted Him as He rode into the city a few days before, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Ere that day this whole dispensation of grace—the period of the revelation of the mystery of the Church as the one Body of Christ—was to come in. At present God is gathering out of all nations a people to the name of His Son; not till that work is completed, will Israel as a nation look upon Him whom they pierced and acclaim Him as their Redeemer and King.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE KING REVEALS THE FUTURE

Part One

CHAPTERS 24 and 25 are very closely linked together. They give us what Sir Robert Anderson has called, "The second Sermon on the Mount." All that we have here was uttered by our Lord on the Mount of Olives in answer to the questions of His disciples, "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and the end of the world (or age)?" They deserve a much more careful consideration than we can give them here. In chapter 24 He shows the conditions that will prevail in the world during the time of His rejection and, more particularly, in what the prophet Daniel calls "the time of the end," the great tribulation immediately preceding our Lord's return as Son of Man, to set up the Kingdom of Heaven on this earth in power and glory. In the three parables of chapter 25 we have, first, in that of the virgins, the responsibilities resting upon His people during His absence and the importance of being ready to greet Him when He returns. In that of the talents we are reminded of the account which every servant will have to give in that day for whatever ability has been entrusted to him; and in the last we have the judgment of the living nations when

the Son of Man comes in the clouds of heaven, with His holy angels, and sits upon the throne of His glory.

This judgment of the nations on the earth at that time is not to be confounded with the judgment of the wicked dead, when the great white throne is set up at the end of the kingdom age, which will be also the end of the world. The contrast is very noticeable between that scene in Revelation 20: 11-15 and the pre-millennial judgment of Matthew 25: 31-46. The two events are separated by a thousand years.

After His most solemn denunciation of the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees and His expression of grief over the blindness and insubjection of the people of Jerusalem the Lord left the temple courts where He had been preaching and teaching, and with His disciples walked across the brook Kedron to the Mount of Olives. Ere they left the city the disciples attempted to arouse His admiration for the beautiful buildings on the temple site.

"And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and His disciples came to Him for to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down"—vers. 1-2.

When Jesus so spoke it must have seemed a prophecy which was unlikely to be fulfilled. In the eyes of His followers those buildings looked substantial enough to stand for many centuries. Yet

His words were to be proven true after a probationary period of forty years. Evidently the disciples linked the prediction of Jesus to what He had said on former occasions concerning His second coming; and so, after they had reached and were seated upon the Mount that overlooked the fair but doomed city, they put three questions to Him:

"And as He sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world"—vers. 3.

Note the questions in order:

1. "When shall these things be?" That is, when shall Jerusalem be destroyed? The answer to this is given more fully in Luke's report of His discourse (Luke 21: 20-24).

2. "What shall be the sign of Thy coming?" Both Matthew here and Mark in his thirteenth chapter give the answer to this.

3. "What shall be the sign of . . . the end (consummation, or full end) of the age?" It is not the world as such but the age, of which they spoke. This is answered here and also in the corresponding passage in the Gospel according to Mark. Each Evangelist wrote as guided by the Holy Spirit. In verses 4 to 8 Matthew deals particularly with the characteristics of the entire present age until Christ returns. Then in verses 9 to 14 he emphasizes the signs of the last days. Verse 15 brings in the beginning of the great tribulation, as predicted also

in Daniel 12:11. Verses 16 to 28 give details of that time of trouble. Verses 29 to 31 bring us to the end of the age and the coming of the Son of Man. The rest of the chapter gives illustrations and admonitions, all based on what has gone before.

Let us consider the first section.

"And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows"—vers. 4-8.

The conditions depicted here have marked all the centuries since the Lord returned to heaven. They do not in themselves tell us of the nearness of His return, but they show us how badly this poor world needs a competent Ruler and how all creation groans as it waits for His advent.

"Take heed that no man deceive you." Satan works by imitation. He seeks to ensnare by counterfeiting everything that is of God. Hence the necessity to be on guard constantly against his deceptions. We need to test everything by the Holy Scriptures.

"Many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ." The number of impostors or antichrists have been legion. Often such men, and occasionally women, have given every evidence of paranoia; but many have been wilful deceivers. No one would

ever have been led astray by such pretenders to Messiahship if they had remembered that Christ is not coming again to earth as He came before, through the gate of birth. He will come as the Lord from heaven accompanied by the whole celestial train.

"The end is not yet." Ever since He ascended to heaven wars and rumors of wars have been constant reminders of man's folly in rejecting the Prince of Peace; but these are not evidences of the closing up of the age. It is a mistake to look upon the conflicts of nations as being in themselves signs that the second advent is close at hand.

Verse seven depicts a series of great wars in which many nations and kingdoms will be engaged. Such conflicts have been frequent during the past nineteen hundred years and have increased in intensity and frightfulness during the last century; so that the World Wars of 1914-18 and 1939-45 have been the worst mankind has ever known. As the aftermath of widespread warfare there invariably succeed famines and pestilences. To these plagues are added here earthquakes in many places, which would seem to imply a great increase in natural convulsions as the end draws nigh.

"All these are the beginning of sorrows." They are to be succeeded by far worse and more startling conditions ere the Son of Man appears in person to bring in the kingdom which was rejected when He was here the first time.

The secret of the rapture of the Church, prior to the end-time is not introduced here in this great prophetic discourse. That was still a hidden mystery when Jesus spoke these words. There is no time set for it, nor are there any signs indicated. The signs here all have to do with His revelation from heaven as the King who is to return to take His great power and reign. The coming of the Son of Man refers always to this event, never to the Rapture.

The conditions depicted in verses 9 to 14 fit perfectly with the first half of the unfulfilled seventieth week of Daniel; and therefore it is quite possible that the Rapture should be fitted in between verses 8 and 9. On the other hand, similar conditions have taken place again and again during the so-called Christian centuries, but they will be accentuated in the time of the end.*

"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for My name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come"—vers. 9-14.

"Ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake." The martyrdom of the saints, first under pagan rule, then under Papal Rome, and later under vari-

*The perplexed reader might find help in the author's *Lectures on Daniel the Prophet*, and *The Great Parenthesis*. In these the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks is fully explained.

ous other evil systems, is not to be ignored when considering this prophecy. Martyrdom will not cease when the Church of God is caught away. Then the Lord will call out a new testimony when He takes Israel up once more; and many of His witnesses, in those dark days, will be called upon to lay down their lives during the reign of the Imperial atheistic Beast-power of the last days and his satellite, the personal Antichrist. So that these predictions will have a double fulfilment—during the present age of grace, and in the coming period of judgment.

Then there will be great apostasy when many shall be stumbled, and faithful servants of God will be betrayed by their closest relatives. This, too, has had a partial fulfilment during this dispensation. History repeats itself, both in the professing church and in the world.

The closer we come to the end the more active will Satan be, knowing his time is short. So "many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many."

Because of abounding iniquity those professing allegiance to Christ will be grievously tested; and where love was only superficial it will become cold, and so apostasy will prevail.

The test of reality in any age is endurance. So it is now, and so it will be in the day of grief and sorrow that lies ahead of Christendom. "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." In order to fit these solemn words into the truth

revealed elsewhere of the believer's eternal security, it is not necessary to say that they apply solely to the tribulation period. It is true always that only those who endure shall be finally saved. But when one has been born of God and so received eternal life he will endure. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5: 4). He who makes a profession of faith in Christ and then in the hour of testing repudiates it and goes back like a dog to his vomit, or a sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire (2 Peter 2: 20-22) gives evidence that he was never born of the Word and Spirit of God. Had such an one been a sheep belonging to the Good Shepherd he would never have been attracted to the hog-wallow.

The great tribulation in its full sense will begin in the midst of the seventieth week—that is, of the last seven years of Daniel's great time-prophecy. It will be ushered in by the setting up of the abomination that maketh desolate. To this the next section refers.

"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall

be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; inso-much that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth: behold, He is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together"—vers. 15-28.

We have here a graphic portrayal of the outstanding events of the time of trouble, "such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time" (Daniel 12: 1).

The abomination of desolation of old (Daniel 11: 31) was an image set up by Antiochus Epi-phanes, King of Syria, in the temple at Jerusalem, after he had defiled the sanctuary by offering a sow upon the altar and sprinkling its blood in the holy places. The abomination of desolation in the future will evidently be some outward recognition of the apostate power and the antichrist. Forewarned by this prophecy saints in those days will recognize this, and it will be to them the signal to flee from Jerusalem and from Palestine to "the wilderness of the people" (Ezekiel 20: 35), where they will be hidden from the wrath of the Beast and his followers, "until the indignation be overpast" (Isaiah 26: 20). These will be "the brethren" of the Lord of whom He speaks in the next chapter, when He pictures the judgment of the nations which will be living on the earth when the Son of Man shall come in His glory.

These faithful Jews, the remnant so often spoken of in the prophets, will flee in haste, not waiting to take their goods and chattels with them, lest the fury of the antichrist burst upon them.

They are exhorted to pray that their flight be not in the winter nor on the sabbath day. This, in itself, indicates a different condition of things to that prevailing in this present age. While this remnant will be waiting for the manifestation of Messiah, they will be on Jewish ground, under law because not as yet having entered into the liberty of grace.

"Then shall be great tribulation: "—Such distress as had not been known from the world's beginning unto that time. So terrible will be the conditions that unless God in mercy shortens the days there should no flesh be saved. But for the sake of the elect—not the elect of the Church but of Israel—He will shorten the days. They are numbered as actually 1260 days in the Book of the Revelation. This would be three-and-one-half years, made up of thirty-day months, and so considerably shorter than the full time if the years were counted as of 365 days each.

In the time of trouble all who have turned to God will be looking for the Son of Man to return and give deliverance. Satan will attempt to deceive them by offering false christs, and, above all, presenting the personal antichrist himself as the expected one. But those who know God and rely upon His Word—

"the very elect"—will be prepared to refuse all such deceptions.

If told that Messiah has come already and is manifesting Himself in the desert they are not to go forth seeking Him there. If told He is hidden in some secret place they are not to believe it. For His coming will be in visible manifested glory when He shines forth from heaven as lightning flaming athwart the sky.

As the great tribulation moves on to its culmination apostate Judaism, centering in Jerusalem, will be as a putrid carcass against which the eagles (or vultures) will be gathered together. This is a vivid picture of the gathering of the armies of "all nations against Jerusalem to battle," as foretold in Zechariah 14 and other scriptures.

The second advent will take place at the very time when it will seem as though Satan's triumph is complete.

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other"

—vers. 29-31.

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days . . . then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven." There are many who hold and teach that the great tribulation is past already: that it referred

to the great persecution for over two centuries under pagan Rome, or to the worse persecutions under Papal Rome in the years preceding and following the Protestant Reformation. But our Lord tells us definitely here that His second advent is to follow at once upon the close of that time of trouble; so that it is evident that this day of trial is yet in the future. When it comes to its complete fulfilment there will be remarkable manifestations among the heavenly bodies and the Son of Man will be seen "coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." The tribes of the earth, or more properly, of the land, will then mourn as predicted in Zechariah 12:10-12 when they look upon Him whom they once rejected, and whom they pierced, as they realize at last that He is the King, the Anointed One for whose coming they have waited so long.

Then the great trumpet shall be blown (Isaiah 27:13), and the angels will gather together the elect from all quarters of the earth, those who in that time of testing will have received the kingdom message and so be prepared to welcome the King at His return. This is not at all the same event as the rapture of 1 Thessalonians 4. There the saints living and dead will be changed and raised from the grave, and caught up to meet the Lord in the air. But when the Son of Man descends to the earth His elect will be gathered from the four winds to greet Him as their King and Deliverer. Thus at long last shall the throne of David be set up again in

Jerusalem, and the law shall go forth from Mount Zion, where Christ Himself shall reign in righteousness for a thousand glorious years, as we learn in Revelation 20.

