

Seventy Less-Known Bible Stories

GEORGE GOODMAN



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Preface

THIS is the third volume of *70 Bible Stories*. In the first *70 Best Bible Stories* I kept to the arterial roads of Holy Scripture, if I may be permitted that simile, in the second *70 Familiar Stories* I have traversed other widely used roads, but this time I am going off the beaten tracks to *70 Less-Known Stories*. As in the country, some of the best scenery and quiet lovely spots are found in the byeways, so in the Scriptures in the lesser-known parts there are beautiful views of truth and refreshing streams of the water of life.

I trust they will receive the same kind reception that the previous volumes had. The call for fresh editions from time to time has proved that they are supplying a need and helping those who have constantly to find pastures new in the Sacred Writings.

These *Less-Known Stories* will encourage what is by many felt to be a real need, that is, the opening up from Scripture of a wider range of truth. The constant choice of the same subjects and the reiteration of the same truths tends to become wearisome and may degenerate into mere platitude, than which nothing is more painful to hearers.

An unusual Bible subject at once awakens an unusual interest, and the preacher or teacher is encouraged by it. A fresh line of truth needs more careful preparation and will lead to more study and prayer, all of which is beneficial.

The Lord graciously use this further effort.

GEORGE GOODMAN

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THE WONDERS OF THE BIBLE

“ THY COMMANDMENT IS EXCEEDING BROAD ”
(Psa. 119. 96).

THE Bible is the outstanding marvel in the world. This cannot be gainsaid. No book has approached it or bears any comparison with it.

On the shelves of the British and Foreign Bible Society are translations of the Bible or parts thereof in 1,000 languages of which the B. & F. B. S. has supplied 715.

No other book on earth has such a record or anything near it.

The book has reformed the character of thousands of millions and brought peace and holiness into their lives.

Every land where its circulation is unrestricted has been elevated and enlightened by it.

It still holds the first place in all literature for beauty and variety, strength and love. It is the book of truth and joy. No book has been so loved nor so frequently quoted. It has become the standard of life in millions of homes and ennobled and enriched them. It has taught men to love one another and to honour truth. It has taken the lead in all self-sacrifice and loving service.

All this is true because the Book has as its first aim *the Revelation to men of the Divine Saviour*, the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. It leads to Him and contains within its covers all the knowledge we have of Him. The Scriptures witness to Christ and those who read and obey find Eternal Life in Him. But it is of some of the outstanding marvels that I wish to write. Let us consider then,

1. **The Typology of Scripture.** There is perhaps nothing so unique and so original, so simple and yet so profound as the typology of the Bible.

No other book in the world has any such thing, nor could in the nature of things. For typology is *enacted prophecy or historical parable*. God was pleased to choose a small nation and make it a lesson book for the whole world, illustrating His way of salvation. He put it through certain experiences so that its peculiar and miraculous history foreshadowed the Gospel. Every main truth of the Salvation afterwards revealed and wrought out by Christ is anticipated in some type, so that the way of Life by Faith in Christ and His atoning work is more easily learned and understood from the type than even from the doctrinal writings.

Redemption by the Blood of the Lamb is seen in the Passover. The believers who sprinkled the blood on the door were saved by God (who overshadowed them) on the ground of the blood. The dying Israelite obtained Life by looking at the Serpent lifted up.

We are not left to guess the meaning of these types, they are all unfolded in the New Testament. The Apostle tells us Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed for us and the Lord Himself interpreted the Brazen Serpent (see John 3. 14). The types close with Solomon. Let those who deny this try and produce some from the second half of the Old Testament.

2. **The Law.** There have been many moralists in the world and many codes, but none can for a moment stand beside the Holy Commandments given on Sinai.

How happy the world would be were they observed, for they are "holy, just and good," "given for our good always," and shown by the Lord's matchless unfolding of them in the Sermon on the Mount to be "spiritual."

reaching to the secret life, "the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Were they observed there would be no idols in the land, the name of God would be revered and swearing cease. Children would obey their parents and Sabbath rest be enjoyed. No police would be needed and that abomination the Divorce Court could be closed.

How precious then is the morality of the Bible. "O how I love Thy law, it is my meditation all the day long."

3. The Poetry of the Bible. Once again the Bible takes the pre-eminence, for there is no praise and psalm and poetry in the world such as is found there.

There is no piece of poetry so beloved, so well known and so simply grand as the 23rd Psalm. The Book of Job is unsurpassed as an epic poem dealing with the mystery of suffering. The Book of Psalms can never be surpassed nor will it ever be ousted from its proud position as the World's Hymn Book. The Church of all generations and in all climes has expressed its worship and adoration in those inspired words.

4. Prophecy in Scripture. Here, too, is an unchallengeable miracle. Thousands of years before it came to pass the facts of Christ's coming to earth to die and to save were foretold. (See my "Miracle of Prophecy," 6d.).

Or consider the wonderful outline of the world's history from the lips of the Lord. When He spake the words the church was unfounded. Jerusalem was the centre of the national life of the elect nation. The temple, blazing in gold, forty-six years in building and scarcely then finished, was still standing, and its stately ritual and blood sacrifices all proceeding. Who could guess what course events would take? how the three great streams of life, the Jew, the Gentile and the Church of God, would flow, and what would be the destiny of each? Yet

the Lord foretold it all in Luke 21 and other Scriptures.

(1) *The Church He was to build*, so far from having a glorious triumph in the world, was to proceed through persecution and blood, its members hated of all men, betrayed and slain; yet preserved through it all and persevering till the Lord should come (16).

(2) *The Gentile nations* would continue to war with one another, and nation rise against nation, till civilization would seem to totter, and men's hearts fail from fear (26).

(3) *The Jew* would see his city surrounded by armies and destroyed (20), its temple burned to the ground and Jerusalem trodden down of the Gentiles for a period that has not yet ended after two thousand years, and the people scattered to every land (24).

Such was the destiny of each of the three great streams of life as foretold by the Lord Jesus. Two thousand years have passed. Was He a true Prophet? Indeed, He was. Each branch of the human race, Jew, Gentile and Church, has taken the direction He indicated, and suffered the things He foretold. The Jew is scattered, the Church persevering through persecution, and the Gentiles warring.

5. The Lord Jesus as revealed in the Gospels.

Here is the greatest miracle of all. Four Evangelists, simple men—a tax gatherer, a servant, a local doctor and a fisherman, without collusion, tell what they saw and heard of Jesus of Nazareth in language plain and unadorned and Lo! *The Perfect Man* stands before us, such as all the world confesses was never before seen or heard, and has not been since.

He speaks in Parables so charming that literature knows not their equal—The Prodigal Son, The Good Samaritan, The Lost Sheep, The Marriage Supper, and many more.

He Himself claims to be both Son of God and Son of Man, the Lamb of God bearing sin, the Living Lord of Life, the Saviour of the World.

He bids all come to Him, take His yoke and learn of Him and promises them Eternal Life.

6. The Doctrine in the Epistles.

Here the Gospel, which was preached to Sinners is explained to Saints.

Not in dry, theological language, but in language glowing with love, teaching based upon real incidents arising in the life of the assemblies of the Saints. Many things truly "hard to be understood," but combining milk for babes with strong meat for full grown men.

Such profound logic as the Epistle to the Romans or the Hebrews the world has elsewhere never found. This, too, is a marvel.

7. The Future Revealed.

What do we know of the Future Life? Nothing, except what is shewn in the Bible. Obviously no other book attempts (or if attempts succeeds) to tell us what is to come. Without the Bible, Death is a leap in the dark, but the Sacred pages have made it the porch of the blessed Heaven of Perfect Life and Love—an eternity with Christ and like Christ.

The destiny of this world is set before us in the last book of the Bible in apocalyptic language depicting the final triumph of righteousness in a world of sin.

"For ever be Thy name adored
For these celestial lines."

8. Its Testimony to Itself.

It is sometimes falsely alleged that the Bible does not claim to be inspired; this is, of course, absolutely untrue. It does so in the most definite and exact terms, as follows:

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3. 6).

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came in old time not by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1. 20, 21).

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" (Psa. 19. 7).

"The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10. 35).

"Till Heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in

no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled ” (Matt. 5. 18).

This is confirmed by

The Titles Given to the Bible.

- “ The Sword of the Spirit ” (Eph. 6. 17).
- “ The Faith once for all delivered to the saints ” (Jude 3).
- “ The Oracles of God ” (Rom. 3. 2 ; Heb. 5. 12).
- “ The Lively (Living) Oracles ” (Acts 7. 38).
- “ The Holy Scriptures ” (Rom. 1. 2).
- “ The Scriptures of the Prophets ” (Rom. 16. 36).
- “ The Scriptures of Truth ” (Dan. 10. 21).
- “ The Word of God ” (Heb. 4. 12), “ of the Lord ” (1 Pet. 1. 25), “ of Christ ” (Col. 3. 16).
- “ The Word of Truth ” (James 1. 18).
- “ The Word of Life ” (Phil. 2. 16).
- “ The Word of the Gospel ” (Acts 15. 7) “ of Promise ” (Rom. 9. 9), “ of Salvation ” (Acts 13. 26).
- “ The Word of the Cross ” (1 Cor. 1. 18, R.V.).
- “ The Book ” (Luke 4. 20). “ The Book of the Law ” (Gal. 3. 10).
- “ The Law of the Lord,”
- “ The Testimony of the Lord,”
- “ The Statutes of the Lord,”
- “ The Commandment of the Lord,”
- “ The Judgments of the Lord,”

(Psa. 91. 7-9
and
Psa. 119. 1, 4, 5
6, 7, etc.)

What the Bible Does.

- “ Makes wise unto Salvation ” (2 Tim. 3. 16).
- “ Saves the Soul ” (James 1. 21).
- “ Brings Regeneration ” (1 Peter 1. 23 ; Jas. 1. 18).
- “ Cleanses from Defilement ” (John 15. 3 ; Eph. 5. 26 ; Psa. 119. 9).
- “ Converts the Soul,”
- “ Makes Wise the Simple,”
- “ Rejoices the Heart,”
- “ Enlightens the Eyes,”

(Psa. 19. 7-9).

“ Effectively works in them that believe ” (1 Thess. 2. 13).

Builds up and gives an inheritance among the sanctified (Acts 20 32).

The Grace of Memory

O LORD with what a wondrous gift
Thou did'st endow the sons of men,
When the rich grace of memory
Was first bestowed, that it might then
In blest employment ever be
Devoted to remember Thee.

For Faith which always pleases Thee,
Will summon memory to her aid,
And so recall all Thou did'st do :
Each gracious word that Thou hast said,
And visit all those scenes so fair,
Once hallowed by Thy presence there.

Faith led by memory can go
To Bethlehem where she may recall
The lowly mother, with her child
Laid wrapped around within the stall ;
And worship with the shepherds there,
Give with the Magi gifts most rare.

With memory may we stand with John
Beside the Jordan, as the Lord
Is there baptised, and see the Dove
Descend upon Him, hear the word
That spake from Heaven, " This is My Son,
Who all the Father's will hath done."

And memory follows Him with joy.
In street and lane, in field and wood,
From place to place in blest employ,
Ever engaged in doing good.
The leper cleansed, the blind made see,
The dead are raised, the prisoner free.

THE GRACE OF MEMORY

And memory most of all delights
Within the upper room to dwell,
The night in which He was betrayed,
And hear His tender, last farewell,
To share with them the bread He brake,
And treasure every word He spake.

Then tremblingly may memory go
With awe to dark Gethsemane,
The drops of falling blood behold
And share the awful agony,
Recall the deep submissive moan :
" Father, not Mine, Thy will be done."

Then memory with bated breath,
With head bowed down and silently,
May follow as they lead the Lord
Unto the place called Calvary,
And watch Him there and see Him die,
And hear His loud expiring cry.

And memory stands beside the tomb,
The empty tomb, where angels tread,
And tell us that the Lord is risen :
" Why seek the living with the dead, ? "
And memory with joy will stay
To meet the Lord upon the way.

O blessed gift of memory,
Faith with her aid can see the Lord,
Can follow all His path below,
And hear again each sacred word.
Dear Lord, may we obedient be,
With faith and love remember Thee.

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STORY 1

Enoch and Methuselah

Read GENESIS 5. 21-32.

I. Text. "Enoch walked with God and begat Methuselah, and all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years" (Gen. 5. 21-27).

II. Main Lesson. The oldest man who ever lived died before his father—because Enoch the father of Methuselah was translated and did not see death.

Enoch teaches us the blessedness of the walk of faith.

Methuselah the long suffering of God, for the flood was not to come until he died and so his life was prolonged beyond that of any other man.

III. The History Told.

vv. 21, 22. *Enoch the seventh from Adam walked with God after begetting Methuselah.* "Enoch lived 65 years and begat Methuselah, and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah 300 years and begat sons and daughters."

v. 23. *Enoch lived to be 365 years old.* "All the days of Enoch were 365 years."

v. 24. *Enoch is translated.* "Enoch walked with God and he was not for God took him."

v. 25. *Methuselah begat Lamech, Noah's father.* "Methuselah lived 187 years and begat Lamech."

v. 26. *He lives 782 years longer and has children.* "Methuselah lived after he begat Lamech 782 years and begat sons and daughters."

v. 27. *Methuselah lives in all 969 years.* "All the days of Methuselah were 969 years and he died."

IV. The Patriarchal Age.

Before the flood men lived to an extreme age as seen by the following list :—

Adam lived 930 years.

Seth lived 912 years.

Enos lived 905 years.
 Cainan lived 910 years.
 Mahalaleel lived 895 years.
 Jared lived 962 years.
 Enoch translated at 365 years.
 Methuselah lived 969 years.
 Lamech lived 777 years.

But in each case, except that of Enoch, the words are added "*and he died,*" showing the result of sin, "in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (2. 17). So we read: "*death passed upon all men for that all sinned*" (Rom. 5. 12 R.V.) that is all sinned in Adam "*for by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin.*"

There is an incident told of an unawakened man who strolled into a place of worship and heard this chapter read. The constant repetition of the solemn words "and he died," awakened him to the fact that he too was under sentence of death and led him to seek the Saviour in Whom all live.

V. New Testament References to Methuselah and Enoch.

Luke 3. 37, in the genealogy of our Lord. "Noe, which was the son of Lamech, which was the son of Mathusala, which was the son of Enoch."

Hebrews 11. 5, 6. "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God, but without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

Jude 14. "Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying: Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints."

VI. Other Lessons from the History.

1. IN ADAM ALL DIE. Death means separation from God. Man is a tripartite being, "body, soul and spirit." The soul is the man, for Adam was made a Living Soul. He has a body with which he communicates with his fellow men and a spirit with which he has communion with God.

When Adam sinned his spirit ceased to function (that is "died," for death never means cessation of existence in the Bible) and all communion with God ceased. "The unregenerate man—the fallen sinner, is therefore described as dead toward God"—"dead in trespasses and sins"—"dead while he liveth."

He needs to be born again, quickened to new life in order to be restored to communion with God.

2. LENGTH OF LIFE. Although these patriarchs lived to be nearly a thousand years old, what is that to Eternity? "*A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past*" (Psa. 90. 4) and with the Lord "*a thousand years (is) as one day*" (II. Peter 3. 8).

Yet the wonder of Grace is that

"To man the creature of a day
He grants eternal life."

3. WALKING WITH GOD BY FAITH. Faith always pleases God and without it it is impossible to please Him. We remember how the Lord Jesus whenever He met with faith commended it.

Faith honours God, just as confidence in a man and in his word honours and pleases him. Not to believe God is to make Him a liar (I. John 5. 10). To put trust in and believe Him is to set to your seal that God is true (John 3. 33).

To practice faith is daily and habitually to walk with God in communion over His Word. It is for this that Enoch and Noah and Abraham are all commended. It is the true Life of Faith.

4. THE MEANING OF METHUSELAH'S NAME "When he is removed it shall come."

The flood came directly on his death. This is seen by the following addition :—

Methuselah at the birth of Lamech was 187 years old.

Lamech at the birth of Noah (v. 28) was 182 years old.

The flood came when Noah was (76) 600 years old.

Which was the year of Methuselah's death, 969

This life drawn out to nearly 1,000 years confirms what is said in I. Peter 3. 20 "The long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah."

Judgment is God's strange work, but He delights in mercy.

We always find God waiting before He executes judgment.

He waited over 400 years till the iniquity of the Amorites was full (Gen. 15. 13-16 ; Lev. 18. 25 ; 20. 23) before He destroyed the nation.

He bids us now *not to despise* "the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering" (Rom. 2. 4).

5. A PROPHETIC FORECAST. Many love to trace in this history of Enoch an anticipation or type of future events.

Enoch is like the Church of God that will be translated before the threatened judgments falls upon the earth. For we read in I. Thess. 4. 16. "The Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first : then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord." What a translation that will be !

VII. Application.

1. TO THE SINNER. Remember we too must die.

"Life at best is very brief,
Like the falling of a leaf."

Remember too that judgment is coming. Do not despise the long-suffering of God.

2. TO THE BELIEVER. Learn to walk with God by faith as Enoch did. Let it be said of us, "He pleased God."

STORY 2

Melchizedek—The King Priest

Read GENESIS 14. 18-24; HEBREWS 7. 1-11.

I. Text. “Thou art a Priest for Ever after the Order of Melchizedek” (Psa. 110. 4.)

II. Main Lesson. The Holy Spirit has chosen Melchizedek (rather than Aaron) as a type of Christ, Our Great High Priest, because there are several things true of Melchizedek, the King Priest that are not true of Aaron—the chief being that he “ever liveth,” and “hath an unchangeable priesthood.” He is in other words Eternally a Priest not as Aaron subject to death. This mystery is explained in Hebrews.

III. The History recounted.

What is said of Melchizedek in Genesis is so brief that it can be given in full.

v. 17. *Abraham returning from his pursuit of the King's Confederate with Chedorlaomer and his rescue of Lot is met by the King of Sodom.*

“The King of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer and of the Kings that were with him at the valley of Shaveh which is the King's dale.”

v. 18. *Melchizedek also meets him.* “And Melchizedek King of Salem brought forth bread and wine and he was the Priest of the Most High God.”

v. 19. *He blessed Abram.* “And he blessed him and said Blessed be Abram of the Most High God possessor of Heaven and earth.”

v. 20. *Abram gives him tithes.* “And blessed be the Most High God which delivered thine enemies into thine hand and he gave him tithes of all.”

IV. New Testament references to Melchizedek.

Psalm 110. 4. "The Lord hath sworn and will not repent Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

Hebrews 5. 5-6. "Christ glorified not Himself to be made an high priest; but He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son, to-day have I begotten Thee (Ps. 2. 7.). As He saith also in another place (Ps. 110. 4.) Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

Hebrews 6. 20. "Whither the Forerunner is for us entered even Jesus made (having become R.V.) an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

Hebrews 7. 1-3. "For this Melchizedek, King of Salem Priest of the Most High God who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the Kings and blessed him; to whom Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of Righteousness and after that also King of Salem which is King of Peace without father, without mother, without descent (genealogy R.V.) having neither beginning of days nor end of life but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a Priest continually."

(The whole of this Chapter, Hebrews 7, should be read).

V. Melchizedek a Great Typical Character.

When we read that Melchizedek was without father or mother and had no beginning nor ending, we must not take it literally but typically.

He is viewed in the New Testament not so much as a historical character but as a typical figure. He was an actual historical person, but he is introduced to us by the Holy Spirit as a Figure or Foreshadowing of Christ.

Some have preferred to think that he was actually Christ who assumed this form and character. That this was in other words one of the Christophanies or pre-appearances of Our Lord in human form (See the Story No. 6 "The Angel of the Lord") but most Bible students have regarded the wonderful words of Hebrews as having a typical rather than a literal meaning.

Let us gather up what is said of Him.

1. HE WAS A KING. Melchizedek means King of Righteousness and he was King of Salem which means Peace.

So our Lord Jesus, who is not only Our Priest but also our King is like Melchizedek "*a Priest upon His Throne*" (Zech. 6. 13.) and combines in His character, Rule, Righteousness and Peace.

Even in His death "Mercy and truth met together and righteousness and peace kissed each other" (Psa. 85. 10.)

He is Our Righteousness (Jer. 23. 6.), He is Our Peace (Eph. 2. 14.)

2. HE WAS PRIEST OF THE MOST HIGH GOD (El Elyon and El Shaddai) (18-19); the first Priest mentioned in the Bible. A Priest is described in Hebrews 5. 1-2., as *a man appointed for men in things pertaining to God,* that is who represents men in the presence of God.

His business was "*to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.*"

He needed to be one "*who can bear gently with the ignorant and them that are out of the way.*"

These qualities are of course seen perfectly in Our Lord Jesus, who offered one sacrifice once for all and by it perfected His saints for ever, so that no sacrificing priest is nor can be now required (Heb. 9. 26; 10. 12-14) There is no more offering for sin (Heb. 10. 18.).

3. HE WAS AN UNCHANGING AND ETERNAL PRIEST. No father, mother, genealogy, beginning of days nor end of life, but like the Son of God abides a priest continually.

This is in contrast with Aaron and the Levitical priesthood. Aaron died and so one by one did those priests, but not so our Lord Jesus, He ever liveth and so can save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him.

4. HE BLESSED ABRAHAM, and in receiving his blessing Abraham recognised Him as greater than he, for "the less is blessed of the better" (Heb. 7. 7.). So Our Lord Jesus is greater than all, the Better who blesses His people.

5. **ABRAHAM GAVE HIM TITHES.** Thus again recognising his superiority. The Apostle argues that Levi and all his descendants, Aaron and the succession of priests, paid tithes in Abraham and thus the Melchizedek priesthood was confessed as Better than the Aaronic (Heb. 7. 9.).

6. **HE BROUGHT FORTH BREAD AND WINE.** The first mention of these emblems that have since become so sacred and precious to us.

For Our Lord Jesus the night in which He was betrayed took bread, blessed and brake it and gave it to us in remembrance of Him and also the cup saying " This cup is the New Covenant in My blood."

So we have in Melchizedek a perfect type of Our Lord Jesus, our Great High Priest.

Only in this he falls short—Melchizedek could not as Our Glorious Priest did, offer himself without spot to God for our sins.

VI. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. **OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST** is said to be superior in this. See Heb. 7.

(a) "*He was made after the power of an endless life*" (16). Though He died as man He was in Himself the Eternal God who cannot die.

So though having a genealogy as man (Matt. 1. and Luke 3.) He was as God without father, mother, genealogy and beginning or end of days.

(b) "*He was surety of a better covenant*" (22). Moses' law made nothing perfect (19) but the " grace and truth " that came by Jesus Christ (John 1. 17.) gives us a *better hope* (19) by which we draw nigh unto God.

(c) "*He is able to save to the uttermost*" because He is never to die again. He ever lives to make intercession for us (25).

(d) *He is "perfected for evermore"* (28 R.V.). " Holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners " and now exalted at the right hand of God " higher than the Heavens " (26).

2. THE FOLLY OF MAKING PRIESTS HERE OF "MEN THAT DIE." (8).

We have now no need of any priest but Christ. God having abolished the Levitical priesthood because it was of "*men that die*" "*for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof*" (18) and having appointed His Son our Great Priest how foolish to set up another *dying-man priesthood*. So modern priestcraft is discredited and should be shunned as derogatory of the Glory, Work and Priesthood of Christ.

3. SAVE TO THE UTTERMOST." literally "to all ends."

The vilest sinner, the oldest sinner, may be saved from the deadliest and mightiest sins and that for ever and ever.

There is no end or limit to the power of Jesus to save.

4. HE SAVES BECAUSE HE EVER LIVES.

The Sinner must first be *reconciled* to God through the *death* of His Son then he will be *saved* by *His Life* (Rom. 5. 10).

The Bible does not talk of being saved at the Cross (as do so many hymns) but of being *reconciled* to God by the death of Christ and then *Saved* from the Throne by the Living Saviour. The Victory of the Cross was over the powers of Sin, Satan, Death and Hell, but in order to enjoy this victory we must live in the obedience of faith in the living Lord. Reconciled by His death, Saved by His life. Salvation is priestly work (Hebrew 7. 24-25).

5. BREAD AND WINE. It was when Abraham returned weary and exhausted from the long pursuit of Chedorlaomer and the fierce battle, that the King Priest met him and refreshed him with bread and wine.

So our Lord Jesus calls His servants, often exhausted with the battle of life, to meet Him at His Table each Lord's Day that He may give them

"Bread to strengthen,
Wine to cheer."

The remembrance of His dying love and living power "till He come."

VII. Application.

1. **TO THE UNSAVED.** Put not your trust in man-made priests, whose breath is in their nostrils and die as men, they can only deceive and fail you, but in Him who is both God and Man, who having offered One perfect sacrifice "once for all" (ephapax) ever liveth and is able to save to the uttermost.

But until you are reconciled to God by the death of His Son you cannot be saved, "Acquaint thyself therefore with Him and be at peace."

2. **TO THE BELIEVER.** Meditate on the Perfect Sacrifice by the Perfect Priest.

Avail yourself of His Priestly Power to Save.

OUTLINE.

Seven Good Priests of Scripture.

1. *Melchizedek* (Gen. 14. 18). King-Priest of Salem—Type of Christ.
2. *Aaron* (Exod. 28. 1). The first of the Levitical priesthood
3. *Eleazar* (Exod. 28. 1). Son of Aaron, who succeeded him.
4. *Eli* (1 Sam. 1. 9), who trained Samuel.
5. *Samuel* (1 Sam. 4. 1), who anointed Saul and David.
6. *Ezra* (Ezra 7. 12), who rebuilt the Temple.
7. *Zacharias* (Luke 1. 5), the father of John the Baptist.

Seven Wicked Priests of Scripture.

1. *Nadab and Abihu* (Lev. 10), sons of Aaron, struck dead for offering strange fire.
2. *Hophni and Phineas* (1 Sam. 2. 34), sons of Eli slain in battle.
3. *Micah's hireling* (Judges 18. 4), who served a carved image (18).
4. *Urijah* (2 Kings 16. 11), who built a heathen altar for King Ahaz.
5. *Annas* (John 18. 24), who sent Jesus bound to Caiaphas.
6. *Caiaphas* (John 18. 14), who condemned Jesus.
7. *Ananias* (Acts 23. 2), who commanded Paul to be smitten on the mouth.

STORY 3

Sarah—The Laughing Princess

Read GENESIS 11. 29-30 ; 12. 10-20 ; 16. 1-6; 17. 15-19 ;
18. 1-15 ; 20. 1-18 ; 21. 1-14 ; 23. 1-20.

I. **Text.** “ As for Sarai thy wife thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah (Princess) shall her name be, and I will bless her and give thee a son also of her ” (Gen. 17. 15-16).

II. Main Lesson.

In spite of her doubts and failures Sarah was yet a woman of faith, for we read “ Through faith Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed and was delivered of a child when she was past age because she judged Him faithful who had promised ” (Heb. 11. 11).

So we have Grace rewarding even feeble and faltering faith.

Also we learn the faithfulness of God to His promise, though unbelief may laugh.

III. The Story of Sarah in Chapters.

Chapter 1 (Genesis 11. 29-30). SARAH'S SORROW. “ The name of Abram's wife was Sarai . . . but Sarai was barren : she had no child.”

Chapter 2. (Genesis 12. 10-20). SARAH'S FOLLY.
v. 10. *Abraham and Sarah go down to Egypt.* “ There was a famine in the land : and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there ; for the famine was grievous in the land.”

v. 11-13. *Abraham persuades Sarah to say she is his sister.* She was his half sister (Gen. 20. 12). “ It came to pass when he was come near to enter into Egypt that he said to Sarai his wife, Behold thou art a fair woman to look upon. Say I pray thee thou art my sister that it may be well with me for thy sake.”

v. 15. *Sarah is taken into Pharaoh's house.* "The princes of Pharaoh saw her and commended her before Pharaoh and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house."

v. 17. *The Lord plagues Pharaoh and she is sent away.* "And the Lord plagued Pharaoh . . . because of Sarai, Abram's wife . . . and Pharaoh . . . sent him away and his wife."

Chapter 3. (Genesis 20. 1-18). THE FOLLY REPEATED.

v. 3. *Abraham repeats the half lie about Sarah being his sister to Abimelech king of Gerar and again God intervenes.* "God came to Abimelech in a dream and said: Behold thou art but a dead man for the woman thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife . . . therefore restore the man his wife for he is a prophet" (v. 7).

v. 10-18. *Abimelech rebukes Abraham and gives him a present of 1,000 pieces of silver and Abraham prays that Abimelech may be healed.* "And Abimelech said unto Abraham: What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing?"

"And unto Sarah he said Behold I have given thy brother 1,000 pieces of silver, behold he is to thee a covering of the eyes . . . thus she was reproved."

"So Abraham prayed unto God and God healed Abimelech."

Chapter 4 (Genesis 16. 1-6, 15). SARAH'S FAITH FAILS.

v. 1-6. *Sarah having no child instead of waiting God's time resorts to an expedient and gives Abraham her maid Hagar to wife.* "Sarai, Abram's wife, bare him no children and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar, and Sarai said to Abram, Behold now the Lord hath restrained me from bearing . . . and Sarah took Hagar and gave her to Abram to be his wife."

v. 15. *Ishmael is born—the persecutor of the child of promise (Gal. 4. 29).* "And Hagar bare Abram a son and Abram called his son's name . . . Ishmael."

Chapter 5 (Genesis 17. 15-19; 18. 6-15). SARAH PROMISED A SON, LAUGHS. ABRAHAM ALSO LAUGHS.

v. 15-16. *God promises Sarah a son and changes her name.* "God said to Abraham: As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai but Sarah shall her name be and I will bless her and give thee a son by her . . . She shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her."

v. 17. *Abraham laughs and questions the promise.* "Then Abraham fell upon his face and laughed and said in his heart shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old and shall Sarah that is ninety years old bear?"

Ch. 18. 1-8. *Three Angels visit Abraham who bids Sarah prepare for them.* "The Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre . . . and lo three men stood by him . . . and Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah and said, make ready quickly."

v. 9-12. *They promise Sarah a son. Sarah hears in the tent door and laughs.* "They said Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said Behold in the tent. And He (the Lord) said I will certainly return unto thee and lo Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself saying After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure my lord being old also?"

v. 13. *The Lord rebukes her.* "The Lord said unto Abraham wherefore did Sarah laugh . . . Is anything too hard for the Lord?"

v. 15. *Sarah denies laughing and is rebuked again.* "Then Sarah denied saying I laughed not; for she was afraid. And He said, Nay; but thou didst laugh."

Chapter 6 (Genesis 21. 1-14). SARAH BEARS ISAAC.

v. 1-5. *The promised son is born and circumcised.* "The Lord visited Sarah and Sarah bare Abraham a son in his old age, and Abraham called the name of his son Isaac, and Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him."

v. 6. *Sarah puns upon his name—Isaac means Laughter.* “Sarah said God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me.”

v. 9-10. *Sarah sees Ishmael mocking and tells Abraham to cast out Hagar's son.* “Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian mocking, wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son : for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son even with Isaac.”

v. 11-13. *Abraham hesitates to do so but God bids him comply.* “The thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight. And God said, Let it not be grievous, in all that Sarah hath said, hearken unto her voice, for in Isaac shall thy seed be called and also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation.”

Chapter 7 (Genesis 23. 1-10). SARAH DIES.

v. 1-2. *Sarah dies in Hebron, aged 127 years.* “Sarah was 127 years old and Sarah died in Kirjath-arba; the same is Hebron, and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and weep for her.”

v. 3-10. *Abraham buys the cave of Machpelah to bury her in.* “Abraham stood up from before his dead and spake unto the Sons of Heth saying, Give me a burying place that I may bury my dead out of my sight.”

v. 19. “And after this Abraham buried Sarah in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre.”

IV. Some other Lessons from the Story.

1. **LITTLE FAITH IS TRUE FAITH.** There is all the difference between little faith and no faith. Little faith may fail and falter, but it still holds on and God never allows any faith to go unrewarded.

It may be faith as a grain of mustard seed only, it is so small, but if it is really placed in the Living God, the Mighty Saviour, the unchangeable Word of God, it will prevail and overthrow mountains at last. Little faith can grow into great faith. but no faith cannot, it is the sin of unbelief.

A touch of an electric wire will give a shock, whether a timid touch with a little finger or the daring grasp of the hand. So as many as touch Jesus are saved.

2. SARAH'S EXPEDIENT TO GET A SON. It is never right to resort to tricks or crooked ways. Sarah got a son by giving Hagar to Abraham, but he was a persecutor and not the child of promise. She would have been wiser to wait on God and not resort to a carnal policy.

This son of Hagar became the ancestor of the Mohammedan races. Some one has remarked that if Sarah had not resorted to this unwise course we might not have had the Mohammedan trouble.

3. A HALF LIE IS AS GUILTY AS A WHOLE ONE. In God's sight there are no white lies, all are black and guilty. Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.

The consequences of the lie might have been very serious. If Sarah had indeed become the wife of either Pharaoh or Abimelech, the promised son of promise might never have been given.

One never knows where a lie will lead to. It usually has to be followed by others.

“ Oh what a tangled web we weave
When once we practice to deceive.”

4. PREVENTATIVE GRACE. In each case Sarah was only delivered from the consequences of her folly by the direct intervention of God. He plagued Pharaoh. He warned Abimelech so that both surrendered her to her husband.

“ O to Grace, how great a debtor,
Daily I'm constrained to be.”

If we were even one day left to our folly, we should be unable to persevere.

5. A PROPHET REBUKED BY A WORLDLY MAN. This was a solemn disgrace. Abraham and Sarah should have stood for right, not have to be rebuked for wrong.

Abimelech's rebuke to Sarah when he gave Abraham 1,000 pieces of silver, “ *Behold he is to thee a covering of*

the eyes," probably means that his folly had blinded her to what was right and good.

6. LAUGHTERS. There are different kinds of laughter. Some laugh for *joy* as in Psalm 126. 1, 2. Some from *folly*, as in Ecc. 7. 6. Some from *feasting* (Ecc. 10. 19). Some from *scorn* (Psa. 22. 7; Neh. 2. 19; Matt. 9. 24) and some from *incredulity*, as with Sarah.

Abraham probably laughed at the *humour* of the thing. Sarah more likely from *unbelief*, since she was rebuked and he was not.

That the child Isaac should be called Laughter (the sound of the name in the original is like laughter) is a happy touch of grace. The laughter of misgiving became by the goodness of God the laughter of happiness.

7. SARAH DENIED BECAUSE SHE WAS AFRAID. How often a denial or contradiction springs to our lips from cowardice. We lie because we are frightened. Let us watch and guard against this.

8. "WHEN THE DESIRE COMETH IT IS A TREE OF LIFE" (Prov. 13. 12). How Sarah must have rejoiced! Her life long reproach and sorrow were removed as she embraced her son Isaac. Like Hannah when Samuel was given, she must have sung for joy.

9. THE MOCKING ISHMAEL IS CAST OUT. This is made into an allegory in Gal. 4. 22-31. I have treated of this at length in Story No. 5 in "70 Familiar Bible Stories," "The Egyptian Slave Girl" (pp. 31-36).

V. Application.

BEWARE OF LYING, it is a steep descent to Hell, once begun it is difficult to arrest.

BEWARE OF EXPEDIENTS. Trust God to fulfil His promise and "wait patiently for Him."