In the next section the Lord gives the answer to the question, "What shall be the sign of Thy coming?"

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree: When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away"

—vers. 32-35.

The pre-eminent sign that the time for the appearing of the Son of Man has drawn near is that of the budding fig-tree. The fig-tree is the well-known symbol of Israel nationally. For many centuries the scattered Israelites, once owned by God as His own covenant people, have had no national existence. But today they are returning to Palestine in large numbers and once more indulging in the sense of again being a distinct nation. Thus the fig-tree is putting forth its green leaves, and thereby proclaiming the near return of Him who is yet to be acknowledged as their Messiah and King. At present they are going back in unbelief, as the Scriptures indicate they would, for it is after many have returned to the land that the nation will be regenerated. If the new life manifested in the fig-tree heralds the approach of the day of Israel's blessing how near must be the hour of the rapture!

How verse 33 should speak to the people of God today as well as to the remnant of Israel in days to come! "When ye see these things, know that He is near, even at the doors" (marginal reading).

His return is certain, for His Word can never fail. Though heaven and earth should pass away His words shall never pass away.

The very uncertainty as to the actual time of the second advent furnishes the basis for the warning words that follow:

"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left"—vers. 36-41.

The comparison of the antediluvian world with that which will exist at the Lord's return negatives the idea indulged in and propagated by many that all mankind is to be converted ere that day comes. Such an expectation is but an idle dream without any scriptural teaching to support it. As it was in the days of Noah so will the coming of the Son of Man be. In the days preceding the flood men lived carelessly and self-indulgently. Corruption and violence filled the earth. God's message given

through Noah was spurned as an idle tale. While insensible to their danger the flood came and destroyed them all. So will it be at the Lord's coming.

Then two will be working in the field, one a believer and the other an unbeliever. The latter will be taken away by judgment; the other will be left to enter the kingdom and enjoy its blessings. Likewise shall it be with two women grinding corn for the morning meal. This passage is often applied to the separation at the Rapture, and it is quite possible to so use it. But in that case we would understand the righteous would be caught away to meet the Lord in the air, and the other left to endure the judgment of the tribulation era.

No one can know beforehand just when the Son of Man will return. It will behoove all, therefore, who live in that day of trial to be ever watching lest He come as a thief in the night.

Responsibility to live for God and witness for Christ while waiting and watching for His appearing is what is stressed in the closing verses of the chapter.

"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth"—vers. 45-51.

It is a great responsibility to be put in trust with any measure of divine truth. What is given is not for our own information alone but to be passed on to others. "It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2). Those to whom the Lord has made known His purpose and counsels are therefore called upon to act as good stewards of the manifold grace of God, sharing with the household of faith the spiritual food for their encouragement and edification. The servant who fulfils his responsibilities along this line will be duly rewarded in the day of manifestation. But if any attempt to trifle with the truth, putting far off the coming of the Master, and live selfishly, manifesting a haughty, over-bearing spirit, they will have to face the Judge at an unexpected hour, and will be given their portion with the hypocrites. Such a false servant is of course not a true child of God at all, but he will be judged nevertheless according to the profession he has made. It is a very serious thing to use one's knowledge of the truth of God for selfish enrichment, with no real concern for those to whose needs one is called to minister.

All service is to be in view of the coming again of the King when His faithful servants will have their places appointed in the kingdom according to the measure of their devotedness during the day of testimony.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE.

THE KING REVEALS THE FUTURE

Part Two

WE have here a continuation of the same discourse as that reported in the previous chapter. There are three parables, each designed to present special aspects of truth in connection with the second coming of Christ.

The parable of the ten virgins has been the subject of considerable controversy. Questions, which are confusing and contradictory, have been raised as to its exact application. It would seem to apply to the entire period during which the professed people of God are waiting for the fulfilment of the promised return of the Bridegroom. It is definitely a parable of the Kingdom of Heaven, and that in its mystical form, as are all the kingdom parables from chapter 13 on; therefore, it would be a mistake to shift it in application solely to the tribulation period, and to endeavor to make the virgins represent only the Jewish remnant rather than the Church in accountability or responsibility, as the number ten suggests.

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh"—vers. 1-13.

It is well to remember that the word "virgin" means also maiden. Too much should not be made of the former usage here. The ten virgins do not necessarily represent born again people, but those who by profession are in the place of testimony on earth. Of this the lamps speak. Five maidens are wise and five foolish. The wise have the oil of grace to replenish their lamps; the foolish have lamps but no oil. All professedly go forth to meet the Bridegroom, and while He tarries they all slumber and sleep. This answers perfectly to what took place in Christendom, when, in the dark ages, the hope of the Lord's return was lost sight of, and the whole professing church slept until awakened by the clarion call, when the darkness was deepest, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him!"

Ever since the Reformation this midnight cry has been sounding but becoming ever clearer as the end nears. With it there came a great awakening. The wise unto salvation trimmed their lamps: their

testimony became brighter. But those who were unreal found that they were without oil to replenish their lamps. The wise could not impart to them but directed them to the source of supply; and we are told that the Bridegroom came while they went to buy. Those who were ready went in to the marriage, but the rest were left outside. They knocked for admittance later but found they were too late. From within came the voice of the Bridegroom saying, "I know you not." They were shut out forever.

The admonition that follows is simply, "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour." The words "wherein the Son of Man cometh" are not found in the best manuscripts. It is not the coming of the Son of Man that is in view here, but the return of the Bridegroom.

As we consider the second parable we should be careful to distinguish between reward for service and salvation by grace. All who trust in the Lord Jesus are saved, and this altogether apart from human merit. But all who profess to believe in Him are responsible to serve Him and to use whatever gift, ability, or means they have for His glory and to further His interests in this world. There are those who profess to be servants who are not even born of the Spirit. But God holds men accountable for what they know and profess. It is incumbent on all who believe His Word to serve wholeheartedly in view of the day when every one of us

shall give an account. In that solemn hour no one will regret having been too much concerned about living for Him, but many will rue the hours spent in selfishness and folly which might have been used for His glory, and talents wasted or hidden away that if properly invested in the light of eternity would have earned Christ's "Well done." He will reward all that is in accordance with His Word (1 Corinthians 3: 13).

It was when the master returned that he took account of his servants. And it will be at the return of our Lord Jesus that He will summon His servants to stand before His judgment-seat, not to be condemned for their sins, for that judgment is past (John 5: 24), but to render an account of their service. Both for Israel and the Church rewards are to be given out at His coming. See Isaiah 62: 11; Revelation 22: 12.

The wicked and slothful servant does not represent a child of God, because he is cast into the outer darkness. He has nothing for which he can be rewarded. It is otherwise with those who are regenerated. Of them it is written that in that day, "shall every man have praise of God" (1 Corinthians 4: 5). This refers, of course, not to every man as such, but to every one of those who appear at the judgment-seat of Christ, where only believers will stand.

If we use whatever gifts we have, no matter how small and insignificant they may seem, in dependence

on God, we shall find our capacity for service increasing constantly. We are told to covet earnestly the best gifts (1 Corinthians 12: 31), and to use them in love.

Nothing is gained by quibbling as to the exact dispensational place of this lesson. The principle is the same whether applied to the Church now or to the remnant of Israel after the Rapture. The important thing is to see that we use aright what we have received of the Lord.

"For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath

ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth"—vers. 14-30.

"A man travelling into a far country." Note that the italicized words in the A. V. should be eliminated. This parable has a very broad application. It refers to all of Christ's servants during His absence in heaven. He has "delivered unto them His goods." They are to act for Him as His representatives in the world until He returns.

"Every man according to his several ability." All have some talents, which we are responsible to use to further the work of the Lord in this scene. "It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2).

"Traded with the same." Both the five-talent man and the two-talent one were faithful with what they had. Each doubled his lord's money by using wisely and carefully what was entrusted to him. This was all that could be expected of them.

"Hid his lord's money." This man thought he had so little, as compared with the others, it was not worth endeavoring to do anything with it. He hid it in the earth, thinking that the best he could do would be not to squander it. He was an unworthy servant, without vision or a true sense of responsibility.

"The lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them." On his return he called each one to

account for the use of that which had been committed to him. So it will be at the judgment-seat of Christ when our Saviour returns (2 Corinthians 5: 9, 10).

"I have gained . . . five talents more." This servant was able to give an account with joy (Hebrews 13: 17). He had used his talents faithfully, and he could be certain of his lord's commendation.

"Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things." Because of his integrity and wisdom during his lord's absence, the servant was rewarded by a special place of trust and confidence when he returned. So will it be at Christ's return for those who have been faithful to Him in this time of testing.

"He also that had received two talents came." This man had less to do with, but he was as truly faithful as his fellow-servant who had so much more. We are held accountable for what we have, not what we do not have (2 Corinthians 8: 12).

"Well done, good and faithful servant." This man receives the same commendation as the other, for he, too, had doubled what was entrusted to him; so he also is accorded a place of authority in the kingdom.

"I knew thee that thou art an hard man." The one-talent man seeks to put the blame of his failure to produce upon his master. He was like those who blame the Lord because of their limited gifts, and who do not realize that to whom little is given, of

him shall little be required, but who are, nevertheless, responsible to use faithfully what they have. On the other hand, he who has received much is the more accountable (Luke 12: 48).

"There thou hast that is thine." He had failed utterly in regard to the very purpose for which the talent was entrusted to him, yet he sought to justify his negligence and supposed his lord would be satisfied.

"Thou wicked and slothful servant." It is wicked to be disobedient. It is slothfulness to fail to act energetically. This servant had to suffer because he failed to carry out the purpose of the master, as made known to him.

"Then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury." If nothing else, the servant should have put out the money at interest and thus have added something to what he had received. He represents those who, while professing to be Christ's servants, do not really know Him at all and so do not seek to obey His Word. Eternal issues hang upon the right use of what we receive from the Lord.

The slothful servant lost everything, even his profession was taken from him. The Lord's words may sound strange, but they are readily understood if we realize that what is in view is profit as a result of using his talent aright. That which he had misused was taken from him and added to the ten talents held by the first servant; while the unprofitable one was cast into outer darkness—an Oriental

expression for the disfavor of the Master. There he wept over his loss even while he gnashed his teeth in anger because of the judgment inflicted upon him.

Throughout this entire section (chapters 22 to 25), which gives us our Lord's controversy with the Pharisees, Sadducees, and other leaders in Israel, and His great prophecies as to His second advent and the judgment of the nations, one thing stands out crystal-clear: That which counts with God is not slavish adherence to legalistic forms, rites, or ceremonies, but a life controlled by divine love. This is the paramount evidence of the new birth (1 John 3: 14), and in the present dispensation is the specific proof that one is indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5: 5). It is important that we have a proper understanding of this section of the Gospel of Matthew, viewing it in connection with God's dealings with His earthly people, the Jewish nation, and with the Gentiles in connection with their attitude toward Israel. On the other hand, we shall lose a great deal for our own souls if we limit it to this dispensational aspect. We need to remember that moral and spiritual realities are the same in all ages, and the love that is here declared to be the fulfilment of all the Law and the Prophets will be manifested in the lives of all "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8: 4).

Love is, therefore, in the truest sense, the law or controlling principle of the new life. It is that per-

fect law of liberty of which the Epistle of James speaks (1: 25). It is so designated because the renewed soul delights to do that which glorifies God and blesses his fellow-men, whether brethren in the faith or belonging to the world that lieth in the wicked one (1 John 5: 19, R. V.). The Christian will love the sinner even while he hates his sin. And in this he but manifests the divine nature, for this, too, is God's attitude toward the world.

We show our love for Christ by our concern for His own. This is true in all dispensations, for in every age the new nature which believers receive is the same. Its very first characteristic is love. After the Church has been caught up to meet the Lord in the air a new witness will be raised up on earth. The wise in Israel, enlightened by the Word and sealed as the servants of God, will go to the nations, proclaiming the everlasting gospel. The attitude of the nations toward them will determine their destiny when the King returns and sets up His throne of judgment.

"When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me. Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, and fed Thee? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger and took Thee

in? or naked, and clothed Thee? or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me. Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungred, and ye gave Me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in: naked, and ye clothed Me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited Me not. Then shall they also answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal"—vers. 31-46.

"When the Son of Man shall come in His glory." The coming of the Son of Man refers always to our Lord's second advent, when He will come back to the earth, in manifested glory, to set up the kingdom which the prophets foretold. This expression is never used in connection with His coming to the air for His Church—a mystery still unrevealed when this discourse was given (1 Corinthians 15:51).

"Before Him shall be gathered all nations." This sessional judgment is to be distinguished from the judgment of the great white throne of Revelation 20, which will not take place on the earth at all, but will be the judgment of the wicked dead. This which is before us here is a judgment of living nations prior to the Millennium. The other—that of the great white throne—is after it ends and the heavens and earth of the present order have vanished away. But this judgment, like the other, is according to works. The *sheep* are those in whom

divine life is manifested by their loving care for those who belong to Christ. The *goats* are bereft of this, and speak of the unrepentant, who did not respond to Christ's messengers.

The "right hand" is the place of acceptance: "the left" hand, of rejection.

"Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." The kingdom mentioned here is that spoken of in Daniel and other prophetic Books (Daniel 7: 13, 14). It is not to be confounded with the heavenly inheritance, but will be set up on this earth at our Lord's second advent, when He shall be revealed as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Timothy 6: 15), and His world-kingdom will supersede all human dominions (Daniel 2: 44).

"I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat." We are not to suppose that the salvation of these Gentiles will be on the ground of works, but their works will prove the reality of their faith. The same principle comes out in John 5: 28, 29, where our Lord speaks of the two resurrections—the first, for those who have done good, and the second, for those who have done evil. In each case, their works demonstrate the state of the heart.

"Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred . . . ?" Notice these "sheep" are designated "the righteous." This in itself speaks of new birth, for apart from that there are none righteous (Romans 3: 10). These disavow any recognition of merit in themselves.

They will not even be conscious of having ministered to Christ in any worthy manner. Hence their question as to when such services had been rendered.

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." The Lord Jesus ever recognizes anything done for one of His own as done unto Himself (Matthew 10:42; Mark 9:41), and He also considers any harm done to His own as though it were done against Him (Acts 9:4). In its strictest sense, the "brethren" here will be part of a Jewish remnant in the last days, who will be witnesses for God in the dark days of the time of Jacob's trouble, the great tribulation (Daniel 12:1-3; Jeremiah 30:7). This will be after the Rapture of the Church and prior to the establishment of the kingdom, for that time of trouble ends with the coming of the Son of Man, as we have seen in chap. 24:21, 23, 29, 30. As the King's messengers go through the world there will be some who receive them and believe their message: these are the sheep. Others will refuse them and spurn their testimony: these are the goats.

Christ's Brethren. While there is a sense in which all believers are brethren of Christ, it is evident that here the term is used in a special sense, for there are three classes of people in view: the sheep, the goats, and those called by the Son of Man "My brethren." These are those of Israel who are related to Christ, both according to the flesh and the Spirit, and will be His authoritative witnesses in the

coming time of tribulation, when the present church age is ended.

"Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." This sentence of eternal doom will be pronounced on those of the nations who have shown by their cold, indifferent behavior to His servants that they did not believe the message they carried through the world. It would seem that this is their final judgment, as the sentence coincides with that of the unrighteous dead, who stand before the great white throne after the thousand years are finished (Revelation 20: 7-15).

"I was an hungred, and ye gave Me no meat." The charge against these lost ones is not concerning any flagrant violation of the moral code, but it is their indifferent attitude toward Christ that seals their doom. They showed they had no faith in Him or His message by their unconcern about the sufferings of His representatives. This principle is as true now as it will be in the coming tribulation era.

"Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred . . . and did not minister unto Thee?" They speak as men utterly unconscious of having given any offense, but they failed to recognize and honor the Son of Man in the person of His brethren, sent to call them to repentance, in view of His coming kingdom.

"Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me." Failure to have compassion on the poorest and weakest suffering one

is failure to minister to Christ Himself, for He makes their cause His own. While in strictest interpretation this has to do with the Jewish remnant before mentioned, it may be applied to all who belong to Him.

"These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." The issues of this judgment are for eternity—either endless punishment or endless life, which is far more than mere prolonged existence. The wicked will be destroyed and go into their awful destiny at once. The righteous will enter into eternal life in the millennial kingdom and then have their portion with Christ through the unending ages that follow the destruction of the present creation. These are the saints of Daniel 7: 18, who will enjoy the blessings of Messiah's glorious reign on the earth.

Two Elections. It will help to get the dispensational setting of this parable clear if we notice that there are two different elections in the New Testament. In Ephesians 1: 4 we see the Church of this age, which consists of those chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. In this present passage the saved are given a place in the kingdom "prepared . . . from the foundation of the world" (verse 34). This agrees with Revelation 13: 8, where we have the same people in view. One is a heavenly election; the other an earthly election. To confuse these in our thinking is to fail to rightly divide the word of truth (2 Tim.:2: 15).

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

THE KING FACES THE CROSS

THE time was drawing near when Jesus was to die—to give His life a ransom for many. All had been foreseen from eternity, and He had come to earth for this express purpose. Yet as the hour drew near His holy soul was deeply moved.

“And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, He said unto His disciples, Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified. Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill Him. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people”—vers. 1-5.

Having completed His last public discourse, the dark shadow of the cross was falling athwart His spirit as He spoke of the coming feast of the Passover, after which He was to be betrayed and crucified. He alone knew the real meaning of that Passover, for He was the antitypical Paschal Lamb, whose blood was to provide a shelter from the judgment of God for all who put their trust in Him.

Meantime the chief priests, scribes, and elders were meeting clandestinely in the house of the wily Caiaphas, who was the high priest that year through the favor of the Romans. There they plotted how

best and with greatest safety to themselves they might get Jesus into their power in order to put Him to death. In their zeal for the Jewish religion which they felt was threatened by His teaching, they were ready to go to any lengths to get Him out of the way, provided it did not embroil them in a conflict with the people. They considered it best not to attempt to take Him on the approaching feast day as that would most certainly provoke an uprising against them.

It is refreshing indeed to turn from consideration of these nefarious, scheming murderers to the beautiful account of Mary's devotion, as narrated in verses 6 to 13.

"Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto Him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on His head, as He sat at meat. But when His disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. When Jesus understood it, He said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon Me. For ye have the poor always with you; but Me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on My body, she did it for My burial. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her"—vers. 6-13.

We know nothing of Simon the leper. His name is recorded here, with the added word telling of the disease to which either he was subject still, or, more likely, from which he had been healed by the Lord. There is also the possibility that he had passed away. Although the house was designated as his, John's account would seem to make it the home of

the two sisters, Martha and Mary, and their brother Lazarus. If this be true Simon may have been the father of the three devoted friends of Jesus, none of whom are mentioned by name however in Matthew's account.

We know that the woman who brought the alabaster box of ointment and anointed Jesus was Mary. John tells us she anointed His feet. Matthew and Mark mention the anointing of His head. Both of course were true. It was an act of loving devotion. To Mary, Jesus was the King. As He sat or reclined at the table her spikenard filled the room with its fragrance (Song of Solomon 1:12, see also verse 3). To Mary there was nothing too precious for Jesus. She lavished her best upon Him.

The disciples, led in this instance by Judas (John 12:4), demurred, complaining of what seemed to them to be a waste. The ointment might, they reasoned, have been sold for a great sum, and the proceeds given to the poor. Judas could not understand a love like that of Mary's, which would lead her to pour her choicest treasure upon the head and feet of Jesus. To him it was a great waste.

Jesus rebuked the complainers and vindicated the woman, declaring she had wrought a good (*literally, a beautiful*) work on Him. They had always the poor to whom they could minister. As the law had said, they would never cease out of the land; but He was about to leave. Mary, who perhaps understood

more clearly than any of the rest what was about to take place, had anointed His body for His burial. Her devotion was appreciated so deeply that Jesus added, "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

Is Christ Himself so real and precious to us that we are ready to make any sacrifice in order to show our devotion to Him?

In vivid contrast to Mary's love and faithfulness the treachery of Judas now comes into view.

"Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him"—vers 14-16.

The wretched traitor left the festive scene and sought out the cabal of priests with whom he had been familiar, evidently, already. He demanded a definite amount to be paid over to him on condition that he should betray Jesus into their hands. Without seeming to recall the prophecy of Zechariah in regard to this very thing, the betrayal of the Shepherd of Israel, they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11: 12). With all their boasted knowledge of the Scriptures they were fulfilling them unwittingly in the bargain to which they agreed.

Judas returned to the company of Christ and His apostles, and continued to consort with them, waiting for a convenient opportunity to carry out his

part of the agreement—a covenant with hell, which must at times have caused his guilty conscience to protest sternly against the awful course upon which he had entered.

The next section tells us of the last Passover.

"Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto Him, Where wilt Thou that we prepare for Thee to eat the passover? And He said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with My disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover. Now when the even was come, He sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, He said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto Him, Lord, is it I? And He answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me. The Son of Man goeth as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born. Then Judas, which betrayed Him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said"—vers. 17-25.

"The first day of the feast of unleavened bread." This feast lasted seven days. On the first day the lamb was slain and the prescribed meal took place. During all the seven days no leaven was permitted in the homes of the Israelites.

The Jewish day began at sunset; so the Passover was "between the two evenings" (Exodus 12:6, R. V., *margin*). Jesus kept the feast after the first sunset of Passover day and died as the true Passover Lamb before the next sunset.

"I will keep the passover at thy house with My disciples." It was considered a pious thing by the inhabitants of Jerusalem to reserve a guest-chamber,

where visitors in the city might observe the feast. Jesus availed Himself of this privilege. Tradition says that it was in the home of John Mark that the last Passover was held by the Saviour and His disciples.

"They made ready the passover." They spread the table with the roasted lamb, the bitter herbs, and unleavened bread, as God had directed. What must all this have meant to Jesus, who knew He was the One prefigured by this typical feast! (1 Corinthians 5: 7, 8).

"He sat down with the twelve." Judas had not yet gone out into the night. He who had already agreed to betray his Lord sat with the rest.

"One of you shall betray Me." He who knew all things was aware of the wicked plot into which Judas had entered, but He gave him space even yet to repent, had his conscience been active.

"Lord, is it I?" We are told that every one of them asked this question: eleven in real sorrow and bewilderment, and one with the guilty knowledge that he had entered deliberately into a covenant to do this wicked thing. How sin does harden the heart and sear the conscience!

"He that dippeth his hand with Me in the dish." Up to the last Judas was permitted to enjoy the tenderest expressions of the love of Jesus, even sharing with Him in the dish of bitter herbs.

"It had been good for that man if he had not been born!" These words destroy the vain hope of the

universalist, for they tell us of one man at least for whom it had been better not to have lived. This could not be true if Judas were ever to be saved.

"Thou hast said." Evidently feeling he was the object of the suspicion of the rest, Judas asked again with ill-concealed fear and yet manifest effrontery, "Master, is it I?" Jesus answered in the affirmative and yet in such a way that the rest either did not hear or did not understand. According to John's Gospel, it would seem that at this juncture Judas hastily arose and left the room (John 13: 30). If this be correct he was not actually present when the next event took place, but went out after the Passover. This has long been a disputed point, however.