Let your laughter be that of faith and not of folly or mistrust.

STORY 4.

Ishmael—the Wild Man

Read GENESIS 16. 11-16 ; 17. 18-27 ; 21. 9-21 ;
25, 8-9, 12-18.

I. Text. “ He will be a wild man ; his hand will be against every man and every man’s hand against him ; and he shall dwell in the presence of his brethren ” (Gen. 16. 12).

II. Main Lesson. Ishmael must be regarded in two ways.

1. PERSONALLY as a historical character, the “ wild man ” whom nevertheless God blessed, and

2. TYPICALLY, for the Holy Spirit has used him as a type of the fruit of the flesh, “ the son of the bondservant ” who is shut out from inheriting the promise of Abraham.

So we learn, the nature of the flesh and who are the true sons of promise.

The Allegory in Galatians 4. 21-31 is explained in Story No. 5 in “ 70 Familiar Stories—‘ The Egyptian Slave Girl,’ ”—so that this ground will not be gone over again.

III. The Story Told.

Gen. 16. 7-16. *Ishmael’s birth.* Hagar having fled from Sarah, her mistress is met by the Angel of the Lord and bidden return to her.

v. 11. *Ishmael’s birth is foretold.* “ Behold thou art with child and shalt bear a son and shalt call his name Ishmael ; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction.”

v. 12. *Ishmael’s nature described.* “ He will be a wild man ; his hand will be against every man, and every man’s hand against him ; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.”

v. 15-16. *Ishmael is born.* “ And Hagar bare Abram a son and Abram called his son’s name which Hagar bare Ishmael. And Abram was 86 years old when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.”

Gen. 17. 18. *When Isaac was promised, Abraham prays for Ishmael.* “ And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before Thee ! ”

v. 20. *God promises to bless Ishmael, but Isaac was to be the child of promise.* “ As for Ishmael I have heard thee : Behold I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. Twelve princes shall be beget and I will make him a great nation.”

v. 21. “ But My covenant will I establish with Isaac which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.”

v. 25. “ And Ishmael was 13 years old when he was circumcised.”

Ch. 21. 9. *Sarah sees Ishmael mocking her as she was at Isaac's weaning feast and calls on Abraham to cast him and his mother out.* “ And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had borne unto Abraham, mocking, wherefore she said unto Abraham : Cast out this bondwoman and her son ; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son even with Isaac.”

v. 11. *Abraham hesitates to do so.* “ And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son.”

v. 12. *God bids him do so, since in Isaac was his seed to be called.* “ God said to Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad and because of the bondwoman ; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee hearken to her voice, for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation because of thy seed.”

vv. 14-16. *Abraham having sent them away they are ready to perish of thirst in the desert. Hagar put Ishmael under a bush saying : “ Let me not see the death of the child.” She goes to a distance and weeps.*

v. 17. *God hears Ishmael's cry, the Angel of the Lord speaks to her.* “ And God heard the voice of the lad and the Angel of God called to Hagar out of Heaven : What aileth thee Hagar ? Fear not for God hath heard

the voice of the lad. Arise, lift up the lad for I will make him a great nation."

v. 19. *She sees a well and gives the child drink. He lives and grows and becomes an archer.* "And God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the bottle with water and gave the lad drink. And God was with the lad and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness and became an archer. And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt."

Ch. 25. 8, 9. *Abraham dies and is buried by Isaac and Ishmael.* "And Abraham died in good old age and his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah."

The names of the 12 Princes of Ishmael are found in 25. 12-17. He dies 137 years old.

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. **ISHMAEL'S NAME** is one of those given to a child before his birth. It means "God Hearing." It commemorated the visit of the Angel of the Lord to Hagar when she fled from Sarah. "Because the Lord hath heard thine affliction."

2. **HIS CHARACTER FORETOLD.** God knows beforehand what manner of persons we shall be. Foreknowledge does not mean fatalism, for though He foresees that does not mean He interferes with the exercise of man's free will so far as it extends.

If I see a man walking he must be walking because I see him doing so, but my seeing him has nothing to do with his action. If I could foresee him doing so (as God can) it would be the same. Esau and Jacob are illustrations of this truth (Rom. 9. 11-13).

3. **ISHMAEL WAS TO BE A WILD MAN.** This we may take to be, as we say "A Child of Nature," uncontrolled and lawless, against every man and every man against him, a desert ranger living by his bow.

This well describes the "*natural man.*" Lawless, self-willed, selfish, "hateful and hating one another"

(Titus 3. 3). He is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be (Rom. 8. 7).

Flesh born of the flesh, he cannot (apart from new birth) be anything but flesh (John 3. 6).

It means he was to be excluded from the privileges enjoyed by Isaac and his seed.

4. GOD'S GRACE TO ISHMAEL. Because a man is not called to privilege (as was Isaac) it does not mean God does not care for him. Though a "wild man" Ishmael was "to dwell in the presence of all his brethren" (v. 12), which may mean that he would share with them the earthly blessings assured even to the natural seed of Abraham in the Covenant of Circumcision which Ishmael also received (v. 25).

5. ISHMAEL'S INHERITANCE. Though the natural seed does not enjoy the blessing of Abraham (Gal. 3. 14) which is only found in Christ, yet God is good to *all* and His tender mercies are over *all* His work.

God blesses man in order that His goodness may lead him to repentance (Rom. 2. 4) and to seek the higher blessing, the spiritual life that is found by faith in Christ.

Ishmael became a great nation. 12 Princes spring from him. Their names are given in 25. 12-17, and the Ishmaelites acknowledged him as their ancestor.

6. THE ISHMAELITES (also called the Midianites, Gen. 37. 28) appear later in Scripture as the enemies of Israel (Psa. 83. 6). True to the prophecy that the son of the bondwoman would persecute the son of the free.

Joseph was sold to a company of Ishmaelites who resold him to Potiphar in Egypt.

In Judges 8. 24, Gideon having defeated them took as his portion their earrings ("For they had golden earrings because they were Ishmaelites"). They appear also in 1. Chron. 2. 17 and 27. 30 dwelling among their brethren.

7. GOD HEARD THE LAD'S CRY when laid by his mother under the bush to die.

This is encouraging. Boys' prayers are heard in Heaven. Though often nothing but a cry, they come up into the

ears of Him who made all for His glory and loves and cares for all!

8. **GOD HEARD THE FATHER'S PRAYER.** "O that Ishmael might live before Thee" (17. 18).

This too is encouraging. Even when the child is "wild" and manifests no signs of grace, yet the father's prayer is not in vain.

The father's prayer in Matthew 17. 14-18 is a further example.

9. "MOCKING" is a mark of a "wild" man, that is, a natural or unregenerate man.

He sees no beauty in Christ, has no faith in the Word of God; has no delight in holiness and holy things. He is the scoffer and scorner, such as taunted Christ as He hung upon the Cross.

"They gave Thee mingled wine and gall,
And mocked Thine agony."

Mocking tells of a man far gone in sin and shame and hardness of heart (Prov. 14. 9). (Gal. 6. 7) But "be not deceived, God is not mocked."

V. Application.

Natural qualities and prosperity do not mean Spiritual blessing.

The flesh is incurably the enemy of God. They that are after the flesh cannot please God.

Seek the blessing that is found in Christ—the Spiritual Seed.

Beware of mocking (I. Thess. 4. 8; Heb. 10. 28).

OUTLINE.

Some Mockers.

ISHMAEL (Gen. 21. 9) mocking Sarah.

ELIJAH (1 Kings 18. 27) mocking the prophets of Baal.

CHILDREN mocking at Elisha (2 Kings 2. 23).

ZEBULAN (2 Chron. 30. 10) mocked Hezekiah's messengers

THE CHIEF PRIESTS mocked Christ (Mark 15. 31).

Some at Pentecost (Acts 2. 13).

Some at Athens—at Paul (Acts 17. 32).

STORY 5

Abraham Intercedes for Sodom

A LESSON IN INTERCESSION.

Read GENESIS 18. 17-33.

I. Text. " Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right ? " (v. 25).

II. The Main Lesson is one of Intercession. In it we learn the value and nature of Intercession.

It is important to understand this, since we are told of Christ that He ever liveth to make Intercession for us.

We see the Grace and Justice of God and the privilege of His servants to be His remembrancers and intercessors.

III. The Story Told.

v. 17-18. *The Lord treats Abraham as a friend and tells him His purpose as to Sodom.* " And the Lord said : Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him."

v. 20-22. *The Lord will visit Sodom to see if the evil report is true.* " And the Lord said : Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great and because their sin is very grievous I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it."

v. 22. " But Abraham stood yet before the Lord."

v. 23. *Abraham asks :* " Wilt Thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked." " And Abraham drew near and said, Wilt Thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked."

v. 24. *He pleads that if 50 are found the city be spared.* " Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city, Wilt Thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein ? That be far from Thee

to do after this manner to slay the righteous with the wicked that be far from Thee : Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right ? ”

v. 26. *The Lord promises to spare it for fifty.* “ The Lord said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city then I will spare all the place for their sakes.”

v. 27. *Abraham further entreats, first for 45, then 40, then 30, then 20, then 10, and the Lord grants him his prayer each time.* “ And Abraham answered and said, Behold now I have taken upon me to speak to the Lord, which am but dust and ashes : Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous. And He said, If I find there forty-five I will not destroy it. And he said unto Him, Oh let not the Lord be angry and I will speak : Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And He said I will not do it if I find thirty there. And He said, I will not destroy it for twenty’s sake.

“ Oh let not the Lord be angry and I will speak yet but this once : Peradventure ten shall be found there. And He said, I will not destroy it for ten’s sake.”

IV. The Nature of Intercession.

Let us avoid some very common mistakes upon this great matter.

1. THAT ABRAHAM WAS MORE TENDER-HEARTED AND COMPASSIONATE THAN GOD. In that he seemed more anxious to shew mercy on Sodom.

This was not so. Abraham did not know what God knew nor understand the perfect balance of Grace and Truth, Mercy and Righteousness in God’s character.

The same applies to the Lord Jesus. Let us not think He is more merciful than God. Both are perfect in Goodness, Mercy and Truth.

2. THAT GOD HAS TO BE PERSUADED TO BE GRACIOUS AND MERCIFUL. Intercession is not to persuade God. He needs no persuasion. He is Love, Perfect Love. Then why Intercession ?

In a Court of Justice we daily see " Pleadings " addressing the Judges. Are they pleading with the Judges to be compassionate ? No certainly not. They have no such idea.

Are they pleading with the Judge to be just ? Indeed no, they are not concerned with the character of the Judge at all. He is good and just. They do not question that.

But *they are stating a case*. They are putting facts before him with a view to showing that their case is one that calls for certain treatment. They want judgment in their favour on the facts.

They are not trying to move the Judge's heart with tears, pitiful stories, pathetic gestures or emotional or sentimental reasons.

Oh no, such things are not heard in Courts.

And God is not to be moved by pathos or emotion. *He is the Judge of all the Earth. He will do right* (25).

3. INTERCESSION THEN IS STATING ANOTHER'S CASE BEFORE OUR GOD, and asking that mercy shall be shown or justice done as it is a case for either.

In this prayer Abraham thought that a case had been made out for mercy to be shewn to Sodom when even ten righteous souls were found therein. He went no further than ten, for he felt that no case could be based on a lower number.

4. INTERCESSION IS NOT BASED ON THE MERITS OF THE INTERCESSOR. Abraham knew this. He confessed he was "*but dust and ashes*" (27) and felt that God might be angry (30) at a mere man presuming thus to reason with God.

So the Lord Jesus bases His intercession on propitiation (1. John 2. 2) and not on any merit in us whom He represents. It is the finished work of Christ, not His merits (though they gave value to the sacrifice) and His Eternal Priesthood that render the intercession effective.

V. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. WOULD GOD HAVE STAYED AT TEN? There is no indication that He would. His compassion and delight in mercy were greater than Abraham's.

In Jeremiah 5. 1, we read, "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof *if ye can find a man* if there be any, that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth and I will pardon it."

Only one and Jerusalem might have been spared. Had Abraham gone on, it may be God would have spared Sodom for the one righteous man, Lot, in it. As it was He had him dragged out and judgment fell.

2. ABRAHAM, THE FRIEND OF GOD. "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do?"

A servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth. "But I have called you friends for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" (John 15. 15).

So Jesus said to His disciples. It is a wonderful privilege to be like Abraham, who was called the Friend of God.

3. ABRAHAM'S QUESTIONS TO GOD. It is interesting how in his plea Abraham asks God questions. Let us look at them and see what are the right answers.

(a) *Wilt Thou destroy the righteous with the wicked?* Sometimes the righteous are involved in calamity brought upon a nation or a community or family by the wickedness of it. But while this is true of temporal things it is not true of eternal realities. The wicked falleth to his own destruction, but the righteous never does so. He may fall seven times, but he riseth up again. The believer may sink, he can never drown.

(b) *Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* Most certainly He can never do other than right and good.

But Judges are for the punishment of evildoers. It would not be right to acquit the guilty.

It is right to justify (acquit) the believer though

admittedly a sinner, when he believes in Jesus, for Jesus suffered, the Just for the unjust.

(c) *Wilt Thou destroy the city for lack of five ?* The Lord showed this was not so. He allowed Abraham to decrease not only five but no less than 40 more after this plea.

Our God is abundant in mercy and truth.

4. ABRAHAM DID NOT EXCUSE SIN. Any plea that did so would not be heard. Sodom was too obviously guilty for excuses.

Sin is never excused of God. We must never think of Forgiveness, as God excusing sin. Remission is the better word to use (they are the same in the Greek) since forgiveness rather suggests excusing sin, but remission means "putting it away," judging and confessing it and having it purged by blood.

5. THE CRY IS COME UP (21). All sin from the time of Adam cries to God for vengeance. Abel's blood cried from the ground, and ever since then sin has never ceased to cry out.

All sin has a cry that is heard in Heaven. Let us then fear to sin.

Like fire (and iniquity burneth like a fire) it cannot be hid.

VI. Application.

We may be intercessors for others.

Let us not excuse Sin.

Let us remember Him who pleads His finished work for us at God's right hand.

OUTLINE.

Some Intercessors.

Abraham for Sodom,	..	..	..	As above
Judah for Benjamin,	..	..	..	Gen. 44. 18
Esther for her People,	..	..	..	Esth. 8. 3
Daniel for his People,	..	..	..	Dan. 9. 11
For the Barren Fig Tree,	..	..	..	Luke 13. 8, 9
Christ for Transgressors,	..	..	..	Isaiah 53. 12

STORY 6

The Mysterious Visitant or “The Angel of the Lord”

I. Texts. “The Angel which redeemed me” (Gen. 48 16.) “Behold Mine Angel shall go before thee” (Ex. 32. 34) “The Angel of the Lord encampeth round them that fear Him” (Psa. 34. 7.) “The Angel of His Presence saved them” (Isa. 63. 9).

II. Main Lesson. There are in Scripture many angels spoken of. They are said to be “ministering spirits,” sent forth to minister for (R. v. do service for the sake of) men who shall be heirs of Salvation. The word “angel” means messenger and is sometimes used of men (Jas. 2. 25 ; Rev. 22. 8-9.).

But there is One Angel called “*The Angel of His Presence*” (Isa. 63. 9) or “*The Angel of the Lord*” a wonderful and mysterious visitant at times, who is said to redeem, to save, to encompass and to lead the people of God. This can be no other than *the Lord Jesus Himself*, who is alone the Redeemer, Saviour and Guide of men.

This wondrous Being as we shall see, appears in the form of a man, yet speaks and acts as God and is spoken of as Jehovah.

These appearances are called “*Theophanies*” (visible appearances of God) or “*Christophanies*” (visible appearances of Christ) and are without doubt manifestations of the Lord Jesus in human form before His incarnation, when He took that form permanently.

They served a double purpose. (i) To prepare the nation for the revelation of God “in fashion as a man.” “The Word made flesh” (John 1. 14) “God manifest in the flesh” (1. Tim. 3. 16) and (ii.) To teach the great part that the Lord Jesus plays in the redemption, salvation and guidance of His people all down the ages.

From Creation to Glory, God has mediated man's history through Christ.

III. Ten Appearances of the Angel of the Lord.

1. TO HAGAR. (Gen. 16. 7 ; and 21. 17). This is the first mention of the Angel of the Lord in Scripture. He appears to send the runaway Egyptian slave girl back to her mistress Sarah.

Notice how He speaks as God (10) "*I will multiply thy seed exceedingly*"; how Hagar recognised Him as God "*Thou God seest me . . . Have I also here looked after Him that seeth me ?*" (13). How on the second occasion the Angel is identified with God (17) "*God heard the voice of the lad (Ishmael), and the Angel of God called to Hagar out of Heaven*" (and see 19 and 20).

2. TO ABRAHAM (Gen. 18. 1-33). As Abraham sat at his tent door "*lo, three men stood by him.*" They ask for Sarah (9) and then One of them (10) says "*I will certainly return unto thee and lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son.*" Then it says, "*The Lord (Jehovah) said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh ?*"

So this visitant attended by two others is no other than the Lord Himself in human form. He goes on to tell of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah—during which talk Abraham addresses Him as "*the Judge of all the earth*" (25). This identifies Him as the Lord Jesus to whom God has committed all judgment (John 5. 22 ; Acts 17. 31).

The incident ends "*And the Lord (Jehovah) went His way as soon as He had left communing with Abraham*" (33).

3. TO MOSES (Ex. 3. 2). The Angel of the Lord appeared in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. It is generally presumed that only fire was seen, but the words might imply that the Angel appeared from out of the flame (the cases of Gideon (Judges 6. 21) and Manoah (Judges 13. 20) associate the Angel of the Lord with fire. This Angel of the Lord announces Himself thus "*I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God*

of Jacob. And Moses hid his face for he was afraid to look on God." (6).

When Moses enquires His name He reveals it as " I AM THAT I AM." We remember how this title was assumed by the Lord Himself, " Before Abraham was I AM," and we recall the seven great " I AMS " in John's Gospel (6. 35 ; 8. 12 ; 10. 7 ; 10. 11 ; 11. 25 ; 14. 6 ; and 15. 1).

He declared to Moses that He had come down to deliver His people as later He came down to save sinners.

4. TO BALAAM (Numbers 22. 22). In the same way as afterwards He appeared to Joshua, the Angel of the Lord stands in the path to oppose the perverse Balaam as he goes on his way in defiance of God to curse Israel for the reward of unrighteousness, with a sword drawn in his hand (31).

As " the Lord " (Jehovah) He opened the mouth of the ass to rebuke the madness of the prophet and as " the Lord " He opened the eyes of Balaam to see Him in the guise of the Angel. Probably, though we are not told so, the angel was in human form. The ass being the first to see Him (27).

5. TO JOSHUA (Joshua 5. 13 ; 6. 2). This is perhaps one of the most striking and dramatic of all the Christophanies. As Joshua was by Jericho " Behold there stood a man over against him with His sword drawn in His hand." When Joshua challenges Him He replies " Nay, but as Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come " (14). As Joshua falls at His feet to worship, He adds, " Loose thy shoes from off thy feet ; for the place whereon thou standest is holy " (15).

Then we read " The Lord said to Joshua, See I have given into thine hand Jericho."

So again in this mysterious visitant we see the Lord in fashion as a man, " The Captain of the Host of the Lord," and are able to identify Him as " The Captain of Our Salvation " (Heb. 2. 10).

6. TO GIDEON (Judges 6. 12). "The Angel of the Lord " appeared to Gideon as he threshed wheat and announced

Himself thus, "The Lord (Jehovah) is with thee thou mighty man of valour," and then commissions and instructs him how to deliver his people. We read "The Lord (Jehovah) looked upon him and said, Go in this thy might . . . have not I sent thee ?" (14).

Then when Gideon prepares a meal the Angel of the Lord calls fire out of the rock and vanishes, perhaps ascends in the flame as in the case of Manoah (13. 20).

Gideon cries, "Alas O Lord God, for I have seen *the* (not "a" R.V.) Angel of the Lord face to face. And the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee, fear not ; thou shalt not die" (22, 23).

Do we not recognise the voice of Jesus in those words so often on His lips when here.

7. TO SAMSON'S MOTHER AND FATHER (Judges 13. 3-21). The Angel appeared first to the wife (unnamed). She describes Him to her husband as "A Man of God" (6) with a face like an angel of God "very terrible," by which we may presume she meant "very awe-inspiring" (not frightening).

When a second time He appeared to Manoah he said, "Art thou *the man* that spakest unto the woman, and He said, I am." Having given His message He declares His name to be SECRET, the same word as "Wonderful" in Isaiah 9. 6. Thus again the Angel of the Lord is identified with the "Child born," the "Son given," the Lord Jesus. Manoah associates the Angel of the Lord ("the" not "a" in R.V. 16 and 21) with God saying, "We shall surely die because we have seen God" (22). So again One who is both "a man" and "God" is set before us.

(8). TO DAVID (2 Samuel 24. 15-17 and 1 Chron. 21. 14-27) The Angel of the Lord appears here as the Executive of the Wrath of God upon David and Jerusalem. This we know is one of the offices of Our Lord Jesus, Who will one day tread the winepress of the wrath of God. So that we read of *The Wrath of the Lamb* (Rev. 6. 16 ; 16. 19 ; and 19. 15).

Again the Angel of the Lord is depicted with a drawn sword in His hand (as with Balaam and Joshua) and again He acts as God, commanding Gad the prophet to say to David that he should set up an altar and sacrifice that the plague be stayed.

9. TO ELIJAH (1 Kings 19. 5 and 2 Kings 1. 3). Twice the Angel of the Lord appears to Elijah—once when he lay exhausted after his flight into the wilderness from the anger of Jezebel and once when he was told to meet the messengers of King Ahaziah on their way to consult Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron and tell them the king's doom.

10. THE DESTRUCTION OF SENNACHERIB'S ARMY (2 Kings 19. 35). "It came to pass that night that the Angel of the Lord went out and smote in the Camp of the Assyrians 185,000, and when they (the Israelites) arose early in the morning behold they (the Assyrians) were all dead corpses."

A terrible picture corresponding to the scene depicted in Rev. 19. 11-21.

These are not all the Christophanies but will serve to a first study of a wonderful subject. This mysterious Character is also seen wrestling with Jacob at the Brook Jabok (Hosea 12. 4). He delivers Daniel from the lions (Dan. 6. 22). He walks with Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego in the fiery furnace (Dan. 3. 25). He appears often in the Visions of Zechariah (1. 9-11 ; 3. 1., etc.), and again in the Book of the Revelation.

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. THE LORD JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. The Lord Himself said of the Old Testament Scriptures "These are they which testify of Me," and after His resurrection "beginning at Moses and all the prophets he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself and said, All things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and in the prophets and in the Psalms concerning Me" (Luke 24. 27 ; and 44).

Then He opened their understanding to see this. Beware then of those blind guides of the blind who speak

against the Old Testament—They have never had their understanding opened.

2. **STUDY THE CHRISTOPHANIES** and you will learn more of Christ. You will see Him redeeming—saving—guiding—encouraging—leading as Captain as well as warning (Judges 2. 1-5. R.V.), and executing judgment.

Indeed “the Angel of the Presence” of the Old Testament bears the same character, and exercises the same offices as the Lord Jesus revealed in the New.

Everything we can learn of Christ is precious to us, then ponder over these remarkable reappearances.

3. **THE DIGNITY OF CHRIST.** As revealed in these pre-appearances, Christ is Himself both God, the Eternal Son of God and Son of Man. He embodies in His own person “All the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form.”

“Thou art the Everlasting Word
The Father’s Only Son,
God manifestly seen and heard
And Heaven’s Beloved One.”

He is to be worshipped as Creator (John 1. 3 ; Col. 1. 16 ; and Heb. 1. 10) as Redeemer, as Saviour and Lord, as Captain of our Salvation, as Judge of all the Earth.

4. **HIS OMNIPRESENCE.** As Hagar said of Him, “Thou God seest me,” and as each of the others to whom He appeared met Him unexpectedly so let us remember He is “The Angel of the Presence,” the Ever present One who says “Lo I am with you alway.”

V. Application.

Learn to know Jesus better.

Remember He is ever with us.

Rely upon His help at all times.

STORY 7

Pharaoh—The Vessel of Wrath

Read EXODUS 5. 1-23 ; 7. 8-14, 17-25 ; 8. 1-32 ; 9. 1-35.
10. 1-29 ; 12. 1-30 ; 14. 5-31.

I. Text. “ The Scripture saith unto Pharaoh. Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up that I might shew My power in thee and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth.” (Romans 9. 17).

II. Main Lesson. Pharaoh in the Sovereign Will of God was chosen to be an example of wrath that the world through him might learn the folly and guilt of defiance and rebellion against God.

God does even to-day choose examples both of Grace and Wrath.

Some sinners are signally punished and thus made an example that others may fear. Some are signally and wonderfully converted and become examples of the saving grace and power of Christ through the Gospel, that others may hope in His mercy.

This election to Grace or Wrath does not affect either the responsibility or the free will of man.

III. The Story Told in Chapters.

Chapter 1.

Exodus 5. 1-23. *Pharaoh on being called on to let God's people go out of Egypt answers defiantly and increases the task of the Israelites with great cruelty. “ And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord (Jehovah) that I should obey His voice to let Israel go ? I know not Jehovah neither will I let Israel go.”*

Chapter 2.

7. 8-14. *Pharaoh demands a miracle from Moses and Aaron. Aaron casts down his rod and it becomes a serpent.*

Pharaoh's sorcerers do the same. Aaron's serpent devours all theirs, but Pharaoh hardens his heart.

v. 13 R.V. "And Pharaoh's heart was hardened that he harkened not unto them."

Chapter 3.

THE PLAGUES ARE SENT ONE AFTER ANOTHER AS FOLLOWS :

(i) 7. 17-25. *The Waters and River of Egypt are turned to blood.*

(ii). 8. 1-15. *Frogs* come up out of the River.

(iii). 8. 16-19. *Lice* throughout all the land.

(iv). 8. 20-32. *Flies* in swarms are sent.

(v). 9. 1-7. *Murrain of Beasts* so that all the cattle except those of Israel die.

(vi). 9. 8-12. *Boils with Blains* upon man and beast.

(vii). 9. 18-35. *A very Greivous Hail* that destroyed all that was in the fields.

(viii). 10. 1-20. *A plague of Locusts* covered the face of all the earth.

(ix). 10. 21-29. *A thick darkness*, but the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.

(x). 12. 1-30. *The First-born Slain*. Israel saved by the Blood of the Passover Lamb upon the door.

Chapter 4.

14. 5-31. *Pharaoh lets the people go but soon after pursues them and is cut off with his hosts in the Red Sea.*

"And the waters (of the Red Sea) returned and covered the chariots and horsemen and all the host of Pharaoh . . . and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore."

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. THE REASON OF THE PLAGUES. We must be careful lest in our own thoughts or in our teaching we allow any thought of wanton cruelty or harsh or unfair judgment on the part of God.

The modernist mocker talks like this but his cant arises from ignorance and malice. It is the hatred of the natural man in his enmity against God that leads to this thoughtless and vain talk. A little consideration shows that there is no foundation for representing Jehovah as a monster of vengeance as some wicked men have done.

Let us notice a few points :

(a) "*Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment. I am the Lord*" (Ex. 12. 12).

In the first instance it was the "gods" of Pharaoh that were to be judged.

The gods of Egypt were a true reflexion of the Apostles scathing indictment in Romans 1. 22, "*Professing themselves to be wise ("All the wisdom of the Egyptians," Acts 7. 22.) they became fools and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things.*"

They worshipped the *River Nile*.

The *Sacred Beetle*—Scarab.

Birds, as the Ibis, etc., *Cats*, *Tortoises*.

Bulls, as the Sacred Appis Bulls, whose giant tombs are still to be seen.

The Sun, Moon and other Heavenly bodies.

It is upon these that the plagues fell; Pharaoh and the Egyptians must be taught the folly of this idolatry. They must either separate from their idols or perish with them.

(b) *Pharaoh was solemnly warned* before any plague fell upon him.

"He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Prov. 29. 1).

(c) *Pharaoh's Rebellion and Pride* called for correction. The proud, God knoweth how to abase.

(d) *Pharaoh demanded and was granted a sign (4. 1-9 ; 7. 10-13), but hardened his heart.*

This bears out what the Lord said of miracles failing to turn stubborn hearts. (Luke 16. 31.)

(e) *God showed great long-suffering and forbearance with Pharaoh.*

Many warnings were given, and in spite of repeated broken promises, long space to repent.

“ God willing to make His power known endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.” (Rom. 9. 22.)

(f) *The Plagues fell on the material things first.* It was not till the 5th plague that living things were smitten. Then the sacred animals felt the “ murrain ” upon them. Even then the crops were spared. Only at the 7th and 8th plagues were they smitten.

(g) At length Pharaoh’s first-born was slain on the Passover night, after being warned that he must let God’s “ first-born ” people go. *“ Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my Son even my first-born. Let My Son go that he may serve Me and if thou refuse to let him go behold I will slay thy son even thy first-born.”* (4. 22-23). This was spoken before any of the plagues. Pharaoh had good time and many preliminary warnings before the first-born was slain.

(h) *Even then Pharaoh himself was not touched.* Until repenting of having let the people go he pursued them, thus again renewing his proud defiance, and was swept away in the Red Sea overthrow (14. 15-31).

These things shew that the treatment of Pharaoh was exactly in accord with what we know from the New Testament Scriptures are the ways of God with the wicked. There is no ground here to blaspheme the Name of the Old Testament Jehovah.

2. PLAGUES. These afflictions are of very common occurrence on the earth. There is probably never a period of any length without some part of the earth being

troubled with them. This fact, of course, makes the plagues of Pharaoh nothing very unusual except that they happened at a set time and for a given purpose. This probably is true of all plagues, they serve some purpose in the economy of God, though we may not be able to detect or state it. The fact that the Bible and the Providences of ordinary life agree is a strange confirmation of its inspiration. *If there were no plagues in the Bible it would be challenged as untrue to real life.*

Many plagues are, no doubt, disciplinary and teach men the need of cleanliness and proper sanitation and rules of life. Any who have seen the present day Egyptian villages will not marvel greatly if plagues spread among them.

3. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.

God reserves the right, and who shall deny it, to make examples both of Grace and Wrath. Saul of Tarsus and Jacob and many another are examples of "Grace abounding to the Chief of Sinners," as Bunyan described it in his own case. Pharaoh and Esau are examples of wrath. It is so to-day. Many a young man sins and no striking example is made of him, but sometimes a man's first sin is so visited upon him that he becomes an example of horror and terror to all who know him. Let sinners fear lest they be made specimens of wrath.

4. PRIDE IS THE SIN OF ALL SINS THAT GOD HATES. "A proud look is an abomination to the Lord."

It has been truly observed by those of long experience that the examples of wrath seem generally to be chosen from among the proud, self-satisfied and conceited, who are defiant and haughty in their contempt of spiritual things.

5. THE FOLLY OF DEFYING GOD.

The only time we ever hear of God laughing (strange anthropomorphology !) is at the defiance and rage of the nations (Psa. 2. 1-4), against Jehovah and His anointed.

Goliath defied the armies of God and fell to a shepherd boy.

Sennacherib reproached God, and was answered through the prophet Isaiah, "Because of thy rage against Me . . . I will put My hook in thy nose and My bridle in thy lips."

Our God is to be held in reverence of all them that fear Him.

V. Application.

TO THE PROUD AND DEFIANT. Beware lest God make thee an example of Wrath.

TO THE REPENTANT SINNER. Ask God to make thee an example of Grace.

TO THE BELIEVER. Admire and wonder at the ways of God in Grace and Judgment.

OUTLINE.

Men Who Defied God.

PHARAOH, as above.

BALAK hired Balaam to defy the people of God (Num. 23. 7).

GOLIATH. (1 Sam. 17. 10 and 45. See also 2 Sam. 21. 21).

SENNACHERIB (2 Chron. 32. 19), King of Assyria.

STORY 8

Jethro—Moses' Father-in-law

The Wise Counsellor

Read EXODUS 2. 15-3. 1 ; 18. 1-27.

I. **Text.** “ When Jethro, the Priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel his people . . . He came with his sons and his wife unto Moses into the wilderness ” (Ex. 18. 1 and 5).

II. **The Main Lesson.** The visit of Jethro was made a blessing to Moses, who was bearing too great a burden, seeking to do all himself.

A lesson in the wise division of labour and the wisdom of listening to sound advise.

III. The Story Told.

EX. 2. 15-22. *Moses having fled from Egypt, takes refuge with Reuel and marries Zipporah his daughter by whom he has two sons, Gershom and Eliezer.* “ And Moses was content to dwell with the man: and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter. And she bore him a son, and he called his name Gershom, for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land.”

EX. 3. 1. *He keeps the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the Priest of Midian.* “ Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian.”

EX. 18. 1-6. *After the exodus Jethro hears of all that has happened to Moses and visits him in the desert round Sinai, bringing Moses' wife and two sons with him.* “ When Jethro, Moses' father-in-law heard of all God had done for Moses and for Israel his people and that the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt, then Jethro took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back and her two sons Gershom and Eliezer, and came into the wilderness where Moses encamped at the Mount of God and he said to Moses,

I thy father-in-law Jethro am come unto thee and thy wife and her two sons with her.”

7-11. *Moses receives them affectionately and Jethro rejoices over all the goodness of God.* “ And Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and did obeisance and kissed him and they asked each other of their welfare . . . And Moses told all that the Lord had done and Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel and said, Blessed be the Lord. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly He was above them.”

12. *Jethro offers sacrifices and Aaron and the elders visit them.* “ And Jethro took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God : and Aaron came and all the elders of Israel to eat bread with him before God.”

vv. 13-16. *Jethro sees Moses judging the people.* “ On the morrow Moses sat to judge the people and the people stood by Moses from the morning until the evening.

Jethro enquires, What is this thing that thou doest, why sittest thou thyself alone ?

Moses said, Because the people come to me to enquire of God and I judge between one and another and make them know the statutes of God and His laws.”

vv. 17-23. *Jethro points out the mistake of bearing the burden alone and advises that able men be appointed rulers and judges and only great matters be brought to him.* “ And Moses’ father-in-law said unto him, The thing that thou doest is not good. Thou wilt surely wear away . . . thou art not able to perform it alone.

“Hearken now I will give thee counsel and God shall be with thee.

“Be thou for the people to Godward that thou mayest bring the causes unto God. Moreover thou shalt provide able men such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness, and place them to be rulers of thousands and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties and rulers of tens : and let them judge the people at all seasons . . . they shall bear the burden with thee.

“If thou shalt do this thing and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure.”

v. 24. *Moses takes this good advice and Jethro departs.*

“So Moses hearkened and choose able men and made them rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And they judged the people, the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves.

And Moses let his father-in-law depart.”

IV. **Who was Moses' Father-in-law?** In Exodus 2. 18 he is named Reuel; in Ch. 3. 1 Jethro; in Numbers 10. 29 Raguel; in Judges 1. 16 “the Kenite”; and in 4. 11 Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses. In Numbers 10. 29 Hobab is said to be the son of Raguel.

The difficulty is solved by the fact that the term “father-in-law” is a wide term that means any male “in-law”—father, brother, or even son.