Next followed the institution of the Lord's Supper, that sacred ordinance which in the Christian Church takes the place of the Passover among the Jews. The two are intimately linked together, for it was after the celebration of the paschal feast that Jesus offered His disciples the bread and the fruit of the vine, and tenderly requested them to partake of them as setting forth His body about to be offered on the cross, and His blood so soon to be shed for the remission of sins. Nearly two millennia have elapsed since that solemn night, during which untold millions of grateful believers have partaken of these memorials in remembrance of Him who loved them even unto death.

The communion (1 Corinthians 10: 16) is not in any sense a sacrifice. It commemorates the one

perfect Sacrifice offered by our Lord once for all when He gave Himself for us on Calvary. Neither should it be celebrated with any thought of its having saving value or inherent merit. It is the reminder that when we were utterly lost and helpless, Christ died for us to redeem us to God. It is true that the sacrifice of praise (Hebrews 13:15) should ever accompany it as we contemplate the great cost at which we were saved, and rejoice that He who endured such grief and shame for us is now alive forevermore, never again to have to submit to the pain of death. We call Him to mind as the "Author and Finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2), from whence He shall soon return to claim the purchase of His blood. Till then we keep this feast with worshipful hearts, while we look back to the cross and on to the coming glory (1 Corinthians 11:26).

"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives"—vers. 26-30.

"Take, eat; this is My body." Jesus took one of the unleavened loaves into His hand, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, bidding them

eat it as His body. Manifestly, there was no transubstantiation there, for He sat before them in His actual body and they ate of the bread. It was as when one shows a portrait and says, "This is my mother." The one represents the other.

"He took the cup." We are not told exactly what was in the cup. We know from the next verse that it was "the fruit of the vine," but whether fermented wine or the juice of boiled raisins (it was too early for fresh grapes), the record does not say, nor should we quibble about it. It is what is signified that is important.

"This is My blood of the new testament." That precious blood had not yet been shed, but Jesus was speaking of it as though the work of the cross were accomplished already. The cup did not contain His blood, but that which would call it to mind in after years when it had been shed for the remission of sins.

"When I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." Jesus did not participate in that which was to be a memorial of His own death, but He looked forward to the time when, as a result of that sacrifice, He would have all His own gathered about Him in the Father's kingdom, to celebrate together the full glorious fruitage of redemption. Then He will see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied (Isaiah 53: 11).

"When they had sung an hymn." Tradition says this was Psalm 135, known to the Jews as the little

Hall-El, celebrating Israel's deliverance from Egypt, or, as others think, Psalms 115 to 118.

The memorial feast of love, the central ordinance committed to the Church, is designed to bring Jesus Himself before the soul. It is an appeal to the affections. He was going away. He did not want to be forgotten by those He loved so tenderly. So He instituted this holy Supper that wherever and whenever it was observed, it might recall Him vividly to mind. His was a love that was even stronger than death, which the many waters of judgment could not quench (Song of Solomon 8: 6, 7). He needs no symbols in order that He may remember us. But our love is very inconstant. We forget so soon. Therefore the need of that which may quicken our affections and revive our thoughts of Him. Then, like Mary, we shall bring our alabaster boxes and break them in His presence, pouring the perfume of our worship and adoration upon Him till the house is filled with the fragrance that is thus set free. It is fitting that the story of her devotion to Christ should precede that of the Supper He instituted.

It is only unconfessed sin that should hinder a Christian from partaking of the holy Supper, and the sooner that sin is judged in the light of the cross, the sooner one will be restored to communion. David said, "My meditation of Him shall be sweet" (Psalm 104: 34). Do we delight to sit at His table, and think of His love?

The Romish doctrine of the Mass and the Real Presence of Jesus in the Sacrament is the very opposite to the truth. To teach that under the form of bread and wine the very body and blood of Jesus are offered continually upon an altar as a sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead, is to deny Christ's personal absence, because of which we remember Him, and also impugns the perfection of His one offering on the cross, never to be repeated.

Rightly observed, we approach the Lord's table as those redeemed to God by His blood, who now desire to call anew to mind His glorious Person and His all-prevailing love in giving Himself a Sacrifice upon the cross for our sins. It is the blood of Christ that makes us worthy to partake of the Lord's Supper. But we need to beware lest we participate unworthily: that is, in a light or careless manner.

Observe how the two comings of the Lord Jesus are linked together by the feast of remembrance. We show His death till He come (1 Cor. 11:26).

As they passed slowly along the way from the place where these things had transpired, to the Mount of Olives, where Jesus resorted so often with His disciples, He began to warn them of what was to take place soon, and to impress upon them the untrustworthiness of their own hearts.

"Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto Him, Though all men shall be offended because

of Thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice. Peter said unto Him, Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee. Likewise also said all the disciples"—vers. 31-35.

It was another of Zechariah's prophecies to which Jesus referred when He told the disciples that all should be stumbled, or scandalized, because of Him that night; for long ago this prophet, speaking by the Spirit of God, had said, I will "smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered" (Zechariah 13:7). These words were about to have a literal fulfilment, though at the moment they all felt it could not be that any of them would forsake Him whom they loved so dearly. But no man can ever sound the depths of evil in his own heart, which grace alone can overcome.

Jesus added the reassuring promise, which however at the moment was meaningless to them, that when He rose again He would go before them into Galilee. There He would keep a sacred tryst with them.

Peter, not realizing the weakness of his flesh, protested that although all the others should be stumbled it would not be so with him. But Jesus declared that before cockcrow—that is, before early dawn, he would deny his Master three times. Self-confident Peter insisted this should never be. Even though called to die for Jesus he would never deny Him. In this they all shared. Alas! How little they knew themselves! Their self-confidence led

them to make protestations they found themselves unable to carry out when the hour of trial came. The flesh is prone to declare its own goodness (Proverbs 20:6).

Reaching the Mount of Olives they came to the garden on the western slope where Jesus often had prayed and communed with His Father.

"Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with Me. And He went a little farther, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt. And He cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done. And He came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And He left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh He to His disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray Me"—vers. 36-46.

Gethsemane! What depths of woe, what bitter grief does the word suggest! It seems to express, as nothing else could, the inner meaning of our Lord's words, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke 12:50). It was there in the garden, where so often He had resorted with His disciples (John 18:2), and where so frequently He had enjoyed

uninterrupted communion with His Father, that He was to enter into His soul's agony as He contemplated the reality of being made sin on our behalf, "that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5: 21, *R. V.*) As He looked forward to it, He exclaimed, "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour" (John 12: 27, *R. V., margin*). The 102nd Psalm has been often designated "The Gethsemane Psalm." As we read it, we hear the breathings of our Saviour's heart as He entered into a sense of the loneliness of One forsaken of God and despised by the very men whom He came to save. This was the cup from which His holy, human nature shrank. That He, the perfect One, in whom the Father had ever found His delight (Luke 3: 22; 9: 35), should be treated as an outcast, because taking the sinner's place, was unspeakably horrible and appalling. True, He had come from heaven for that very purpose. He had assumed humanity that He might die in our stead. But as the hour drew near when He was actually to undergo the baptism of divine judgment against sin, He would not have been the Holy One whom He was if He had not shrunk from so terrible an ordeal. Yet we need to remember that the suffering endured in Gethsemane was not in itself atoning for sin. It was at Golgotha, on the cross of shame, that our sins were laid upon Him, and He endured the full penalty that should have been ours, if God had not

intervened in grace and "sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Gethsemane was anticipatory to Calvary, where He drained to the dregs the cup of wormwood and gall which our iniquities had filled.

"A place called Gethsemane." The name means "the oil press." It was a garden of olives, just across the brook Kedron. It was easily reached from the city of Jerusalem. Jesus left eight of His disciples near the entrance, while He went deeper into the grove to pray.

"Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder." These words were addressed to the eight who were left near the entrance. It is evident that all the disciples did not have an equal sense of love and sympathy.

"He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee." There was a closer tie with these than with the rest, because they seemed to understand and appreciate Him more. To them He expressed the perturbation of spirit under which He was laboring. These three shared the more intimate experiences of Jesus on other occasions (see 17:1; Luke 8:51). They saw that Jesus was in great sorrow though they could not really understand the cause.

"Tarry ye here, and watch with Me." The time came when they, too, had to be left behind, but they were commanded to watch and pray lest the coming trial be too great for their faith (Luke 22:40).

"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." His words must have perplexed them greatly, for they still did not realize what was involved in that of which He had spoken to them earlier—His betrayal, death, and resurrection.

"He went a little farther." They could not follow as He poured out His heart to His Father, saying, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." His resignation to the Father's will was perfect, but He pleaded that if by any other means salvation might be procured for sinners, it would be revealed.

"What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?" Returning to the three, He found them all asleep, their very grief for Him having overpowered them. He gently reproved Peter for lack of watchfulness, inasmuch as he had spoken so strongly of his love and loyalty (John 13: 37).

"The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Jesus recognized the devotion of His followers, but He also realized the untrustworthiness of the human heart, even in the best of saints; so He bade them "*watch and pray*" that temptation might not take them unawares. He besought them to be on their guard and to ask help of God lest in the hour of testing they fail to stand. He well knew that in their spirits they desired to be true, but he warned them of their weakness as men still in the body.

"If this cup may not pass . . . except I drink it, Thy will be done." His was a perfect resignation to the Father's will, no matter what sorrow and agony this meant to Him. He had come into the world for this very purpose (Hebrews 10:7; John 4:34). There was no conflict of wills. Jesus acquiesced in whatever pleased the Father. No matter how bitter the cup, He would drink it if salvation for lost sinners could be obtained in no other way.

"He came and found them asleep again." They did not realize what He was going through on their behalf, and so they failed to watch with Him in the hour of His soul's distress. Our Lord was as truly Man as He was God, and as Man He craved human sympathy and understanding. He looked for some to take pity (Psalm 69:20). His dearest disciples failed Him, thus adding to His grief.

Let us challenge our own hearts as to how far we have entered into the fellowship of Christ's suffering. Are we able to watch and pray in this time of His rejection by a godless world? No man will be able to stand in the moment of severe temptation who has been slothful instead of watchful, and indolent instead of prayerful. If only we realize that prayerlessness is as truly sin against God as cursing or swearing, because it is positive disobedience to His Word, would we not be more alert to use the opportunities He gives to draw from heaven needed grace for testing times?

"He . . . found them asleep again." It was a sad commentary on poor, frail, human nature, even at its best, as seen in those who really loved Jesus but could not rise to the seriousness of the occasion.

"Prayed the third time." Again Jesus bowed alone before the Father, in perfect submission, though with His holy soul shrinking from the awful ordeal before Him—an ordeal which our poor hearts are too deadened by sin ever to understand in its fulness.

"Saying the same words." Vain repetitions, in the sense of useless ejaculations, He, Himself, had condemned (Matthew 6: 7). But importunate prayer He had shown to be according to the mind of God (Luke 11: 5-10). In this He is an example for us as He repeatedly spread out His concern before the Father.

"Sleep on now, and take your rest." So the Authorized Version reads. Another translation turns His words into an exclamatory sentence, "Sleeping still, and taking rest!" And this, with the betrayer almost in view! How little they understood the solemnity of that hour of testing! While they were so drowsy that they did not realize their danger, the emissaries of the priests were entering the garden.

"He is at hand that doth betray Me." There was no effort to escape. His hour was come, and in perfect calmness Jesus went forth to meet the betrayer and the rabble horde who had come to arrest

Him. The agony was over. He was now perfectly composed as He went forth voluntarily, like a lamb to the slaughter, to meet those who were seeking Him in order to destroy Him.

The utter resignation of Jesus to the Father's will shines out in all these closing experiences, but particularly in that of Gethsemane. While the horror of becoming the great sin offering, being made sin for us, overwhelmed His human soul and spirit, yet, as we have seen, He was perfectly subject to the divine will, and had no thought of turning aside. There are depths here that our minds can never fathom, but all is perfection on His part. If He could have contemplated all that was involved in the sacrifice of the cross with equanimity, He would not have been the perfect Man that He was. But knowing it all and realizing there was no other way by which He could become the Captain of our salvation (Hebrews 2: 10), He faced the ordeal unflinchingly in order that God might be glorified, and sinful men saved from judgment.

The Meaning of the Cup. It is not simply of death or of physical sufferings that the cup speaks. Jesus did not shrink from these. But it was the fierce indignation of Jehovah against sin, which filled that cup about to be presented by the Father to His holy Son, that caused the bitter agony of soul which so affected His body that the bloody sweat was forced through the pores of His skin. Some have intimated that the cup consisted in the fear that

Satan might kill Him before He reached the cross, or that He might be driven insane by Satanic power and so not be able to offer Himself voluntarily as a sacrifice for sin; but these are unworthy suggestions, which fail to take into account the fact that Satan could have no power against Him except as allowed of God, and none could take His life until He laid it down of Himself (John 10: 17, 18). He had bound already the strong man (Matthew 12: 29), and He did not fear him in the Garden.

The Cup of Wrath is mentioned in the Old Testament. It is reserved for the wicked (Psalm 11: 6); it is a cup of divine indignation against sin (Psalm 75: 8); it is a cup of trembling (Isaiah 51: 17, 22); it is the cup of Jehovah's fury (Jeremiah 25: 15). All this, and more, was involved in the cup which our Lord had to drink in order that we might have the cup of salvation (Psalm 116: 13).

"Death and the curse were in that cup,
O Christ, 'twas full for Thee;
But Thou hast drained the last dark drop,
'Tis empty now for me."

The holiness of Jesus is seen in His shrinking from drinking the cup of judgment, which involved His taking the sinner's place and bearing the weight of our iniquities (Isaiah 53: 5, 6). Because of His infinite purity He could not contemplate with other than horror all that it would mean to be made sinful for us—that is, to become the antitypical sin offering—in order that God might receive to Himself in

peace all who should avail themselves of the offer of life through His death, and justification through His condemnation. It is this that explains His agony, which was as much an evidence of the perfection of His Humanity as was His utter submission to the will of His Father. Gethsemane made it evident that He was the unblemished, spotless Lamb whose blood could avail to cleanse from sin and shield from judgment.

"If It Be Possible." In Gethsemane was settled once and for all the impossibility of sin being atoned for in any other way than by the infinite sacrifice of the Son of God upon the cross. Had there been any other method which would have met the case and satisfied the claims of divine justice, it would have been revealed then, in answer to the impassioned prayer of our blessed Lord. But there was none. God has shut all men up to Christ and His finished work. No other name is given (Acts 4: 12), no other way is known (Acts 13: 38, 39), whereby guilty sinners can be justified before the throne of God.

Let me repeat: It was not in Gethsemane, but on Calvary, that the sin question was settled and expiation made for iniquity. But the agony in the Garden was a fitting prelude to the darkness of the cross. In order to make an adequate propitiation for our sins, it was necessary that the substitute be a man, but more than man; otherwise his sacrifice could not have been of sufficient value to be a ran-

som for all. He must be a man on whom death and judgment had no claim; therefore one who had been tested and proved to be absolutely sinless—one who had never violated God's holy law in thought or word or deed. But this very sinlessness of Jesus explains the suffering He endured in the contemplation of being made sin on our behalf. There was no conflict of will, though. He was prepared to carry out the Father's purpose whatever the awful cost to Himself.

It is noticeable, and an evidence of divine design in Scripture, that while in the three Synoptic Gospels our attention is focused on Christ's agony in the Garden, there is no mention of this in the Gospel of John, just as in his Gospel there is no word about the transfiguration or the rending of the veil when Jesus died. In the Synoptics, emphasis is placed upon the Humanity of our Lord. In John's Gospel it is His essential Deity that is before us. The glory is seen shining out there, in every act of His life and in every word that He spoke. All is perfect, for Scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3: 16).

The account of the midnight arrest of Jesus follows, when all His disciples forgot their promises and fled, leaving Him alone.

"And while He yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed Him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He: hold Him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master; and kissed Him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend,

wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took Him. And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take Me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on Me. But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled"—vers. 47-56.

What were the thoughts of Judas as he stealthily led the chief priests, elders, and the rabble with swords and staves (that is, clubs) to the rendezvous where he was certain he would find Jesus in prayer? If deeply perturbed, as he would have been if conscience were at all active, he gave no outward evidence of it as he brazenly led the multitude to where he saw Jesus standing with the three disciples. He had given them a sign saying, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He: hold Him fast." One feels horror-stricken as he contemplates such infamy; yet it is that of which every deceitful, natural heart is capable.

Boldly Judas stepped up to Jesus, and exclaiming, "Hail, Master!" kissed Him repeatedly, as the original really has it. Calmly Jesus looked upon him and asked, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" Then He permitted His enemies to lay hold of Him and to arrest Him.

Suddenly, spurred by intense emotion, one of them, whom we know was Peter, drew his sword and

struck a servant of the high priest's, and cut off his ear. Peter was asleep when he should have been alert, watching unto prayer. Now, when he should have been calm and trustful, he was excited and active. But it was the activity of the flesh. Slashing about with the sword, he cut off the ear of Malchus, one who had very little responsibility, as far as the matter of arresting Jesus was concerned. Nothing was really accomplished that would tend to avert the catastrophe Peter evidently dreaded.

Jesus rebuked him for his unwise act, bidding him sheath his sword. Carnal weapons were not needed to protect or defend the Christ of God. He had only to ask of the Father to have twelve legions of angels sent to deliver Him; but how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled which foretold His death as a substitute for sinful men?

Turning to the mob surrounding Him, Jesus inquired, "Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and clubs?" He reminded them that He might have been found any day in the temple, teaching. There was no necessity for this strange midnight foray. But in all these things the Word of God given through the prophets was being fulfilled.

As He yielded Himself submissively to them, the disciples became panic-stricken and every one fled from the scene. Had He not submitted voluntarily to this indignity His enemies would have been helpless before Him. But He gave Himself into their hands, that the will of God might be carried out.

We may see in this submission the expression of His love, both to the Father and to those for whom He was about to die.

In defiance or forgetfulness of their own law, which forbade the trial of any person charged with crime between the hours of sunset and sunrise, those who had arrested Jesus hurried Him to the house of Caiaphas shortly before cock-crowing, answering to our three o'clock after midnight, where a group of the leaders had been waiting in order to pass speedy judgment upon Him. His teaching had caused many to lose confidence in their authority; and they feared He might gain a large following if He was not soon put out of the way.

"And they that had laid hold on Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed Him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end. Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put Him to death; but found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, and said, This Fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. And the high priest arose, and said unto Him, Answerest Thou nothing? What is it which these witness against Thee? But Jesus held His peace. And the high priest answered and said unto Him, I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard His blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in His face, and buffeted Him; and others smote Him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy unto us, Thou Christ, Who is he that smote Thee?"—vers. 57-68.

Peter, who had recovered from his first fright, joined the company, following Jesus at a distance to see what the result might be of all these unlawful proceedings. He entered the corridor of the high priest's palace, and sat with the servants in a place where he could see what was transpiring within.

Witnesses were hastily summoned to give testimony against Jesus, but they were all men prepared to perjure themselves in order to curry favor with the leaders in this plot against Jesus. Even so, their witness did not agree. Finally two men were brought in who testified that Jesus had said on one occasion, "I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days." A half-truth is a whole lie. Jesus had said something that seemed akin to this, but they so reported His words as to completely subvert His meaning.

Like a lamb led to the slaughter and a sheep before its shearers, as Isaiah had prophesied (Isaiah 53: 7), Jesus attempted no defence. He opened not His mouth. This so annoyed Caiaphas that he exclaimed, "Answerest Thou nothing? What is it which these witness against Thee?" But Jesus did not deign to reply until the high priest put Him on oath, adjuring Him by the living God that He say whether He was the Christ the Son of God or not. Then the Lord solemnly declared: "Thou hast said." That is, It is as you have said. "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." This

was a clear, positive declaration of both His Messiahship and His Deity as the Eternal Son. To Caiaphas it was blasphemy. Forgetting the admonition of the law which forbade a priest to rend his garments (Leviticus 21:10) he tore his robe in two, signifying by this very act, though he did not realize it, that his priesthood was ended. God no longer recognized the priests of the Levitical economy. With a great pretence of reverence for God he charged Jesus with blasphemy and declared no more witnesses were needed. He appealed to the rest of the council saying, "Behold, now ye have heard His blasphemy. What think ye?" And they all replied, "He is guilty of death." In fact, they had already prejudged the case and settled on the verdict.

Then in the most shameless way these men, who should have been the guardians of the rights of the poor and defenceless, began to spit in the face of Jesus and to beat and buffet Him in the most insulting manner, even slapping Him with their open hands as they taunted Him, saying, "Prophecy unto us, Thou Christ, Who is he that smote Thee?" He did not answer, but bore all patiently.

Meantime, Peter sat in the court of the palace, giving no sign of his interest in the holy Sufferer whom they were contemning.

"Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and

said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the Man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the Man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly"—vers. 69-75.

A maid servant, who had been eyeing him, came boldly up to Peter and charged him with having been in the company of Jesus of Galilee. Taken unawares, he did not have the courage to confess that it was indeed true. On the contrary, he denied before them all, insisting that he knew nothing of what was being said.

Going out into the porch, he was challenged by another maid who exclaimed, "This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth." With an oath Peter again denied all knowledge of the Man who was enduring such suffering inside the palace. Later a man spoke up and said, "Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee." Peter's Galilean brogue branded him before them all as a man from the north country. Excited and thoroughly frightened, Peter lost all control of himself and began to curse and to swear, again taking an oath that he knew not the Man. He did not even call Him by name. To what depths can even a child of God sink when he is out of communion with his Master and is under the domination of the flesh!

Even as the poor backslidden disciple spoke he was startled to hear a cock crow. The words which

Jesus had spoken came back to him. Realizing something of his terrible failure, he left the company assembled there and went out into the darkness, weeping bitterly. Those were grateful tears, for they told of the work of restoration begun in his soul. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of" (2 Corinthians 7: 10), and this was the beginning of true contrition which was to result in full restoration of soul, after Jesus rose from the dead.

There is a difference between apostasy and backsliding. Judas was an apostate. He had never known the reality of the new birth. Though chosen as an apostle he was a devil (John 6: 70, 71). For him there was no recovery. But in Peter we see a typical backslider. He was a real child of God who failed through self-confidence and lack of prayerfulness; but was afterwards restored and became a faithful witness for Christ. Apostasy is giving up truth that one formerly professed to believe. Backsliding is spiritual declension from an experience once enjoyed. The difference is immense. To see this distinction clearly will save from much confusion of thought.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

THE CONDEMNATION AND DEATH OF THE KING

AS the Jews had no authority, under the Roman regime, to visit the death penalty upon anyone, they were unable to carry out the Levitical law which condemned a blasphemer to death (Leviticus 24: 15, 16), unless they took things into their own hands and acted contrary to the code imposed upon them by Caesar's Government, as they did later on in the case of Stephen who, like his Lord, was charged with blasphemy (Acts 7: 54-60).

In the case of Jesus the chief priests and other leaders were anxious to shift the responsibility for His death to the Romans, in order that the people who had heard Jesus gladly might not turn in indignation upon them. Therefore, having declared Him worthy of death their next move was to bring Him before Pilate, the procurator of Judea at that time.

"When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put Him to death; and when they had bound Him, they led Him away, and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor"—vers. 1-2.