Probably Reuel (who is the same as Raguel) was the father of Zipporah and Jethro and Hobab. So that he would be the father-in-law and Jethro and Hobab brothers-in-law of Moses.

V. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. **JETHRO WAS A KENITE**, a Midianite (Gen. 37. 28), that is either a descendant of Ishmael or of the son of Keturah the wife of Abraham (Gen. 25. 2) of that name—Midian.

He was also a priest. At that time, of course, the Levitical priesthood had not been established.

2. **JETHRO'S CONFESSON.** “Now I know that Jehovah is greater than all gods” seems to indicate that he was before not a worshipper of the True God alone. Perhaps, like Balaam, he found no difficulty in offering on strange altars (Num. 22. 41). In Numbers 25 we find that at Baal-peor the Midianites are associated with the Moabites who invited the children of Israel to the sacrifices to their gods and indulgence in their vile practices.

3. **MOSES' MISTAKE IN BEARING THE BURDEN ALONE** is the common mistake of consciously strong men. Knowing their own powers and underestimating the abilities of those with inferior gifts, they are tempted to do everything, great and small, themselves and thus to overload themselves and wear themselves out.

This should be avoided and the lesser gifts recognised and the work apportioned. Moses should not have been doing the work that other honest and capable men could easily have undertaken.

The Apostle rebukes this mistake in 1. Cor. 12. 17-22, "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing where were the smelling."

There is to be no monopoly given to any. "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased Him, and if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members yet but one body.

"And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary."

4. "THOU WILT SURELY WEAR AWAY." The too frequent nervous breakdowns among zealous workers reveals an anxiety to do too much.

Surely the Lord does not require His servants to wear themselves out and die before their time.

True it is better to wear out than to rust out, but let it be the "fair wear and tear" of a faithful service. Doing only what the Lord calls to. He will not call to that which is too much. Ambition tears some to pieces, while pride and vain glory wears others out.

Let us be 'Careful not to serve Thee much, but to serve Thee faithfully."

5. **WILLING TO BE TAUGHT.** Moses might have resented this interference on the part of his father (or brother) in-law. But the wounds of a friend are faithful, and

Moses, being a meek man, that is one who can take rebuke or even rebuff patiently and graciously, received the wise counsel and acted upon it.

6. NOTE THE QUALITIES OF A TRUE JUDGE. They are fourfold. "Able men," for an unqualified man is not to be exalted to honour. "Such as fear God" for wisdom is needed, and the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. "Men of Truth," for a liar is no good to anybody or anywhere. Truth is the first requisite for any good thing or work. And "hating covetousness" for a man loving gain is open to bribery that perverts the very fountain of justice.

7. JETHRO COULD REJOICE IN THE GOOD OF OTHERS. Like Barnabas, that "good man," who when he saw the Grace of God was glad. We are to rejoice with them that do rejoice. Envy with its cruel, cold eye, cannot see others blessed, without some disparagement. Let us learn that if one member is honoured, all are honoured and rejoice accordingly (1. Cor. 12. 26).

VI. Application.

Beware of bearing all the burden alone.

Esteem others and let them share your work.

Be ready to take advice and do not wear out with
anxiety or ambition.

Rejoice with them that do rejoice.

STORY 9

The Ark of the Covenant and its Experiences

I. Text. " Arise O Lord into Thy rest ; Thou and the Ark of Thy Strength " (Psa. 132. 8).

II. Main Lesson. The Ark of the Covenant was a Symbolic Throne. It had its place in the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple. (Jer. 17. 12).

It denoted the Lord in the midst of the Camp of Israel reigning in Grace and Judgment.

It was a type of Christ in whom God is enthroned in Grace and Judgment and whose presence in the midst of His people is at once their strength and their blessedness.

As the Ark was the centre of the Church in the Wilderness so is Christ in the assembly of His people.

III. Names of the Ark. It was called *The Ark of the Covenant or Testimony* because it was originally built a golden box to contain the two Tables of Stone which Moses brought down from Sinai, on which were engraven the Ten Words (or Commandments).

In Rev. 11. 19 it is referred to for the last time and is called "*The Ark of His Testament.*" It is frequently called "*The Holy Ark,*" and "*The Ark of God*" and "*The Ark of the Lord.*" In Ps. 132. 8 and II. Chron. 6. 41, it is called "*The Ark of Thy Strength.*" In the New Testament *The Throne of Grace* (Heb. 4. 16) is the antitype of the Mercy Seat or Throne.

IV. The Ark may be considered under Seven Heads, as follows :—

1. ITS CONSTRUCTION. It is described in Exodus 25. 10-22 and 37. 1-9 and referred to in Hebrews 9. 3-5.

2. ITS CARRIAGE on the Wilderness Journey. It was the duty of the Kohathites (sons of Levi) to carry it upon their shoulders (Num. 3. 30-31 and 7. 9).

3. CROSSING JORDAN. This episode is recounted in Joshua 3. 11-17.

4. CIRCUIT OF JERICHO. This capture of the city is described in Joshua 6. 6-16.

5. CAPTURE BY THE PHILISTINES in the days of Eli. This we read of in I. Samuel 4. 4-11 ; 5. 1-12 and of its return in 6. 1-7. 2.

6. CENTRE OF THE CAMP In the Wilderness in the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle, or later in the Temple of Solomon.

7. CONSUMMATION. It disappeared from history after the destruction of the Temple of Solomon, but is seen in Heaven in Revelation 11. 19. “ *And the Temple of God was opened in Heaven and there was seen in His Temple the Ark of His Testament (R.v. Covenant).*”

V. The Construction and Character of the Ark (Ex. 25. 10-22). It was made of shittim wood (acacia) and covered with pure gold. It consisted of three parts, *the chest* or box which contained the Tables of the Law, Aaron's rod that budded and the pot of manna. *The Mercy Seat*, which formed the lid of the box, made of a plate of pure gold, on which the blood was sprinkled on the Great Day of Atonement, and *The Cherubim of Glory* overshadowing the Mercy Seat; two angelic figures with wide spread wings, their faces looking down upon the Mercy Seat. These were made of beaten gold and were of one piece with the Mercy Seat. Between them was seen the “*Shekinah Glory*” or Visible Presence (Ps. 99. 1).

The SPRINKLING OF THE BLOOD on the Mercy Seat on the Great Day of Atonement (10th day of 7th month) is described in Leviticus 16. 11-19.

The Ark was placed within the Holy of Holies and was hidden by the Veil so that none but the High Priest, in his white robes, was allowed to enter and that only once a year and not without blood, which he offered first for himself, and then for the errors of the people (Heb. 9. 7).

On the day of Calvary when Jesus died, the Veil was rent and the way into the Holiest opened in the blood of Jesus for all believers (Matt. 27. 51; Heb. 10. 19-22).

Thus the Throne of God became a "Mercy Seat" or "Throne of Grace" or "Propitiatory," where the sinner could draw nigh to God and find mercy and grace to help in time of need.

In other words God in Christ meets the sinner with remission and blessing.

VI. The Carriage of the Ark in its journeys. Whenever the Tabernacle was taken down so as to move on, that is when "the camp setteth forward," Aaron and his sons were to take down the Veil and cover the Ark of the Testimony with it. Over that they put the covering of badger's skins and then a cloth wholly of blue. The staves were put in, it was carried by them (Numbers 4. 5-6).

It was the duty of the sons of Kohath (Levi's second son) to carry the ark and other sacred vessels upon their shoulders. It was the failure to observe this in David's reign that brought judgment upon Uzzah (II. Sam. 6. 6, 7). The Ark was, in defiance of the command, put upon a cart drawn by bullocks, and when they stumbled Uzzah put his hand to it to steady it.

David saw that this failure was remedied when a second time he set out to bring the Ark to Jerusalem (I. Chron. 15. 12-15). "*For because ye did it not at the first the Lord our God made a breach upon us for that we sought Him not after the due order.*"

VII. The Three Incidents recorded of the Ark. The Ark represents the presence of the Lord in the midst of His people, guiding and going before them to victory.

1. **CROSSING JORDAN** (Joshua 3. 11-17). Here the Ark is called The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of all the earth.

It passed over Jordan before them, as Christ went through death before His people, whose privilege it is to be

associated with Him by baptism into death (Rom. 6. 3). It remained in the midst of Jordan till all were passed over and not till then did the waters of Jordan return. So all who are Christ's will pass over with Him into the promised land and to victory. He will not fail.

2. CIRCUIT OF JERICHO (Joshua 6. 3-16). The Ark was carried round the city for six days and on the seventh day seven times. "So the Ark of the Lord compassed the city going about it once: and they came into the camp, and lodged in the camp." (v. 11).

Silently the symbol of the Lord's presence was borne in the midst of the army.

The battle was the Lord's. His presence assured the victory. They only stood still to see the Salvation of the Lord (as at the Red Sea) and at the shout of triumph entered into a victory *given, not gained*, of the Lord. "By Faith the walls of Jericho fell down" (Heb. 11. 30).

3. CAPTURED BY THE PHILISTINES (I. Sam. 4. 4-11; 5. 1-12). The success at Jericho no doubt led the foolish among the people to attribute virtue to the symbol and thus rob God of His glory, as all adorers of relics, holy places and images have done down the ages and still do.

But they were taught the folly of this, for when the wicked Hophni and Phineas, Eli's degenerate sons carried the Ark in the battle against the Philistines, it brought no victory. It was captured and the two evil priests slain. The shock of it causing the death of old Eli their father.

So those who give glory to the creature or the thing, rather than to the Divine Lord and Creator, are warned. It was so with the Brazen Serpent, when men would adore it. Hezekiah ground it to powder, and called it "Nehushtan" a bit of brass (II. Kings 18. 4).

But when the Ark was taken into the house of Dagan it was another matter.

To them (who in ignorance could not distinguish the thing from the Person whom it symbolized) it stood for Jehovah and therefore any irreverence was an insult to Him.

So Dagan fell broken on his face before it, only his stump remaining; and the plague warned them that they could not with impunity defy Jehovah.

VIII. The Ark the Centre of the Elect Nation. As we have seen it typified, God enthroned in Christ. Christ having made reconciliation through the Sprinkled Blood. God is on a Mercy Throne stretching out hands in grace to men, entreating them to be reconciled to Him (II. Cor. 5. 18-21) and Christ is the Propitiatory (I. John 2. 2) the meeting place for His people, the new and living way by which they draw near to God.

So we see the Ark in the Holy of Holies, first in the Tabernacle and then in Solomon's Temple, the very centre of all worship. The Shekinah Glory between the Cherubim, the Cloud and Pillar of Fire resting over it.

What more impressive symbol of the Presence of the Lord in the midst of His people could be imagined.

IX. The Consummation, the Ark seen in Heaven. Rev. 11. 19. "And the Temple of God was opened in Heaven and there was seen in His temple the Ark of His Testament."

This reminds us of an elementary but important fact that Christ (whom the Ark typified) is now in Heaven, that we no longer have a worldly sanctuary, but are a Heavenly people

X. Application.

Let us "Learn Christ" as He is revealed in the typology of Scripture.

Let us know the Power of His Presence.

Let us worship Him in the beauty of holiness.

Beware of adoring things.

STORY 10

The Great Name of Jehovah and the Additions thereto

I. **Text.** “Thou shalt not take the Name of Jehovah thy God in vain; for Jehovah will not hold him guiltless that taketh His Name in vain” (Ex. 20. 7).

II. **Main Lesson.** God forbade man to make images; that is to try and represent God to himself—in attempting to do so man has always debased the idea of God—“and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things” (Rom. 1. 23).

But God revealed Himself by names, each name having a value and making known some added thought of God.

So the Great Name of Jehovah tells of God as the eternal and Unchangeable One, the “I AM THAT I AM,” the Ever Present Existing One.

To that Name God added from time to time, generally after some historical event in which He acted for His people in the character revealed by the New Name.

It is these additions that we are to consider.

III. The Seven Additions to the Name Jehovah.

1. **JEHOVAH-JIREH.** “In the Mount of the Lord it shall be seen” (Gen. 22. 14). The God of Prevision and Provision—The Lord will provide.

This addition was made to the Great Name of Jehovah on the occasion of Abraham being called upon to offer his Son, the child of promise, as a burnt offering to God.

Abraham answered Isaac’s query, Where is the Lamb for a burnt offering? as follows, “My Son, God will provide Himself the Lamb” (8 R.V.).

This was prophetic (prevision) for God did provide His One Son, His Well-Beloved to be the Lamb of God to bear away the sin of the world. God set forth Christ (provision) to be a propitiation (Mercy Seat) through faith in His blood (Rom. 3. 25).

So the Name "Jehovah-Jirèh" has taught men ever since that God who has provided the Lamb, will provide for all their need (Rom. 8. 32).

2. JEHOVAH-ROPHI. "I am the Lord that Healeth thee" (Exodus 15. 26).

This addition was given to the Name when the Children of Israel came to Marah soon after their Exodus from Egypt.

The waters were so bitter that they could not drink and they murmured against Moses saying, "What shall we drink?"

In answer to Moses' prayer "The Lord shewed him a tree which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet" (Ex. 15. 25).

Having healed the waters the Lord further promised that if they walked in obedience "I will put none of these diseases upon thee which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am Jehovah-Rophi."

3. JEHOVAH-NISSI. "The Lord my Banner" (Ex. 17. 15).

It was after the life and death struggle with Amalek in the wilderness that this addition was made to the Great and Holy Name—Jehovah.

The victory was celebrated by Moses building an altar calling it Jehovah-Nissi, for he said, "Because Jehovah hath sworn that Jehovah will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

So in our Conflict with the Flesh we are taught the all-Sufficiency of the Captain of Our Salvation. He is Jehovah-Nissi—The Lord our Banner.

4. JEHOVAH-MEKADDISHKEM. "I am the Lord that doth sanctify you" (Ex. 31. 13).

The Lord gave this further addition to His Great Name on the occasion of His repeating the Command to observe the Sabbath. "Verily My Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am Jehovah-Mekaddishkem." If men refuse to keep the day holy they will of course refuse to keep themselves holy, the one is a sign or token of the other.

So the added Name reminds us of the great truth "Ye shall be Holy for I am Holy."

5. JEHOVAH-SHALOM. "The Lord is Peace" (Judges 6. 24). Gideon celebrated the appearance of the Angel of the Lord to him with the promise of deliverance from the oppressing Midianites, by building an altar and calling it Jehovah-Shalom.

It was a prayer of anticipation and an act of faith. The Lord send Peace and the Lord is Our Peace. In due time he realized this in a mighty deliverance and ever since God has been known to us as the God of Peace.

6. JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU. "The Lord our Righteousness" (Jeremiah 23. 6). Jeremiah in proclaiming this Name is anticipating the day of the Deliverance of His people, a day yet in the future.

In His days (the Righteous Branch, the King whom God will raise up to them v. 5) Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is the name whereby He shall be called, Jehovah-Tsidkenu" (Jer. 23. 5-8).

To us who believe, this happy day is already present for the Lord Jesus has been made of God unto us Righteousness (I. Cor. 1. 30).

So we can sing

"Jehovah-Tsidkenu is all things to me."

7. JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH. "The Lord is there" (Ezek. 48. 35). The prophet Ezekiel has seen in Vision the

restoration of the Scattered Nation. Their Temple, and worship are re-established and the Holy City rebuilt, the metropolis of the revived nation. "The City," he says, "from that day shall be Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord (Jehovah) is there."

But we are come to a more glorious City, "Mount Zion, the City of the Living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in Heaven," and, best of all, the Lord is there, Jehovah-Shammah (Heb. 12. 22).

IV. Other Lessons from the Great Name.

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING GOD. "He that glorieth let him glory in this that he understandeth and knoweth Me that I am Jehovah" (Jer. 9. 24).

It is possible to have "Another Jesus" (II. Cor. 11. 4) conceived by our own foolish ideas, who is not the True Christ of God revealed by the Holy Ghost to faith in the Scriptures.

2. EACH EXPERIENCE IN LIFE MAY TEACH US MORE OF GOD AND HIS WAYS. Just as the Holy Name Jehovah was added to after each great event in their history.

3. KEEP YOURSELVES FROM IDOLS. The only "image" God ever recognised was His Own Dear Son, who was the express Image of His Person. Let us avoid all figures and ikons whether of the supposed Christ, or crucifixes, virgins and saints, they can only mislead and lower our thoughts of God.

4. NAMES DO NOT MISREPRESENT, if they are God-given. The Name that is above every Name—JESUS, is also an enlargement of the Great Name Jehovah; JE=Jehovah, SUS=Saviour. So the name carries with it the character and work of Christ. He is the Divine Deliverer, the Saviour God. There is none other Name whereby we can be saved.

V. Application.

Trust in the Name of the Lord.

Praise His Name.

Avail yourself of all that Name means.

OUTLINES.

The Names of God.

1. JEHOVAH. Used 7600 times in the Old Testament, and sometimes "JAH."
2. EL. The Mighty One.
3. ELAH. An Object of Worship ; and ELOAH.
4. ELOIHM. A plural form.
5. ADON. Lord, and in the plural ADONAI.

In the Greek the word *Theos* is used for God and *Kurios* for Lord, and for all quotations of the name *Jehovah*. "Lord Jesus" is a Divine title.

The Name of the Lord is

A STRONG TOWER,	..	..	..	..	Prov. 18. 10
OINTMENT POURED FORTH,		..	..	..	S. of S. 1. 3
A WAY TO WALK IN,	..	..	..	..	Micah 4. 5
THE WAY OF SALVATION,	..	..	..	..	Acts 4. 12; Psa. 54. 1
AN OBJECT OF LOVE,	..	..	..	..	Psa. 5. 11
A REASON FOR PRAISE,	..	..	..	..	Psa. 7. 17
A GROUND OF TRUST,	..	..	..	..	Psa. 9. 10
A SURE DEFENCE,	..	..	..	..	Psa. 20. 1
A MEANS OF STRENGTH,	..	..	..	..	Psa. 44. 5
A PLEA FOR FORGIVENESS,	..	..	..	..	Psa. 79. 9 ; 1 John 2. 12
A SOURCE OF HELP,	..	..	..	..	Psa. 124. 8

STORY 11

In the Cleft of the Rock

MOSES SEES GOD'S GLORY.