As soon as circumstances permitted, Jesus, bound with chains, was brought into Pilate's court. No

doubt the governor had known something of Him and possibly thought of Him as a harmless zealot of some Jewish sect. Now he was called upon to pass judgment upon Him as a seditious, who was endeavoring to arouse the populace to rebellion against Rome and to accept Him as their King instead of Caesar.

At this juncture Judas the traitor appeared before the chief priests and elders. He was filled with remorse as the full import of the deed he had done began to dawn upon him. Many have tried to excuse Judas on the ground that he may have been over-anxious to see the kingdom of Messiah established, and that he thought possibly by betraying his Master to the clique that sought to destroy Him, he would force His hand, so to speak, and bring Him to declare Himself at once as the King of the Jews. But of this there is no hint in Scripture; nothing save that Judas is described as a covetous man, who sold the Lord for thirty pieces of silver.

Now that he began to realize the probable fate awaiting Jesus, he was seized with fear, and in his crushing anxiety endeavored, too late, to undo the fearful wrong of which he had been guilty.

"Then Judas, which had betrayed Him, when he saw that He was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? See thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with

them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of Him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me"
—vers. 3-10.

The repentance of Judas was not true self-judgment because of the sin he had committed. The word used here is not the ordinary one for "repented," which implies a complete change of mind, or attitude. It rather means "to be remorseful," and there may be bitter remorse apart from genuine repentance.

Bringing the thirty pieces of silver back to those from whom he had received them, Judas exclaimed, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." He knew well the holiness and righteousness of Jesus: he had kept company with Him during some three or more years, and he realized there had been no flaw in His character, no evil in His behaviour.

Coldly the priests replied, "What is that to us? See thou to that." These calloused hypocrites had their prey in their power, as they believed, and they were unconcerned as to the truth or untruth of the charges brought against Him. They were determined upon His condemnation.

In his horror and despair Judas threw down the money in the temple, and rushing out in an insane frenzy he sought a secluded spot where he committed suicide by hanging himself. Peter supplies

details omitted here. He tells us that "this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out" (Acts 1: 18). Putting the two accounts together we gather that the wretched man, who was probably somewhat corpulent, hung himself, possibly from some tree or beam which broke under his weight, so that his body was so ruptured in falling to the earth that the condition depicted by Peter resulted. It was a sad and terrible end indeed to a life that once promised so much!

The priests, too punctilious to put the blood-money into the temple treasury, after some consultation, decided to buy with it a potter's field—that is, a piece of ground from which clay had been extracted for the making of pottery; so in this way Judas himself really purchased the field with the reward of iniquity. This waste land was set apart as a cemetery in which to bury strangers for whose interment no other arrangements could be made. Significantly it was called "The Field of Blood"—a constant reminder of the nefarious transaction in which the priests and Judas had participated.

There have been questions raised as to the proper understanding of verse 9. In the book of Zechariah (11: 13) we read, in reference to the thirty pieces of silver, "Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord." While this passage is very

similar to that which is quoted here, it is not quite the same: "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of Him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me." There is the possibility that Jeremy, or Jeremiah, is a faulty reading, which some scribe may have written inadvertently in place of Zechariah, as he was thinking of another manuscript which he may also have copied, telling of Jeremiah's visit to the potter's house, and that later copyists, finding this name in the text, did not feel free to alter it. On the other hand, it may not be Zechariah's prophecy that is definitely referred to at all, but rather something handed down by tradition which was *spoken*, not *written*, by Jeremiah.

J. N. Darby suggests that the book of Zechariah formed part of a scroll which began with the prophecy of Jeremiah, and therefore would bear his name; and so it could be spoken of as an utterance found in "Jeremiah." In any case we may be sure that there is nothing here to invalidate the authority of Holy Scripture.

Leaving the sordid story of Judas we turn again to Pilate's court to see what will become of the Prisoner whom the chief priests had brought before him.

"And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked Him, saying, Art Thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest. And when He was accused of the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing. Then said Pilate

unto Him, Hearest Thou not how many things they witness against Thee? And He answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly. Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would. And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas. Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ? For he knew that for envy they had delivered Him"—vers. 11-18.

In response to the governor's question, "Art Thou the King of the Jews?" Jesus calmly replied, "Thou sayest." That is, You have said that which I am. Thus, before Pontius Pilate, He witnessed a good confession (1 Timothy 6:13). While He made no answer to the false and vindictive charges brought against Him by His enemies, He unhesitatingly declared the truth when the procurator himself addressed Him.

Pilate was astonished at the quiet confidence which the Lord manifested. No accusation perturbed Him. He did not attempt to defend Himself. Assured in his own mind that Jesus was innocent of any crime, and yet knowing the implacable character of His accusers, Pilate sought for some way whereby he might release Jesus, and yet not displease these wily and unscrupulous religious leaders. It was passover time, and for some years—as a favor to the Jews—it had been customary to release some notable prisoner of their own nation. If they were sincere in charging Jesus with sedition, might they not appreciate the dismissal of the charge and the freedom of the prisoner? Another seditionist was awaiting execution at the time,

Barabbas, who had led in an insurrection against the Government. So Pilate put the two names before the crowd and asked, "Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?" Both were charged with the same offence. Why then might not Jesus be released and so the people be satisfied?

While the matter was being debated excitedly by the accusers of Jesus and the rabble who had gathered about them, a message came to the governor from his wife.

"When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just Man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him. But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate said unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let Him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath He done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let Him be crucified"—vers. 19-23.

Church tradition has made a saint of Claudia Procula, the wife of Pilate. Legend says she was a Jewish proselyte who became a believer in Jesus. But Scripture tells us nothing more than what is recorded here. She sent a message to her bewildered and time-serving husband, bidding him have nothing to do with "that just Man," because of whom she had suffered much in a dream.

We are not told of Pilate's reaction to this, except that we find him casting about still for some way whereby he might not have to face the issue before

him and take up the case of Jesus in a thoroughly legal and judicial manner, which could have resulted only in the acquittal of the Prisoner. This would arouse the intense indignation of His accusers, who would then, in all probability, go to any length to destroy the governor by misrepresenting him to Caesar as an untrustworthy servant of Rome, because of failing to do his duty concerning One who should have been condemned as a seditionist.

He waited for the people to make their choice. Who should be released: Jesus or Barabbas? The answer was not long in coming. Moved upon by the chief priests and elders, the multitude vociferously gave their voices in favor of Barabbas.

"What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" Pilate asked weakly. It is a question every man has to meet sooner or later wherever this story of Jesus is known.

The throng cried as with one voice, "Let Him be crucified." Thus the King of Israel, the Anointed of Jehovah, was definitely rejected; and so, for the time, the hopes of the Jews were destined to be obliterated. There could be no kingdom for them when their rightful Ruler was spurned and slain.

Recognizing his impotence in dealing with this mob of excited religionists, Pilate called for water and dramatically washed his hands before the multitude, as he exclaimed, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person: see ye to it." Yet he was there as the representative of the imperial throne, and he

was responsible to condemn the guilty and to acquit the innocent. How little he realized that for all time to come his name was destined to be linked with that of the patient Sufferer whom he weakly surrendered to His prejudiced accusers. Untold millions yet unborn were to intone in all the centuries to come, "I believe in God . . . and in His Son Jesus Christ . . . crucified under Pontius Pilate." No water could ever wash away the stain of the blood of the Son of God!

In fearful recklessness the Jews invoked a malediction upon themselves as they cried, "His blood be on us, and on our children." The awful anguish and suffering the unhappy nation has endured throughout the past two thousand years can be traced back to the choice made that day when they preferred a murderer to the One who came in grace to redeem them. For every individual among them, as for all others, who will turn to God in repentance, the curse has been turned aside because of the Saviour's intercession, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23: 34).

Yielding to their demands Pilate delivered Jesus to their will, and He was turned over to the soldiers, who heaped added indignities upon Him.

"Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto Him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe"—vers. 26-28.

In accordance with the horrible custom of the times Pilate gave order to scourge Jesus—a most cruel ordeal which involved the tearing of His flesh into ribbons as He was beaten on the bare back by a whip of several lashes, on which were fastened pieces of metal, so that His body must have been soon literally bathed in His own blood. Yet no word of reproach escaped His holy lips. Knowing He was condemned because He had claimed to be a King, the soldiers stripped Him of all His outer garments and put a discarded scarlet robe on him, and crowned Him with thorns, then mockingly bowed before Him.

“And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand: and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the head. And after that they had mocked Him, they took the robe off from Him, and put His own raiment on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him. And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear His cross”—vers. 29-32.

They knew it not, but their action was most significant as they pressed the thorny circlet upon His pallid brow. When God cursed the earth for man's sin He caused thorns and thistles to be brought forth (Genesis 3:18). The thorn, is the fruit of the curse; and Jesus was about to be made a curse for those who so basely treated Him and for all men, that all who would trust in Him might be redeemed from the curse of the law.

The ribald soldiery made obeisance before Jesus, in whose hand they placed a reed for a scepter, and cried in jeering tones, "Hail, King of the Jews!" To them it was all a huge joke, that this meek, defenceless Prisoner should ever have imagined Himself, or permitted His followers to think of Him, as a King. In their eyes there was nothing regal about Him: yet to the eye of faith He was never more royal than when He endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, with such holy patience and resignation to the will of the Father.

The soldiers spat in His face, as the Jews had done in the house of Caiaphas. Jew and Gentile were one in their rejection of Him.

When they wearied of their coarse and vulgar treatment of Him, they took the robe off Him and put His own garments upon Him, and so led Him away to crucify Him.

Tradition, not Scripture, tells that He fell beneath the weight of His cross, not only once but thrice; but this rests on no authentic records. However, it seems evident His physical strength was so weakened by loss of blood and excessive suffering that even the callous soldiers saw He needed help in bearing His cross; so they laid hold on Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming that way, and compelled him to assist. What a privilege was Simon's! We would like to know for certain that he appreciated it. The early Christians said that the Alexander and Rufus, mentioned as his sons in Mark 15: 21, both became

ardent followers of Jesus, and that their father too was of His company. We may hope this is more than an unfounded tradition.

At last they reached the little hill outside the walls of Jerusalem, called "Golgotha" by the Jews; and by the Latins, "Calvary," "the place of a skull." There the tragedy of all the ages was to be enacted. There the Sacrifice of which all the offerings of the Old Testament were types was to be presented to God on our behalf.

"And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, they gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink. And they crucified Him, and parted His garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted My garments among them, and upon My vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched Him there; and set up over His head His accusation written, **THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS**. Then were there two thieves crucified with Him, one on the right hand, and another on the left"—vers. 33-38.

It was customary to give one who was being put to death by crucifixion a stupefying draught to make it easier for him to endure the fearful ordeal through which he was called to pass. Such a drink, composed of sour wine (or vinegar) mingled with gall, or myrrh, was offered to Jesus, but He refused it. He would not take anything that might benumb His mind or alleviate the sufferings He was undergoing.

Below the cross the soldiers who were responsible for His execution divided His garments among themselves and cast lots, gambling, for His seamless

tunic, in accordance with David's prophecy uttered a thousand years before (Psalm 22:18). During these six hours one prophecy after another was fulfilled.

The thirty-sixth verse might well speak to all our hearts: "And sitting down they watched Him there." While for "watched" we might better read "were keeping guard," yet the sentence as it stands is most suggestive. These hardhearted, indifferent soldiers looked carelessly upon Him as He hung upon the tree. You and I, my reader, may well turn aside and see this great sight, the Holy Son of God suffering unspeakably at the hands of men whose very lives depended upon His mighty power. We may learn much as we sit down and behold Him there, bleeding and dying for sins not His own.

It was customary to indicate by a placard the crime for which one was being punished. So Pilate had a document prepared which read: "This is Jesus the King of the Jews." It was as much as to say He was being crucified for setting Himself up as King in rebellion against Caesar.

Two thieves were crucified with Him, one on either side. Thus He was numbered with transgressors.

"And they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself. If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him

deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth"—vers. 39-44.

The hearts of those passing by were untouched by the Lord's affliction. They continued to mock Him, raising again the old accusations and saying, "Thou that destroyed the temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself." They even challenged Him to descend from the cross if in very truth He was the Son of God.

The religious dignitaries also joined with the rest in belittling and ridiculing Him; and yet uttered a great truth which they themselves did not comprehend when they said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." Our Christian poet was right when he wrote:

"Himself He could not save;
He on the cross must die,
Or mercy could not come
To ruined sinners nigh."

Oblivious to the real meaning of His death these priests and elders challenged Him, as the rabble had done, bidding Him come down from the cross if He was indeed the King of Israel. In that case they declared they would believe Him. They even quoted from Psalm 22 without seeming to realize it, saying, "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him." He had said He was the Son of God. They called upon Him to demonstrate it by descending from the cross.

The thieves too cast the same, we are told, in His teeth. Matthew does not tell us of the subsequent repentance of one of these. We must turn to Luke's account for that.

Up to this point, which takes in a period of three hours, from 9:00 o'clock A. M. to 12:00 o'clock noon, Jesus had been suffering at the hands of men. It was not these sufferings that put away sin. The next few verses summarize the awesome events of the last three hours, when He endured the wrath of God, as the great Trespass Offering, able to say, "Then I restored that which I took not away" (Psalm 69: 4).

"Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This Man calleth for Elias. And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save Him"—vers. 45-49.

No finite mind can fathom the depths of woe and anguish into which the soul of Jesus sank when that dread darkness spread o'er all the scene. It was a symbol of the spiritual darkness into which He went as the Man Christ Jesus made sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. It was then that God laid on Him the iniquity of us all—that His soul was made an offering for sin.

"The tempest's awful voice was heard;
O Christ, it broke on Thee.
Thine open bosom was my ward;
It bore the storm for me."

We get some faint understanding of what this meant for Him when, just as the darkness was passing, we hear Him cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Each believer can reply, "It was that I might never be forsaken." He took our place and endured the wrath of God our sins deserved. This was the cup from which He shrank in Gethsemane; now, pressed to His lips, He drained it to the dregs.

"His the wormwood and the gall:
His the curse; He bore it all;
His, the bitter cry of pain,
When our sins He did sustain."

Some who heard His piercing cry in Aramaic did not know the meaning of the words, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" and thought He was calling on the prophet Elijah for help. One ran and filled a sponge with vinegar and put it to His parched lips, giving Him to drink. This He received. Others said indifferently, "Let be, let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him." But there was none who could deliver Him: He must endure the pains of death that we might never die.

"Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God. And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed

Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto Him; among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children"—vers. 50-56.

When all had been accomplished which it was given Him to do, Jesus cried with a loud voice—John tells us what He said—"*It is finished.*" Then He dismissed His spirit. He did not die of exhaustion, but He laid down His life voluntarily when His work was done.

The veil in the temple, separating the holy from the most holy place was immediately rent in twain from the top to the bottom, the unseen hand of God tearing that curtain apart to signify that the way into the holiest was now made manifest. No longer would God dwell in the thick darkness. He could come out to man, in the light; and man, redeemed by atoning blood, could enter with boldness into the very presence of God.

Certain natural phenomena also occurred, which Matthew alone mentions—a great earthquake, rending rocks and opening graves. Saints whose bodies had been sleeping in the tombs were raised and came out of the graves after His resurrection and appeared unto many.

The centurion in charge of the squad of soldiers who were detailed to guard the crucified victims was so impressed by all he had seen and heard that he was filled with awe, and declared, "Truly this was a Son of God." He did not use the definite article, as given in the A. V.; but, like Nebuchadnezzar of

old as he saw the mysterious fourth One in the furnace (Daniel 3:25), he was persuaded that the holy Sufferer who had just died on that central cross was more than Man.

Standing afar off, with hearts filled with conflicting emotions, were many devoted women, who were true to Jesus to the last, though they could not understand why He was left to suffer and die unaided. Among these were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and also the wife of Zebedee, the mother of James and John.

It is worthy of note that as long as our blessed Lord was taking the sinner's place in His vicarious offering of Himself unto God, His enemies were permitted to heap upon Him every kind of shameful indignity. But from the moment the blood and water—which were, with the Holy Spirit, the witnesses to accomplished redemption (1 John 5: 6, 8)—flowed from His wounded side, God seemed to say, as it were, "Hands off." From that instant no unclean hand touched the body of His holy Son. Loving friends took it down from the cross, wrapped it in the new fine linen clothes, and laid it in the bed of spices sent by Nicodemus (John 19: 39, 40), in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. It was the burial of a King (see 2 Chronicles 16: 13, 14).

"When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: he went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his

own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre"—vers. 57-61.

"A rich man . . . named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple." He was one of the few of those who had riches who waited for the kingdom (Matthew 19: 23, 24; Mark 15: 43), but he had not, hitherto, openly proclaimed himself a follower of Jesus (John 19: 38). He had been a secret disciple, but he proved loyal and brave when the test came.

"Pilate commanded the body to be delivered." Thus the body of Jesus was preserved from further indignity, and Isaiah 53: 9 was fulfilled. He must be with the rich in His death.

"He wrapped it in a clean linen cloth." As was customary in Jewish burials, the body was entirely swathed in long, linen strips, not simply covered with a shroud.

"Rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre." This stone covered the entire entrance and was probably like a great millstone, fitted into a groove cut in the face of the cliff.

"Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary." Mary of Magdala, out of whom seven demons had been cast (Luke 8: 2), and Mary, the mother of Joses (Mark 15: 47), were looking on, taking note of everything that was done, so that they might come to the tomb after the Sabbath was past and properly

embalm the body of the One they had loved and on whom all their hopes were set, but who now was cold in death.

"Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night, and steal Him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch"—vers. 62-66.

"The next day, that followed the day of preparation." This was on the evening of the day when Jesus died, as we would count time. But for the Jews, the new day began at sunset. So, immediately following the 14th Nisan, as the evening which ushered in the 15th of the month began, the Pharisees and others hastened to Pilate to prefer their request.

"We remember that that deceiver said . . . After three days I will rise again." Strange that they, His enemies, should remember what His own disciples had forgotten! It is evident that His prediction had become well known.

"Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day." They were taking no chances. They realized that if the least ground were given for starting a rumor that Jesus had fulfilled His promise, their efforts to destroy the effect of His teaching would be in vain. The disappearance of His body from Joseph's new tomb

would be, in their estimation, a tragedy, and would be accepted by many as a proof of His resurrection. So they were afraid His disciples might arrange to rob the sepulchre and hide the body away; therefore, the importance of effectually thwarting any such attempt.

"Make it as sure as ye can." Pilate was probably not only incensed, but even amused by their fears and anxiety. He gave them a detachment of Roman soldiers and appointed them to guard the tomb. His grim words bidding them make it as sure as they could seem almost sardonic. They were soon to learn how helpless they were when God's hour should strike.

"So they . . . made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch." To break that seal would be a crime of the first magnitude, which they felt none of the disciples would dare to attempt, and the guard of soldiers would ensure that no one would be able to steal the body before the three days had elapsed.

It is evident that His own declaration that He was to rise again the third day (20: 19) had made a deeper impression upon the minds of His enemies than upon the hearts of His own disciples. Although He had mentioned it on several occasions, they never seemed to enter into the meaning of His words. They wondered what the rising from the dead could mean (Mark 9: 10, 31, 32; Luke 18: 33, 34). So even after He was crucified they had no expectation

of His resurrection (John 20: 9). But the leaders of the people, who had so definitely opposed Him, remembered His words; and while they did not expect them to be fulfilled, they were fearful that by some kind of trickery His disciples might be able to persuade the credulous populace that He had actually triumphed over death; hence their errand to Pilate and their request that every precaution be taken to prevent the disappearance of His body from the tomb. But all in vain, for in spite of the sealing of the stone, which covered the entrance to the sepulchre, and the watchfulness of the Roman guard, the stone was rolled away and the Saviour arose from the dead and appeared unto many reputable eyewitnesses, who testified to the reality of His resurrection.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

THE RISEN KING, AND THE ROYAL COMMISSION

ON the morning of the feast of the first fruits, the first day of the week following the first sabbath after the Passover, Jesus was raised from the dead and so became the first fruits of them that slept (Leviticus 23:9-14; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23).

His resurrection is the proof that redemption has been accomplished. Because of His perfect satisfaction in the work of His Son, God raised Him from the dead (Acts 4:2) and seated Him at His own right hand, thus acknowledging Him as Lord and Christ (Acts 2:33, 36). Had the body of the Lord Jesus Christ never come forth from the tomb, it would have been silent evidence that He was either a deceiver or deceived when He declared that He was to give His life a ransom for many (20:28). He would have been simply another martyr to what He believed to be the truth, or else to His own ambitions. But His resurrection, in accordance with His prediction that the third day He would rise again, confirmed His claims and proved that His death was an actual propitiation for sin and that God had accepted it as such.

On Calvary, as we have seen, the Lord Jesus Christ took the sinner's place and bore the judgment that we deserved. That judgment involved eternal separation from God for the wicked. As made sin, the Lord Jesus cried to God, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Because He is infinite and we are but finite, His sacrifice and suffering were a sufficient propitiation for the sins of the world. When expiation had been made, it behoved God the Father to bring Jesus Christ back from the dead, thus fully vindicating Him from any charge of personal failure for which He should be "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (Isaiah 53:4). All His atoning sufferings were for others, not as penalty for any ill desert of His own. In raising Him from the dead, the Father attested the perfection of the work of His Son.

The empty tomb of Jesus is the silent yet effectual witness to the fact of His resurrection. Had it been possible to find His body, His disciples would have received it and given it careful burial again. And if His enemies could have produced it, they would have displayed it in fiendish glee as a positive proof that His prediction—that He would rise again the third day—had been utterly falsified. But neither friend nor foe could locate it, for God had raised His Son from the dead in token of His perfect satisfaction in the sacrifice of the cross. The tomb was empty on that first Lord's Day morning, not because the disciples had come by night and stolen

the body while the soldiers slept (an unheard-of proceeding), nor yet because the chief priests and their emissaries had dared to break the Roman seal upon the stone that covered the entrance to that rock-hewn grave, but because Jesus had fulfilled His words when He declared that if they destroyed the temple of His body, He would raise it again in three days. The resurrection is attributed to the Father (Hebrews 13:20), to the Son (John 2:19-21; 10:17, 18), and to the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:11). The entire Trinity had part in that glorious event, the supreme miracle of the ages, when He who died for our sins rose again for our justification. Joseph of Arimathea little thought of the honor that was to be his, when preparing the new tomb which was to be the dwelling-place for a few hours of the dead body of Him who is now alive forevermore.

"In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake, for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead; and, behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him: Lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring His disciples word. And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell My brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me"—vers. 1-10.

"In the end of the sabbath." The Jewish sabbath was now ended. A new era was about to begin, to be characterized by a new day. "As it began to dawn toward the first day of the week." It was the early morning of the day following the sabbath when the two Marys went out "to see the sepulchre," preparatory to taking steps for the embalming of the body, which had been so hastily laid away on the day of death.

"The angel of the Lord descended from heaven . . . and rolled back the stone." This stone was not rolled back to let the risen Lord out, for He had left the tomb already. No barriers could restrain Him in His resurrection body. It was to let the women and the disciples in, that the tomb was opened.