Read EXODUS 33. 12-23 ; 34. 5-14.

I. **Text.** "Moses said, I beseech Thee shew me Thy glory."

"And the Lord said, I will put thee in a cleft of the rock."

"And the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the name of the Lord." (Ex. 33. 18, 22 ; 34. 5).

II. **Main Lesson.** God's Glory is His goodness. All that His name stands for.

III. The Story Told.

After the sad failure of Israel in making the Golden Calf, God said, "I will not go up with you for thou art a stiff-necked people, lest I consume thee in the way (3). Moses intercedes with God who promises "My presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest" (14). Then Moses appeals to God.

v. 18. *I beseech Thee shew me Thy glory.* "And he said, I beseech thee shew me Thy glory."

v. 19. *God promises to make His goodness pass before Moses and to proclaim the name of Jehovah.* "And He said, I will make all My goodness pass before thee and I will proclaim the name of the Lord (Jehovah) before thee and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy."

v. 20. *But tells Moses he cannot see His face and live.* "And He said, Thou canst not see My face, for there shall no man see Me and live."

v. 21. *The Lord puts Moses in a cleft of the rock and covers him with His hand.* "The Lord said, Behold

there is a place by Me and thou shall stand upon a rock and it shall come to pass while My glory passeth by that I will put thee in a clift of the rock and will cover thee with My hand while I pass by, and I will take away Mine hand and thou shall see My back parts, but My face shall not be seen."

Chap. 34. 5. *The Lord stands with Moses and proclaims His name.* "And the Lord descended with the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the name of the Lord.

v. 6. *The Lord's Great and Wonderful Name.* "The Lord passed by before him and proclaimed, Jehovah, Jehovah, Eloihim, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth."

v. 7. *God's ways with men proclaimed.* "Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children unto the third and fourth generation."

v. 8. *Moses bows his head and worships.* "And Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth and worshipped."

v. 14. *God reveals another aspect of His name.* "Thou shalt worship no other god, for the Lord (Jehovah) whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God."

IV. What is Anthropomorphology ?

This long word means that God speaks in the language of a man and his actions are described as if He were a man. Unless we understand this we shall have wrong ideas of God and get confused in reading such passages as this.

"*God is a Spirit*" (John 4. 24), and not to be thought of as a man ("God is not a man" 1 Sam. 15. 29), He has no human form and therefore when we read of His eyes, hands, feet, heart, we must think of such terms as *figurative* only. Anthropomorphism then is God con-

descending to use man's language and imagery so that He may enable us to understand better what He means.

For example, in our story when God says "My face," He means the manifested glory of His presence. Such glory that no man could bear. When God speaks of covering with His hand and taking away His hand (22. 23), He intends that He lets Moses see or not at His will, just as man might do with a child when he hides the little one's eyes with his hand for a moment or two.

So when the Lord is said "to stand," He means that His presence remains consciously with Moses for that space.

We often find the most striking language used of God in this way. As for example, when He speaks of "Making bare His arm" (Is. 52. 10,) "His eyes burning or being as lamps of fire" (Dan. 10. 6). "His fury coming up in His face" (Eze. 38. 18). We must remember as we read it to think of God as the Eternal Unchangeable and Holy God above all passion or emotional feeling, working all things after the Counsel of His own will and only using man's language to help him to understand.

V. What is Glory?

Glory has been well described as "*Manifested Character.*" God is wonderful and beautiful in Himself (Zech. 9. 17), and when He displays or makes known His goodness, wisdom, beauty or power it is called "His glory." Just as the sunshine is the "effulgence" (Heb. 1. 3 R.V.), brightness or shining forth of the sun.

Now God's glory, that is the display of His Majesty is seen,

1. IN NATURE. How beautiful, wonderful, varied, multiple and lavish is Nature. What delight to think of each thing made as a thought of our wonderful Creator put into being.

2. IN THE GOSPEL. Being free to save man as He pleased, He did it by the gift of His only begotten Son, by the Cross of Calvary, by the glorious Resurrection, by the free gift of Righteousness to "everyone that

believeth." Those who meditate on the gospel will see in it the exceeding riches of His grace, the glory of His grace (Eph. 2. 7 and 1. 6).

3. IN THE WORD OF GOD. The Sacred Oracles, the Scriptures of the Prophets.

" A Glory gilds the Sacred Page
Majestic as the Sun."

Those who know their Bible best, know the excellence of it.

4. IN CHRIST JESUS, Who is Himself the express Image of God (Heb. 1. 3).

The Effulgence of His glory.

If we would see the glory of God in its perfect manifestation, let us consider Him.

VI. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. GOD'S GOODNESS IS HIS GLORY. He is Love. He is the God of all grace. He delights in mercy. He is slow to anger and of great goodness. He is long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth.

The Lord is good to *all* and His tender mercies are over *all* His works.

2. GOD'S GLORY IS SHOWN IN FORGIVENESS. He forgives iniquity (that is guilt) and transgression (that is breaches of His law) and sin (that is lawlessness and unrighteousness, I John 3. 4 R.V. ; 5.17). The stain, the actions and the evil principle, all are mercifully remitted of Our Gracious God for Christ's sake.

3. GOD IS SOVEREIGN. He has mercy on whom He will (Rom. 9. 18), for mercy is a sovereign act, it cannot be forced or claimed. God visits the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation.

This is explained in two ways—

(a) There is an inherited weakness and tendency to evil in the children of evil men. It is called "heredity," it is part of the curse on sin that is often visited in a *physical* way on the innocent children.

(b) But the children are *not held guilty* for the sins of the fathers (see Jer. 31. 29-30 ; Ezek. 18. 2-4), and notwithstanding any physical weakness, may yet rejoice in God's goodness.

The passage (v. 7) means that just as the fathers' sins were visited so will the sins of their children be, if they sin in their turn, it is only on "*them that hate Me*" to the third and fourth generation that they are so visited (Exod. 20. 5). Often children of wicked men have become saints (e.g., Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz).

4. SEEING GOD. This expression must always be taken as limited to some manifestation of God. For God is *invisible* (Col. 1. 15 and 1 Tim. 1. 17), "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto" (1 Tim. 6. 16). So that when we read that Moses talked with God "face to face" (33. 11) and that the 70 elders "saw the God of Israel" (Ex. 24. 10-11), we must remember what is said above about Anthropomorphism. We too, are said to "see Jesus" (John 6. 40 ; Heb. 2. 9), but it is not literally, but by that faith that seeth Him who is invisible. (Heb. 11. 27).

5. AN INFIDEL REBUKED. A scoffer once said, "show me God and I will believe." He was answered thus "I will show you one of His servants and if you can look him in the face we will talk of seeing his Maker," and he took him and bade him look on the sun.

6. "A JEALOUS GOD." Again we must recall what is said above of Anthropomorphism. God is not subject to moods, tempers or passion, but in love He is "jealous" lest we should give our affections elsewhere. He desires that we should love Him with all our hearts.

VII. Application.

Pray with Moses—"I beseech Thee, shew me Thy glory."
Behold that glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

ACROSTIC.

The LORD is my	REFUGE,	Psa. 46 1
	OPEN DOOR,	Prov. 18. 10
	COVERT FROM STORM,	Isaiah 4. 6
	KEEPER,	Psa. 121. 5

STORY 12

The Shekinah Glory and its Appearances

Read EXODUS 16. 7-10; 24. 16; 40. 34, 35. LEVITICUS 9. 6, 24 ;
NUMBERS 14. 1-12; 16. 19-21; 20. 6. II. CHRONICLES 7. 1-3 ;
LUKE 2. 9.

I. Text. " The Lord our God hath shewed us His glory " (Deut. 5. 24).

II. The Main Lesson. The visible manifestation of God's Glory seen on specific occasions was for the vindication of His honour or the impressing of the people with His Majesty lest they should have low ideals of Jehovah as the idolaters around them had of their gods.

It symbolized His presence among men as the Judge of all. It rested upon the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies.

III. The Various Appearances of the Glory of the Lord.

1. THE FIRST APPEARANCE AT THE GIVING OF THE MANNA (Exodus 16. 10). " And it came to pass as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation, that they looked toward the wilderness and behold the Glory of the Lord appeared in the Cloud."

It is striking that the first occasion of the Shekinah Glory being seen was when the Manna was given. For Jesus said, I am the Living Bread which came down from Heaven and He was the effulgence of the Glory of God (Heb. 1. 3),

2. THE APPEARANCE ON MOUNT SINAI at the giving of the Law (Exodus 24. 16). " And the Glory of the Lord abode on Mount Sinai and the cloud covered it six days, and the seventh day He called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud and the sight of the Glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the Mount in the eyes of all the Children of Israel."

3. AT THE SETTING UP OF THE TABERNACLE (Ex. 40. 34).
“Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle and Moses was not able to enter because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle.”

4. AT AARON'S FIRST OFFERING (Leviticus 9. 22-24).
“And Aaron lifted up his hand toward the people and blessed them and came down from offering of the sin offering and the burnt offering and peace offerings.

“And Moses and Aaron went into the Tabernacle of the Congregation and came out and blessed the people and the Glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people. And there came a fire out from before the Lord and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw they shouted and fell on their faces.”

5. AT THE EVIL REPORT OF THE SPIES (Numbers 14. 6-10.)
“And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, spake . . . If the Lord delight in us He will bring us into the land . . . Only rebel not ye against the Lord . . . But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the Glory of the Lord appeared in the Tabernacle of the Congregation before all the Children of Israel.”

6. AT THE REBELLION OF KORAH, DATHAN AND ABIRAM (Numbers 16. 19). “And Korah gathered all the congregation against them unto the door of the Tabernacle of the congregation and the Glory of the Lord appeared unto all the congregation and the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron saying, Separate yourselves from among this congregation that I may consume them in a moment.”

7. AT THE SMITING OF THE ROCK THE SECOND TIME (Numbers 20. 6-8). “And Moses and Aaron fell on their faces: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them and the Lord spake unto Moses saying, Take the Rod and gather thou the assembly together and speak ye unto the Rock before their eyes.”

8. AT THE DEDICATION OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE (II. Chron. 7. 1-3). “When Solomon had made an end of praying,

the fire came down from Heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices and the glory of the Lord filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the Glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house : and when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the Glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves to the ground upon the pavement and worshipped and praised the Lord saying, For He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever."

9. EZEKIEL'S VISION OF THE GLORY.

Chap. 1, v. 26. He saw a man above upon a throne.

v. 28. "As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the Glory of the Lord. And when I saw it I fell upon my face."

Chap. 3, v. 23. *The glory appears to him again in the plain.* "Then I arose and went forth into the plain and behold the Glory of the Lord stood there . . . and I fell on my face."

Chap. 8, v. 1. *As he sat with two elders of Judah he was taken to Jerusalem by a lock of his head and saw the image of jealousy when the glory appeared.* "As I sat in mine house and the elders of Judah sat before me, the hand of the Lord God fell there upon me . . . and He took me by a lock of mine head and the Spirit lifted me up and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem to the door of the inner gate, where was the seat of the image of jealousy which provoketh to jealousy and behold the Glory of the God of Israel was there."

Chap. 9, v. 3. *He sees the Glory go to the threshold of the house.* "And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up to the threshold of the house."

Chap. 10, v. 4. *The Glory fills the house and then departs.* "Then the Glory of the Lord went up from the cherub and stood over the threshold of the house, and the house was filled with the cloud."

v. 18. "And the Glory of the Lord departed . . ."

Chap. 11. v. 23. "And the Glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city and stood upon the mount which is on the east side of the city" (that is the Mount of Olives from which the Lord Himself departed from this earth). See also 43. 2-5 and 44. 4 for the return of the Glory in the day of the Lord.

10. THE LAST APPEARANCE AT THE BIRTH OF THE LORD JESUS (Luke 2. 9). "Lo an Angel of the Lord came upon them (the shepherds of Bethlehem) and the Glory of the Lord shone round about them."

IV. Other Lessons from the Appearances of the Glory.

1. THE "SHEKINAH" GLORY. This word so often heard does not appear in the Bible, but is the term the Rabbi used for the visible glory. Their prayer and desire is that that Glory should be manifested again among them.

2. THE APPEARANCE AT SINAI was to give the people a sense of the majesty and terror of the Law. Moses described the scene, "So terrible was the sight that I exceedingly fear and quake." (Heb. 12. 21). Paul dwells on this in II. Cor. 3. 7, "If the ministration of death (the Law) written and engraven on stones, was glorious, so that the Children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance . . . How shall not the ministration of the Spirit (the Gospel ministered by the Spirit) be rather (or exceed in) glorious?"

In other words, How much more glorious to His saints is the Lord Jesus than the visible glory resting upon Sinai.

3. THE APPEARANCES IN JUDGMENT. They are three :—

(a) At the trouble raised by the evil report of the spies when the people threatened to stone Joshua and Caleb.

(b) At the rebellion raised by Korah, Dathan and Abiram.

(c) Before the smiting of the Rock the second time.

How terrible to these sinners must have been that Glory, described as "Fire enfolding itself," as "Consuming fire,"

and "devouring fire" and suggesting the terrible words, "Our God is a consuming fire." It is written, "The Lord shall judge His people" (Heb. 10. 30-31).

4. THE APPEARANCES IN GRACE. These also are three :

- (a) At the setting up of the Tabernacle.
- (b) At the offerings made by Aaron.
- (c) At the Dedication of Solomon's Temple.

That these were gracious in the eyes of the people is clear for though they caused them to fall on their faces in worship, they praised the Lord saying, "For He is good ; for His mercy endureth for ever" (II. Chron. 7. 3).

The fire consuming the sacrifices evidenced their acceptance of God and their acceptance of God in them. *The cloud of glory filling the house* meant to them that God was come to dwell in their midst. This they felt was a merciful and gracious cause for worship and praise.

V. Application.

Let us remember that we have come to God, the Judge of all.

ACROSTIC.

The GLORY OF GOD is seen in His :

GOODNESS AND GRACE,	.. ..	Exod. 33. 19
LOVE AND LONGSUFFERING,	.. ..	Rom. 2. 4
OMNIPOTENCE AND OMNISCIENCE		
REDEMPTION AND REMISSION,	.. ..	Luke 24. 47
YEARS THAT FAIL NOT,	..	Psa. 102. 27 ; Heb. 1. 12

The Glory,

Of HIS GRACE,	.. ..	Eph. 1. 6
Of HIS POWER,	.. ..	2 Thess. 1. 9
Of HIS INHERITANCE IN THE SAINTS,	..	Eph. 1. 18
In THE CHURCH	.. ..	Eph. 3. 21
As of the ONLY BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER,		John 1. 14

STORY 13

Caleb—The Man who Wholly Followed the Lord

Read NUMBERS 13. 6, 17-33; 14. 6-10; 30-38; 34. 16-19;
JOSHUA 14. 6-15; 15. 13-19.

I. Text. “Caleb the son of Jephunneh, he shall see it (that good land) . . . because he hath wholly followed the Lord” (Deut. 1. 36).

II. The Main Lesson. Caleb, one of the two spies who gave a good report, was rewarded by being allowed to enter the promised land. He and Joshua alone surviving of that old generation.

“Joshua, the son of Nun
And Caleb, the son of Jephunneh
Were the only two
Who ever got through
To the land of milk and honey.”

Let us by faith and courage follow his example. It is a lesson in the faith that overcomes.

III. The Story Told in Five Chapters.

Chapter 1. CALEB SPIES OUT THE LAND.

Num. 13. 6. *Caleb one of the heads of the Tribe of Judah is chosen as one of the twelve spies.* “Of the Tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh.”

v. 22. *The spies go up from the South to Hebron where the giants lived.* “They ascended by the South and came unto Hebron where the children of Anak were.”

v. 23. *They cut a cluster of grapes by the brook Eshcol and carry it on a staff, also some pomegranates and figs.* “They came unto the Brook of Eshcol and cut down a branch with one cluster of grapes and they bare it between two upon a staff and they brought of the pomegranates and of the figs.”

v. 25-27. *They return and shew the grapes and tell how the land flowed with milk and honey.* “And they returned

from searching the land after 40 days and brought back word unto all the congregation and shewed them the fruit of the land and told them, we came unto the land and surely it floweth with milk and honey and this is the fruit of it."

v. 28-29. *The other spies discourage the people.* "Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled and very great, and moreover, we saw the Children of Anak there. The Amalakites and Jebusites and Hittites dwell in the mountains and the Canaanites by the sea."

v. 30. *Caleb quiets them with words of faith and courage.* "And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it."

v. 31-33. *The other spies bring up an evil report of giants and cause the congregation to weep and talk of returning to Egypt (14. 1-4).* "But the men that went up said, We be not able to go up against the people for they are stronger than we. There we saw the giants, the sons of Anak . . . and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers."

Chapter II. THE JUDGMENT THAT FELL UPON THE PEOPLE, JOSHUA AND CALEB ARE SPARED.

Chap. 14. 6-9. "Joshua and Caleb rent their clothes and spake, The land is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in us then He will bring us into this land and give it to us. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land, for they are bread for us, their defence is departed from them and the Lord is with us, fear them not."

v. 10. *The people threaten to stone them.* "But all the congregation bade stone them with stones, and the Glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle before all the Children of Israel."

v. 23. *God refuses to let the congregation enter the land, only Caleb.* "Surely they shall not see the land, neither shall any that provoked Me see it, but my servant Caleb,

because he had another spirit with him and hath followed Me fully, him will I bring into the land . . . and his seed shall possess it."

Chapter III. CALEB IS APPOINTED AS ONE OF THOSE TO DIVIDE THE LAND.

Num. 34. 16-19. "The Lord spake unto Moses, These are the names of the men which shall divide the land unto you, Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun and one prince of every tribe . . . of the tribe of Judah, Caleb.

Chapter IV. CALEB RECEIVES HIS INHERITANCE. HIS WONDERFUL STRENGTH AND COURAGE IN OLD AGE.

Joshua 14. 6-9. *Caleb reminds Joshua of God's promise that he should receive the land he spied as his portion.*

v. 6. *Caleb reminds Joshua of the promise.* "Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the Lord said unto Moses concerning me."

v. 9. "And Moses swore on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance because thou hast wholly followed the Lord."

v. 10-11 *His strength and courage.* "Behold the Lord hath kept me alive, as He said, these forty and five years and yet I am as strong as I was in the day that Moses sent me."

v. 12. "And now give me this mountain . . . for thou heardest how the Anakims were there and that the cities were great and fenced, for if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out."

v. 13. "And Joshua blessed him and gave unto Caleb Hebron for an inheritance."

Chapter V. CALEB TAKES POSSESSION OF HIS INHERITANCE.

Chap. 15. 14. *Caleb drives out the Anakims.* "And Caleb drove out the three sons of Anak, Sheshai, Ahiman and Talmai."

v. 16. *He offers his daughter's hand to the man who should capture Kirjath-sepher.* "Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife."

v. 17. *Othniel his brother's son takes it and marries Achsah.* "And Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it, and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife.

v. 18-19. *Achsah asks for springs of water.* "As she came unto him she moved him to ask of her father a field : and she lighted off her ass, and Caleb said unto her, What wouldst thou ? Who answered, Give me a blessing for thou hast given me a south land ; give me also springs of water. And he gave her the upper springs and the nether springs."

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. FAITH AND UNBELIEF CONTRASTED. *Unbelief* said, "We saw the giants and we were as grasshoppers in our own sight and theirs. We are not able to go up against this people for they are stronger than we." *Faith* said, "Let us go up at once, we are well able to overcome it. They are bread for us, their defence is departed from them."

We see the pessimism of unbelief and the optimism of faith, "We can't"—"We can."

2. "IF THE LORD DELIGHT IN US." This is the real condition. Victory is of the Lord. Giants and walled cities are nothing to Him. The question is, "Is He well pleased with us?" If so, He will fulfil His promise. Only when the Holy Spirit is grieved need the believer fear defeat. Victory is *given* not *gained*.

3. "BETTER TO RETURN TO EGYPT." What a cowardly suggestion—rather return to slavery than make a fight for the land of promise. So base is doubt and fear. So dishonouring to the God who had shown them such wonders in Egypt and at the Exodus, who led them by a pillar of cloud and fire and fed them daily with bread from Heaven.

4. "WHOLLY FOLLOWED THE LORD." Again and again Caleb has this testimony. It is a grand thing to be wholeheartedly for Christ, to be out and out for Him.

"Those who trust Him fully,
Find Him wholly true."

Caleb proved it so. His wholeheartedness met its reward in a grand inheritance.

5. DISCOURAGEMENT. How easily unbelief and discouragement spread. At the evil report of the ten spies the whole congregation wept, murmured and reproached God, 'Would God we had died in Egypt or in the wilderness, our wives and children will be a prey.' How solemnly shameful, and then to threaten to stone the faithful ones.

6. THE GRAPES OF ESHCOL. Served to attest the truth that it was a good land. So the promises of God serve to strengthen our faith and courage.

"The Eternal Glories gleam afar
To nerve our faith endeavour
So now to work, to watch, to war
And then to rest for ever."

7. CALEB'S GRAND OLD AGE. He was forty years old when sent to spy out the land. Since then 45 years had passed, 39 in the wilderness and 6 in conquering the land under Joshua, so that now he was 85. He could say, "Yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day Moses sent me." Righteousness tendeth to life. They that wait on the Lord renew their strength.

8. HIS SPLENDID DARING. Give me the mountain of the Giants. If so be, the Lord will be with me, I shall be able to drive them out. So we read he did—a real triumph of faith. He drove out the three sons of Anak. All things are possible to him that believeth.

V. Application.

Beware of doubt and unbelief. It robs of all courage. Let faith always say "We are well able." All God's promises are enablings. Possess your possessions.

Men who said "We Can."

Joshua and Caleb (Num. 13. 30); Caleb (Josh. 14. 12);
Jethro (Exod. 18. 23); David (1 Sam. 17. 32); Paul (Phil. 4. 13).

STORY 14

The Rock Smitten the Second Time

Read NUMBERS 20. 7-13.

I. Text. "The Lord said, Speak unto the rock, and Moses lifted up his hand and with his rod he smote the rock twice and the water came out abundantly" (Num. 20. 7-11).

II. Main Lesson. Provocation should not lead the servant of God to act in the flesh. Moses, the meekest man that ever lived (Num. 12. 3), except the Lord (Matt. 11. 29), failed in this his strong point. His failure spoiled a wonderful type, for Christ was not smitten a second time, it dishonoured God and lost him the privilege of entering the Land of Promise.

III. The Story Told. The Children of Israel, coming to the desert of Zin abode in Kadesh where Miriam died, and finding no water gathered themselves against Moses and Aaron and complained bitterly, 'Would God we had died, Why did we come out of Egypt to this evil place.' Then the glory of God appeared and

v. 7-8. *The Lord bids Moses take his rod and speak to the rock and thou shalt bring forth water.* "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod and gather thou the assembly together, thou and Aaron thy brother and speak to the rock before their eyes; and it shall bring forth his water and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock. So thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink."

v. 9. *Moses takes the rod from before the Lord.* "And Moses took the rod from before the Lord as He commanded him."

v. 10. *Moses speaks angrily to the people.* "And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock and he said unto them, Hear now ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?"

v. 11. *Moses smites the rock and waters flow out.* "And

Moses lifted up his hand and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly and the congregation drank and their beasts also."

v. 12. *The Lord rebukes Moses and forbids him the land.* "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed Me not to sanctify Me in the eyes of the Children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them."

v. 13. *This is the Water of Strife.* "This is the water of Meribah: because the Children of Israel strove with the Lord and He was sanctified in them."

IV. This Occasion distinguished from that of Exodus 17.

The differences are as follows:—

1. **THE FIRST SMITING OF THE ROCK** was at Rephidim in Horeb near Sinai. In Numbers 33. 14, we see that this was in the first year before they were turned back from entering the land, in verses 36-39 we see the latter was in their fortieth year at Kadesh, the camp before Mount Hor on the edge of Edom where Aaron died.

2. **THE WORD USED FOR ROCK** is different in the two stories. The first **TSUR** is so named from its sharpness, the second **SELA** is so called for its elevation. Some have loved to see in this a double type of Christ, our Rock. The first time Christ was smitten in the sharpness of the Cross, the second time the rock typifies Christ in resurrection (raised or elevated) who needed only to be spoken to, to give the living water and not to be smitten again (see John 7. 37-39).

3. **THE RODS WERE DIFFERENT.** In the first case the Lord said, "Thy rod wherewith thou smotest the river take in thine hand." This was the miracle-working rod he had used before Pharaoh. In the other case we read that Moses "took the rod from before the Lord," that is Aaron's rod that budded (Num. 17. 8), which was brought "before the Testimony (that is the Golden Ark in the Holiest) to be kept for a token against the rebels." The rod of Moses typified the law under which Christ was smitten, but Aaron's rod of priestly office was figurative of His intercession for us.

4. In the first case MOSES SMOTE the rock at God's command. In the second he smote the rock twice contrary to the command to *speak* to the rock only.

5. In the first MOSES DID NOT REBUKE THE PEOPLE, but in the second *he called them rebels*—perhaps the rod which was “a token against the rebels,” suggested this to his mind.

6. THE NAME OF THE FIRST PLACE was called Massah and Meribah (temptation and strife), that of the second Meribah alone, because the people strove with the Lord (13).

V. “Once for All.” In this evil day when there is a revival of pseudo-priestcraft and the multiplication of “Masses” or pretended sacrifices for sin, it is urgent that our hearts should be established in the truth as to the One Sufficient Sacrifice offered by Christ for us and our sins never to be repeated. Let us consider the Word of God on the subject. The word “EPHAPAX” is a strong Greek word meaning “once for all.” It is found 5 times in the New Testament, as follows:—Romans 6. 10, “In that He died, He died unto sin *once for all*.”

Hebrews 7. 27. “Who needeth daily as those high priests to offer up sacrifice first for his own sins and then for the peoples: for this He did *once for all* when He offered up Himself.”

Hebrews 9. 12. “Christ . . . by His own blood entered in *once for all* into the Holy Place having obtained Eternal Redemption for us.”

Hebrews 10.10. “By the which will (Christ perfectly accomplishing the Will of God) we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ *once for all*.”

“For by one offering He hath perfected *for ever* them that are sanctified” (14).

VI. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. CHRIST WILL NEVER DIE AGAIN. “He died unto sin *once for all*” (Rom. 6. 10). To talk of repeating or continuing the finished work of Christ is to do dishonour to His Glorious Victory of the Cross. So for Moses to

“ smite ” instead of speak to the rock marred the type.

“ Lord’s redeeming work is done,
Fought the fight, the battle won.
Lo, our sun’s eclipse is o’er,
Lo, He sets in death no more.”

2. CHRIST IN RESURRECTION gives the Holy Spirit to them that “ *ask* ” Him. He needs only be spoken to, no second smiting is needed. When He was smitten and glorified the Holy Spirit was given once for all.

3. REPETITION is often a mistake in Christian service. Because a thing did well once, it does not mean it must succeed again. Many a lifeless work once full of vigour is carried on for this reason, energy is spent by workers beating a dead horse. Let dead things die and seek guidance for future service.

4. THE WRATH OF MAN we read (Jas. 1. 20) “worketh not the righteousness of God.” One may always say, “Doest thou well to be angry?” as the Lord did to Jonah. We may be angry and sin not (Eph. 4. 26), but this is not generally our case. Anger most often leads to speaking unadvisedly with the lips (Prov. 10. 19).

5. “REBELS.” Moses called the people “Ye rebels,” at the same time he himself was in rebellion against the word of the Lord and his sin cost him the promised land. It is easy to condemn others and sin in doing so. Let us remember what Jesus said about “beholding the mote in our brother’s eye.”

6. BLESSING NOT HINDERED BY MOSES’ FAILURE. Though Moses acted contrary to the mind of God in smiting the rock a second time, the water nevertheless came from the rock for the thirsty people. Grace reigns even where sin abounds. He abideth faithful though His great servant was unfaithful that day.

VII. Application.

Beware of murmuring.

Let anger not lead us to sin.

Let us rejoice in the Grace that abounds over sin.

Let us drink of the water of life freely.

STORY 15

Moses Views but may not Enter the Land

Read DEUTERONOMY 32. 48-52 and 34. 1-7.

I. Text. “ So Moses the Servant of the Lord died there (Nebo, the top of Pisgah) in the land of Moab according to the word of the Lord ” (Deut. 34. 5).

II. The Main Lesson. The death of Moses without entering the land can be viewed in two ways.

1. HISTORICALLY. When it must be regarded as the penalty of his failure. “ Because ye sanctified Me not in the midst of the children of Israel ” (32. 51).

Even the greatest and most honoured of God’s servants cannot escape the loss of privilege that comes upon those who fail in their responsibility as ministers of God.

2. TYPICALLY. Moses stands for the Law. He was the Mediator of the Old Covenant (Gal. 3. 19). The law makes nothing perfect. It can never bring us into enjoyment of the Salvation that is found in Christ nor can we by it inherit the promises, that is typically, enter the promised land.

So Moses, the personification of the law has to pass off the scene and give place to Joshua (Jesus) by whom we are brought into possession of the land.

III. The Story Told.

The failure of Moses is recorded in Numbers 20. 7-13.

The prayer refused is found in Deuteronomy 3. 23-28.

The sentence of death is as follows :—

Deut. 32. 48-50. *The Lord bids Moses go up into the mountain Abarim, unto mount Nebo and die there.*

“ And the Lord spake unto Moses that selfsame day

saying, Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab that is over against Jericho and behold the land of Canaan which I give unto the Children of Israel for a possession and die in the mount whither thou goest up and be gathered unto thy people as Aaron thy brother died in the mount Hor and was gathered unto his people."

v. 51. *The reason of his death without entering the land.*

"Because ye trespassed against Me among the Children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin; because ye sanctified Me not in the midst of the Children of Israel.

"Yet thou shalt see the land before thee; but thou shalt not go thither."

Ch. 34. 1-3. *Moses goes up the mount and shewn the land.*

"And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo to the top of Pisgah that is over against Jericho. And the Lord shewed him all the land of Gilead unto Dan and all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh and all the land of Judah unto the utmost sea. And the south of the plain of the Valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees unto Zoar."

v. 4. *It was the land promised to the patriarchs.* "And the Lord said unto him, This is the land which I swear unto Abraham and unto Isaac and unto Jacob saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes but thou shalt not go over thither."

v. 5. *Moses dies. No man knows his grave.* "So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab according to the word of the Lord, and He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."

v. 7. *His age and strength.* "And Moses was 120 years old when he died: his eye was not dim nor his natural force abated."

v. 8. *The Children of Israel lament him.* "The Children of Israel wept for Moses on the plains of Moab thirty days.

So the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended."

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. **THE MOUNTAIN RANGE** is called Abarim. It is in Moab, East of Jordan, facing Jericho. Its ridge is called Pisgah and its highest point Nebo. It was formerly in the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites. The modern name of Nebo is Jebel Nebbeh.

2. **DEATH THE WAGES OF SIN.** Even in so great a servant of God as Moses, who was faithful in all his house, the principle holds good. The wages of sin is death. God is no respecter of persons, the soul that sinneth dies. So Moses died.

3. **DEATH IN OLD AGE AND FULL STRENGTH.** Moses' life was divided in three periods of 40 years each. 40 years in Egypt (Acts 7. 42), 40 years in the backside of the desert as a shepherd and the 40 years of the Exodus.

4. **THE LOSS OF PRIVILEGES BY FAILURE.** Many believers fail of their full honours and privileges by want of faithfulness. While sin may be confessed and forgiven, yet privileges lost cannot be recovered. Like Esau many find no place of repentance though they seek it carefully with tears (Heb. 12. 17). He lost the blessing for ever. So lost opportunities and privileges do not recur. The "might have been" is gone beyond recall.

5. **"SEEING BUT NOT ENTERING IN."** It is also possible for us to see the promises of God in Christ, yet through want of faith and patience never to enjoy them. Some know the promises well, as for example, "Sin shall not have dominion over you" but are still overcome. "I will make you fishers of men," yet never win souls. "Ye shall be holy for I am holy," yet are never sanctified in practice.

6. **"YE SANCTIFIED ME NOT."** Moses failed to *sanctify* the Lord before the people. This probably means that he lost his temper and spoke rashly when he said, "Must we fetch you water out of the rock." An assumption of power that belonged only to God.

7. **MOSES ENTERS THE LAND AT LENGTH.** On the Mount of Transfiguration Moses appeared with Christ in glory. His desire was gratified at long length and his feet stood with his Lord in the land of Promise (Matt. 17. 3).

8. **THE DISPUTE OVER THE BODY OF MOSES** (Jude 9).

It has been suggested that the Devil disputed the right of Moses to rise and appear in the body with the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration, since Satan has "the power of death" (Heb. 2. 14).

But no power can prevail against Him, who overcame death by death for His people.

9. **UNANSWERED PRAYERS** (Deut. 3. 23-28). "I besought the Lord . . . I pray thee let me go over and see the good land. The Lord said, Let it suffice thee speak no more unto Me of this matter."

So we learn that some prayers go unanswered and should not be persisted in.

Paul uses the same words of his unanswered prayer, "I besought the Lord" (II. Cor. 12. 8) thrice, but the thorn in the flesh remained with the promise, "My grace is sufficient for thee." So Moses, Paul and the Lord Himself (Luke 22. 42) the three greatest of men, all had their prayers unanswered.

V. Application.

Let us fear to sin lest we lose the privileges we might enjoy.

Let us not be content to see the promises, but let us by faith and patience be among them who inherit them (Heb. 6. 12).

STORY 16

Feet on the Necks of Kings

Read JOSHUA 10. 15-27.

I. **Text.** “Come near and put your feet upon the necks of these Kings. And they came near and put their feet upon the necks of them.” (Josh. 10. 24).

II. **The Main Lesson.** No figure or symbol of victory could be more impressive than this call by Joshua to the Captains of his armies to come and put their feet on the necks of the five Kings of the Amorites.

It is thus that the Lord Jesus calls on His people to triumph gloriously over their spiritual enemies and promises “*The God of Peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly*” (Rom. 16. 20).

Our part is to learn self-control, that gracious fruit of the Spirit so that no Sin has any longer dominion over us.

III. The Story Told.

It was after the great Battle of Gibeon in which Joshua called on the Sun to stand still (see “70 Familiar Stories” No. 23 ; pp. 109-112), that this dramatic incident occurred.