"His countenance was like lightning." Angels are supernatural beings, pure spirits, who assume the human form at will and can disappear suddenly. "Like lightning" is suggestive of those who are said to be as "a flame of fire" (Hebrews 1: 7).

"For fear of him the keepers . . . became as dead men." In their fright at the appearance of this celestial messenger, the hard, sturdy soldiers of the guard fainted away, unable to look upon his terrifying countenance.

"The angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye." Quieting the fears of the women, the angel gave them to understand that he knew their quest exactly. But he had good news for them.

"He is not here: for He is risen." This is the foundation of all our hope. It is not true, as Arnold wrote, that the body of Jesus still sleeps in a Syrian tomb. That tomb is empty. "The place where the Lord lay" bore mute evidence of His resurrection in the presence of the unruffled grave-clothes that had enswathed His body (John 20: 3-8). The attention of the two Marys was directed to the empty crypt, where that precious body had reposed as it lay cold in death. No earthly hands had removed it. Jesus arose at God's appointed hour and left the sepulchre behind forever.

"Go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead." It was the privilege of these godly women to be the first evangelists of the new dispensation—to carry the glad news of a risen Saviour to the sorrowing, because unbelieving, disciples. Ere going to the cross, Jesus had told them, "After I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee" (Matthew 26: 32). To this appointed rendezvous the women were commanded to tell the disciples to repair, that there they might, as a group, meet their risen Lord.

"They . . . did run to bring His disciples word." Love and joy gave wings to their feet as they hastened to carry the glad tidings. There was no doubt in their minds as to the truth of the angel's message.

"As they went . . . Jesus met them, saying, All hail." He appeared to them Himself, so that now

they had not only the word of an angel and the sight of the empty sepulchre to rely upon, but they could also testify that they had seen the Lord Himself in the body of His resurrection, and thus their faith had turned to sight. Jesus directed them to convey the good news to the disciples and to bid them to go into Galilee to the rendezvous appointed, where He had promised to meet them.

While the women were hastening to carry the news of the Lord's triumph over death to the apostles, the Roman soldiers were in a state of great perturbation over the events of the early morning, and had made their way to the city to tell the chief priests what had occurred.

"Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole Him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day"—vers 11-15.

There are no depths of deceit and chicanery too low for religious bigots who are determined to pursue a chosen course to the bitter end, no matter what may be involved. When the soldiers explained what had taken place these priests, and the elders, who soon joined them, counseled the soldiers to say that the disciples of Jesus had come by night, while the guard slept, and stolen the body away.

Such an acknowledgment, if true, would have exposed them to severe penalties, but the chief priests promised to intercede for them if the matter came to the ears of the governor. They gave large bribes to the soldiers to ensure their collaboration in the matter. So they went away and gave out the story as they were instructed, and that was commonly reported, Matthew tells us, "until this day"—that is, for some years at least after the resurrection.

"Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw Him, they worshipped Him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen"—vers. 16-20.

"Into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them." During His last days with His disciples, as they were drawing near to Jerusalem, Jesus had told them of His approaching death and His resurrection, and He mentioned a definite mountain in Galilee where He would meet them after all had been consummated (Matthew 26: 32; 28: 7; Mark 16: 7). Though He appeared earlier to individuals and to various groups, it was in Galilee that He manifested Himself to "above five hundred brethren at once" (1 Corinthians 15: 6). At least, most commentators consider this to be the case, though He evidently met first

with the eleven apostles on this occasion, before appearing to the larger number.

"They worshipped Him." When they beheld Him and knew it was indeed the risen Christ they were looking upon, they worshiped Him, knowing Him to be the Son of God come forth in triumph from the tomb (Romans 1:4). "But some doubted." What a proof of the incorrigible evil of the human heart! Unbelief can be overcome only by the power of the Holy Spirit. It was some time ere all the little group believed (Mark 16:14). This helps us to understand Mark 16:17. It was promised only to the believing apostles that miraculous signs would follow and thus authenticate their testimony.

"All power (authority) is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." As the obedient One, who had humbled Himself to the death of the cross, Jesus was exalted as Man by the Father to the place of pre-eminence over all things (Philippians 2:9-11). He is set as Son over His own house (Hebrews 3:6), to whom all God's servants are to be subject. It is He Himself who is the General Director of the missionary program of the present age.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations . . . in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." This gives the primary commission. The command is to teach, or make disciples, of all nations. The words "baptizing them" are secondary. It was not to baptize that they were sent, important as that is, but to instruct the nations in

the way of life. Those receiving the Word were to be baptized as the outward expression of their faith.

The baptismal formula was in the name of the Trinity, as was their preaching and teaching—not in the names, but the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Each Person of the Godhead had and still has a part in the work of salvation; therefore all are recognized and confessed in Christian baptism. The Father sent the Son, who gave His life in the power of the Eternal Spirit.

"All things whatsoever I have commanded you." During the forty days between His resurrection and ascension, Jesus unfolded to His disciples the program He would have them carry out, and gave the commandments which they were to teach to the people of all nations (Acts 1:2, 3). "Lo, I am with you alway." His presence by the Spirit was promised to all who sought to carry out His commission. "Even unto the end of the world." The last word is really "age." It refers to a time-world, rather than the material universe. Strictly speaking, the age to which He was referring will not end until He appears in glory to set up His kingdom over all the earth, but the period of the calling of the Church from Pentecost to the Rapture is included necessarily in that word "unto." During all that time from the hour in which He spoke these words to the bringing in of the Kingdom age, the

gospel is to be preached, and His Spirit will be with His faithful messengers, to enable them to proclaim the message in power for the blessing of mankind.

The Great Commission to evangelize the world is not given as a whole in any of the Gospels, but we need to take all related passages in the three Synoptics and in Acts 1 to get it in its entirety. There are different aspects of the commission which are emphasized in each place. Then, in addition, we have the Lord's command to the eleven as given in John 20. These all agree in this: that it is our responsibility to carry the message of grace to all men everywhere, while we wait for our Lord to return, according to His promise. In keeping with the character of Matthew's Gospel as setting forth the King and the kingdom, the commission as given here has specially in view the bringing of all nations to acknowledge the authority of Christ, and proclaim their allegiance by baptism into the name of the Holy Trinity. In its fullest sense this commission has never been fulfilled as yet. It will be completed after the Church age has ended, and a Jewish remnant will carry out the Lord's instructions preparatory to setting up the kingdom. But this does not relieve us of our responsibility to carry it out as far as possible in the present age. Mark stresses the importance of faith on the part of those who carry the message, which was to be authenticated, by "signs following." Luke, both in his Gospel and the Acts, links the subjective with the objective—

repentance on the part of the sinner, forgiveness on the part of God. John dwells on the authority of the risen Christ who commissions His servants to proclaim remission of sins to all who believe and retention of sins to those who spurn the message.

But all alike declare the urgency and the importance of carrying the witness-testimony, the proclamation of the gospel, unto all the nations of the world in the shortest possible time. Alas, how sadly has the Church failed in this respect! It is an appalling thought that after nineteen centuries of gospel preaching there are many millions of men and women still sitting in darkness and the shadow of death (Isaiah 9:2) who have never heard the name of Jesus, and know nothing of the redemption which He has purchased by His atoning death upon the cross.

The program as set forth by our Lord has never been modified or repealed. It still constitutes what the Iron Duke (Wellington) called the "marching orders" of the Church—orders which have, however, been very largely ignored by the great bulk of professing Christians. The first six centuries of the present era were characterized by great missionary zeal, when, at times, whole nations were brought to at least an outward profession of faith in Christ. But the next thousand years, which Rome calls "the ages of faith," but which instructed Christians rightly designate "the dark ages," were marked, in great measure, by an eclipse of true gospel activity.

With the coming of the Protestant Reformation came a new interest in missions, in which the Moravians were the pioneers. Later, within the last century and a half, there has followed a great awakening as to the responsibility of the Church to evangelize the regions beyond. Today there is no excuse either for lack of information or lack of zeal as to missionary activity.

Some there are who deny that we of the Church age are to act at all on this commission as given here, insisting that it was intended for a Jewish testimony in the coming era of the great tribulation. This is fanciful in the extreme. Far more important than any quibbling as to the exact character of this commission is the truth of our responsibility to carry the story of redeeming love to all men everywhere. It is given, not alone to those we may think of as official ministers, or specially designated missionaries, but to every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, to endeavor to make Him known to others and so to win as many precious souls as possible while the day of grace is continued. This is the first great business of every member of the Church of the living God. All are called to be witnesses, according to their measure. It is ours to "go" (v. 19), to "pray" (9:38), and to help send forth (Acts 13:3) and sustain those who are able to leave home and friends as they hasten forth into distant lands to carry the gospel to the regions beyond (3 John 6-8). The command to teach, or dis-

ciple, all nations, does not mean that it is our responsibility to educate the heathen along secular lines. This may come in as a by-product of missionary service, but it is not the supreme work of the herald of the cross. It is a lamentable fact that much missionary money has been devoted to founding and maintaining schools and colleges which have turned out bitter enemies of the cross of Christ. Had the same money and energy been devoted to preaching the gospel, the results would have been far different. Schoolteaching is a laudable profession, but it should not be confounded with gospel testimony, though it would be a happy and blessed thing if each schoolteacher were also a proclaimer of the glad tidings of grace.

The Lord's instructions never yet have been fully obeyed, and we know that not all the nations will accept the message in this age of grace; but we are commanded to go forth in the name of the Triune God, proclaiming the authority of the risen King and bidding all men yield to Him in glad surrender, and so enter into peace and blessing while waiting for His return from heaven.

Matthew closes with the Lord sending forth His messengers. We do not read of Christ's ascension here. This is significant, for it is the King commissioning His ambassadors that the Holy Spirit desired to emphasize. The last we see of Him, He is directing His representatives to go to all nations, calling upon men and women everywhere to

acknowledge Him as their Saviour and become subject to His will.

When the commanding officer speaks, a loyal soldier has but to obey. The "captain of the host of the Lord" (Joshua 5: 14) has said, "Go ye!" It is ours to act upon His instructions. The blessing of God has always rested in a very special way upon the individual or the church which was missionary-minded. None ever lost out by obedience to our risen Lord's command.

When we say there are plenty of heathen at home to whom we should give our attention rather than to seek the lost in distant lands, we forget that all at home are within easy reach of the gospel, if interested in it; whereas there are untold myriads dying in heathen lands to whom the way of life is unknown, and who have never heard of the Bible or the Saviour it reveals.

There were no missionary societies in the early Church because the entire body of believers was supposed to be engaged in the great work of evangelizing the world. It was after the Church as a whole lost this vision that societies were formed to arouse interest in and forward missionary activity.

Sending out men and women as missionaries who do not themselves have a definite Christian experience is folly of the worst kind. It is but the blind leading the blind, and both are headed for the ditch (15:14). No one is fit to be a missionary abroad who is not a missionary at home. An ocean voyage

never made a missionary of anyone. There must be a divinely implanted love for lost souls ere one is ready to go forth in Christ's name to carry His gospel to the heathen world. One of the first evidences of genuine conversion to Christ is the desire to make Him known to others.

It has been asked: What right has anyone to hear the gospel hundreds of times when millions have never heard it once? We may well be exercised as to this, for we are called to be *ambassadors* for Christ. This is the title Paul gives to those who seek to carry out our Lord's instruction as to evangelizing the nations (2 Corinthians 5:20). While our Saviour Himself is personally in heaven, seated on the right hand of the divine Majesty (Hebrews 1:3), we are called to represent Him in this world, going to rebels against the authority of the God of heaven and earth, and pleading with them to be reconciled to Him who sent His Son in grace that all men might have life and peace through Him. We are unfaithful representatives indeed if we fail to respond to the command laid upon us, and allow our fellow-men to perish in their sins unwarned and knowing not the way of life.