Joshua 10. v. 15. *Joshua returns from the Slaughter of Gibeon and all Israel with him.* “And Joshua returned and all Israel with him unto the camp to Gilgal.”

v. 16. *The five Kings hide in a Cave at Makkedah.* “But these five kings fled and hid themselves in a cave at Makkedah.”

vv. 17-19. *Joshua being told bids them secure them there while they pursue the enemy.* “It was told Joshua and he said, Roll great stones upon the mouth of the cave and set men by it for to keep them : and stay ye not but pursue after your enemies for the Lord God hath delivered them into your hand.”

v. 20-22. *After the pursuit Joshua bids them bring out the five Kings.* "It came to pass when Joshua had made an end of slaying them with a great slaughter and all the people returned to the camp of Joshua at Makkedah in peace: then said Joshua, Open the mouth of the cave and bring out those five kings unto me out of the cave."

v. 23. *They bring the Kings to him.* "They did so and brought forth those five kings unto him out of the cave. The King of Jerusalem, the King of Hebron, the King of Jarmuth, the King of Lachish, and the King of Eglon."

v. 24. *Joshua bids the Captains come and put their feet on their necks.* "When they brought out those kings Joshua called for all the men of Israel and said unto the Captains of the men of war which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near and put their feet upon the necks of them."

v. 25. *Joshua says that thus the Lord would do to all their enemies.* "And Joshua said, Fear not nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage; for thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies against whom ye fight."

v. 26. *The Kings are then hanged until evening.* "Afterwards Joshua slew them and hanged them on five trees: and they were hanging upon the trees until the evening."

v. 27. *They are then buried in the cave where they had hidden.* "At the time of the going down of the sun Joshua commanded and they took them down off the trees and cast them into the cave wherein they had been hid and laid great stones in the cave's mouth which remain until this very day."

IV. **The Amorites** were a race descended from Canaan the fourth son of Ham, Noah's son (Gen. 10. 16). The first mention of them is in Gen. 14. 7.

They inhabited all the mountainous part of Judah. Solomon reduced to bondage those that were left of them (I. Kings 9. 20-21). Both Ahab and Manasseh (I. Kings 21. 26; and II. Kings 21. 11) worshipped their idols and practiced their abominations.

V. Other Lessons from the Story

1. **THE CONQUERED KINGS.** It was not until after the battle in which these Kings were defeated that this striking scene took place. It was *the aftermath of victory*.

In this it is a type of our Triumph. We enter by faith into a Victory that has been won for us by Our Joshua the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. **OUR ENEMIES ARE BEATEN ENEMIES.** Our three Great Foes: The World, The Flesh and The Devil are all spoken of as defeated by Christ at the Cross. *The World*—Jesus said, “Fear not, I have overcome the world” (John 16. 33). And of us He says, “This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith” (1 John 5. 4, R.V.). “Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (and see Gal. 6. 14).

The Flesh—“Our old man is crucified with Him” (Rom. 6. 6). “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal. 5. 24).

The Devil—“That through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the Devil” (Heb. 2. 14), and He writes to us, “I have written unto you . . . because ye have overcome the Wicked One” (1 John 2. 14).

So we see that our Foes were beaten by our Joshua and faith enters into the Victory putting the feet upon the necks of these kings.

3. **THE PROMISE TO FAITH.** “Thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies.” How precious to faith is this assurance. “Sin shall not have dominion over you for ye are not under the law but under grace” (Rom. 6. 14).

4. “**FEAR NOT NOR BE DISCOURAGED. BE STRONG AND OF GOOD COURAGE.**” (25). Fear and discouragement will mean defeat. For as the victory is given to faith so it must be maintained by faith.

Peter walked on the water till he feared and then he began to sink.

5. SELF-CONTROL ILLUSTRATED. To have a thing under your feet is to have it under control. To be master over passion and desire is the blessed fruit of the Spirit. "*Self-Control.*"

When we read of "all things being put under the Lord's feet" (I. Cor. 15.25-27; Eph. 1. 22; Heb. 2. 8), it means that all are brought under His authority and Lordship.

So the believer must be lord over his spirit and every thought must be brought to the obedience of Christ.

6. THE FIVE KINGS. These have been variously named. Someone called them *the five senses*, which is suggestive; these should be under our feet or godly control. Suppose we call them King Lust, King Pride, King Temper, King Envy and King Drink. Have we our feet on the necks of these five kings?

7. HANGED ON FIVE TREES. In not allowing the bodies to remain on the trees all night, Joshua was observing the law which said, "If a man have committed a sin and thou hang him on a tree his body shall not remain all night upon the tree but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God)" (Deut. 21. 22-23).

We remember how this was applied to Our Lord Jesus (John 19. 31) and how He was made a curse for us as we read in Galatians 3. 13, "*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.*"

VI. Application.

Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies.

Learn to walk in the Spirit that the fruit of so doing may be self-control.

The Way of Victory.

"ABIDE IN ME." "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not" (John 15. 4; 1 John 3. 6).

"WALK IN THE SPIRIT and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh" (Gal. 5. 16).

"ADD TO YOUR FAITH." "If ye do these things ye shall never fall" (2 Peter 1. 10).

STORY 17

Joshua and the Children of Joseph

OR

The Demand of a Great People

Read JOSHUA 17. 14-18.

I. **Text.** “ If thou be a great people then get thee up to the wood country and cut down for thyself ” (Josh. 17. 15).

II. **Main Lesson.** Faith should be *ambitious*, for the Lord desires His people to enjoy all the spiritual blessings that are in Christ for us.

But faith must be *active* and go on to possess these blessings. “ Be strong, quit you like men.” Overcome the enemy and triumph over difficulties. It is thus that faith enters into blessing.

III. The Story Told.

v. 14. *The children of Joseph demand a larger inheritance from Joshua.*

“ The children of Joseph spake unto Joshua, saying, Why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing I am a great people, forasmuch as the Lord hath blessed me hitherto.”

v. 15. *Joshua tells them, if they are a great people to get up to the woods and cut down there in the land of the giants.*

“ Joshua answered them, If thou be a great people, then get thee up to the wood country and cut down for thyself there in the land of the giants, if Mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee.”

v. 16. *They say the hill is not enough and the Canaanites*

in the valley have chariots of iron. “ And the Children of Joseph said, The hill is not enough for us : and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, both they who are of Beth-shean and her towns, and they who are of the valley of Jezreel.”

v. 17. *Joshua tells them to go on to possess both mountain, wood and valley in spite of the chariots of iron.* “ And Joshua spake unto the house of Joseph, even to Ephraim and to Manasseh, saying, Thou art a great people and hast great power : thou shalt not have one lot only but the mountain shall be thine, for it is a wood and thou shalt cut it down : and the outgoings of it shall be thine for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots and though they be strong.”

IV. The Tribes of Joseph. Joseph had two tribes in Israel. His two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. So that in all there were thirteen tribes, only Levi the priestly tribe was not reckoned as one. Half the tribe of Manasseh had its inheritance with Reuben and Gad on the East side of Jordan (Joshua 13. 7-8 and 29). The two tribes of Joseph at this time numbered together 85,200 (52,700 Manasseh and 32,500 Ephraim) (Numbers 26. 34-37). At the start of the Exodus they numbered 72,700 (32,200 Manasseh and 40,500 Ephraim) (Numbers 2. 18-21). They were therefore the largest of all the tribes, Judah being next with 76,500 (Numbers 26. 22).

V. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. **HOLY DISSATISFACTION.** Why only one lot and one portion ? (14). It is a good thing for a Christian not to be content with small things. God bids us open our mouths wide and He will fill them.

There are untold riches in Christ, “ all spiritual blessings ” (Eph. 1. 3) all things are yours, then let us not rest satisfied until we enter into the fulness of the blessing of Christ, till we are enriched in Him, as we may and should be “ Filled full (complete) in Him.”

2. “ **I AM A GREAT PEOPLE.**” No doubt the tribes of

Joseph gloried in the fact that they together formed the largest of the twelve tribes.

Let us remember we are, viewed in Christ (not according to the flesh) a great people. A Heavenly people, a holy nation of whom God has spoken great things.

Christians are spiritually *a great people*, "Children of God," "Heirs of God," "Joint heirs with Christ," partakers of a Heavenly calling, destined to Glory. O that Christians would recognize the dignity of their position.

3. "THE LORD HATH BLESSED ME HITHERTO" (14).

This is what made them a great people while Simeon, because of sin, had declined in numbers during the wilderness journeying from 59,300 to 22,200 (Num. 1. 23 and 26. 14). Ephraim and Manasseh had grown from 72,700 to 85,200 thus passing Judah in size.

But the blessing of the Lord is an argument for us to go on to greater things. The larger the cup the more it needs to fill it. If God has blessed us hitherto, let us reason thus, then He will bless us yet more.

4. JOSHUA'S ARGUMENT. "If . . . then" (15).

A great people should do great things. They should be great not only in name and size, but in accomplishment.

So let us say, If I am great with blessing in Christ, then let me be great in faith and courage and spiritual warfare.

Again and again we are called on to be strong and of a good courage, to quit us like men, to war a good warfare, to fight the good fight of the faith. If great, then let us show ourselves great.

5. MOUNTAIN, WOOD AND VALLEY (15-16). When Joseph complained that even "the hill (that is mount Ephraim) *is not enough* they were told that the valley of Jezreel could be taken too. These probably formed the choicest parts of the land.

Our portion in Christ includes Mountain, Wood and Valley, "all things are yours and ye are Christ's."

There is a beauty of variety and largeness of inheritance in Christ, we should enjoy it all.

6. "TOO NARROW" (15). Since there is such beauty and variety to be found in Christ, what a pity to be "too narrow," to take a restricted and limited outlook. To be sound in doctrine and narrow in sympathy. To be particular in detail and exclusive in heart when God would have us like Himself (Matt. 5. 45), large hearted. The very last thing we can conceive of God is that He is exclusive or narrow.

7. WOODS MUST BE CUT DOWN. (15). There are many natural growths that hinder the believer. These must be cut down. There is an ugly tree in some Christian lives—the tobacco tree—it should be cut down. It was a wise man who advised a smoker to pray :

" O may no earthborn cloud arise
To hide Thee from Thy servant's eyes."

Let faith get to work. "*Get thee up into the wood country and cut down for thyself.*" (15).

8. CHARIOTS OF IRON represent the strength of the enemy. Perhaps we may liken them to "evil habits," bad practices that are strong in the life through frequent yielding. These must be conquered. "Thou shall drive out the Canaanites (the fleshly enemies) though they have iron chariots. A Christian must not be a slave to any sin or evil practice. He must drive them out of his life. He can, through Christ, and should and must or they will spoil his life and testimony.

9. GIANTS are large but feeble things in God's sight. Giants are remarkable as having feeble legs. They are boastful and bombastic, but when met by faith cannot stand. The braggart powers of this world, the wicked spirits in the Heavens, "the world rulers of this darkness," are our giants, but they fall to faith and courage.

" Many giants, great and tall,
Stalking through the land,
Headlong to the earth will fall,
If met by Daniel's band."

10. "THOU HAST GREAT POWER" (17). Not the energy of the flesh, but the mighty power of God. Let us lay hold of it and "be strengthened in the Lord."

We are bidden be strong, but not in ourselves, but "in the Lord and in the power of His might."

The believer has great power, he can say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

VI. Application.

Only be strong and very courageous. Go in and possess the land.

OUTLINES.

The Greatness of the Lord's People.

Ye are A Chosen Generation.

A Royal Priesthood.

A Holy Nation.

A Peculiar People.

A Spiritual House (1 Peter 2. 5 and 9).

Children of God, and if children, heirs—joint heirs with Christ (Rom. 8. 17).

God's Elect (Rom. 8. 33).

Beloved of God, saints by calling (Rom. 1. 7).

Washed, Sanctified, Justified (1 Cor. 6. 11).

A New Creation (2 Cor. 5. 17).

Walking Worthily.

Worthy of the Vocation (Eph. 4. 1).

Worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing (Col. 1. 10).

Worthy of God (1 Thess. 2. 12).

Worthy of this calling (2 Thess. 1. 11).

STORY 18

Ed—A Great Altar not for Sacrifice

Read Joshua 22. 10-34.

I. **Text.** “ Let us now prepare to build us an altar not for burnt offering nor for sacrifice but that it may be a witness ” (Josh. 22. 26-27).

II. **Main Lesson.** It was ordained of God that on the Children of Israel entering into the Promised Land their sacrifices should only be offered in the place that he should shew them (Deut. 12. 5 and 13-14). The altar in the tabernacle served that purpose until Solomon built the Temple on Mount Moriah.

To erect another centre of sacrifice would be to rebel.

III. The Story Told.

The two and a half tribes, Reuben, Gad, and half Manasseh had been allotted their inheritance on the East of Jordan, the land taken from Og, King of Bashan and Sihon, King of the Amorites, but only on condition that they went to war with their brethren until the whole land was conquered. This they did and now were returning to their own inheritance.

Ch. 22. 10. *Coming to Jordan the Two and a Half tribes build an altar there.* When they came unto the borders of Jordan, the Children of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manassah built there an altar by Jordan, a Great Altar to see to.

v. 11-12. *It is reported to the other Tribes who gather to war against them.* “ When the Children of Israel heard of it the whole congregation gathered themselves together at Shiloh to go up to war against them.”

vv. 13-16. *They send Phinehas, Son of Eleazar the Priest, and ten Princes who demand, What trespass is this?* “ And the Children of Israel sent unto the Children of Reuben, Gad and half Manassah, Phinehas the Son of Eleazar the Priest and with him ten Princes, each one head of the house

of their fathers and they came unto the land of Gilead and spake saying, Thus saith the whole Congregation of the Lord, 'What trespass is this that ye have committed to turn away this day from following the Lord in that ye have builded an altar that ye may rebel this day against the Lord.' "

vv. 17-20. *They quote the cases of Peor and Achan as examples of trespass bringing wrath on the congregation.*

"Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us from which we are not cleansed until this day although there was a plague in the congregation of the Lord"

"Did not Achan commit a trespass on the accursed thing and wrath fell on the Congregation of Israel? And that man perished not alone in his iniquity."

vv. 21-29. *The Two and a half Tribes explain that their Altar is a sign of unity and not to offer sacrifices on, but a Memorial.* They answered. "The Lord God of gods, the Lord God of gods He knoweth, and Israel shall know; if it be in rebellion (save us not this day) that we have built us an altar to turn from following the Lord or if to offer hereon burnt offering or meat offering or if to offer peace offerings thereon let the Lord Himself require it."

"And if we have not rather done it for fear of this thing, saying, In time to come your children might speak unto our children saying, What have ye to do with the Lord God of Israel . . . ye have no part in the Lord, therefore we said, Let us build us an altar not for burnt offering, not for sacrifice but that it may be a witness between us and you."

"God forbid that we should rebel to build an altar . . . beside the altar of the Lord Our God that is before His tabernacle."

vv. 30-34. *Phinehas and the Princes are satisfied. The altar was called Ed—a witness.* "When Phinehas and the Princes heard the words it pleased them. This day we perceive that the Lord is among us, and they came to Gilead to the Children of Israel and brought them word again. And the thing pleased the Children of Israel and they blessed God."

And the Children of Reuben and Gad called the altar Ed : for it shall be a witness between us that the Lord is God."

IV. The Aaronic Priesthood and Levitical Altars and Ritual have for ever passed away.

From the Epistle to the Hebrews we learn that the Aaronic Priesthood has given place to Christ Our Great High Priest after the Order of Melchizedek. (See Story No. 2, pp. 21, "Melchizedek the King Priest"). There is no longer a succession of priests who die, but He ever liveth and hath an unchangeable priesthood. We need no other and no other can presume to offer sacrifices. So also there is no longer a Sanctuary (a Temple) on earth (Heb. 7. 12 ; and 9. 1-12), nor Altar nor Sacrifice because the temporal has given place to the eternal, the imperfect type to the perfect reality, the visible to the invisible.

All these things are realized for us in Christ, Whose One Offering for ever ended all Sacrifices for sins and Who ever lives to make intercession for us.

V. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. THE INDIGNATION OF THE TEN TRIBES at the idea of the two and a half tribes setting up another Altar "beside the altar of the Lord our God that is before His Tabernacle" (see Exodus 27. 1-8 for its description) and in direct disobedience to Deut. 12. 13-14, is readily understood. It appeared not only to be a schism among them but another transgression like those of Peor (described in Numbers 25) and Achan (described in Joshua 7) which would bring wrath on the whole congregation.

2. "ONE SINNER DESTROYETH MUCH GOOD." Two things are noted of the rebellions of Peor and Achan. Of the first it is said, "From which we are not cleansed until this day, although there was a plague on the Congregation," shewing how difficult it is to purge out moral evil once allowed, and of the second it is said, "That man (Achan) perished not alone in his iniquity" for one sinner makes others and often the sin of one brings sorrow on many. "None of us liveth to himself." No one goes to hell alone, he always drags others with him.

Our Sin has a shadow like our bodies. An unconscious influence we cannot avoid any more than we can get rid of our own shadow.

3. WAR THREATENED. It was a terrible thing to have to fight against their own people but it was expressly commanded (see Deut. 13. 15). Whether the nearest and dearest relative or friend, he was not to be spared but put to death, if he sought to turn any to serve other gods. It is so to-day among the Lord's people, those who sin are to be put away (1. Cor. 5. 1-13).

4. PHINEHAS THE SON OF ELEAZAR. On the occasion of the sin of Baal-Peor it was this same man who, filled with indignation at *the open shame of Zimri and Cozbi*, personally executed judgment on them (Num. 25. 7) and so stayed the plague that had broken out. He was specially commended of God. "Behold I give unto him my covenant of peace, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood because he was zealous for his God" (Num. 25. 12-13).

5. THE DESIRE OF THE TWO AND A HALF TRIBES. They feared lest their geographical separation from their other Tribes should lead to an actual separation. So the Altar of Witness was set up to remind the coming generation of their connection. They feared lest the other Tribes would say, "Ye have no part in the Lord."

6. THE LORD'S SUPPER is not a sacrifice nor is the Lord's Table in any sense an altar. But it is a blessed and precious memorial and witness. "For as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do shew (proclaim) the Lord's death till He come."

VI. Application.

Let us beware of "altars" that are set up in disobedience to the word of God.

Let us learn the true heavenly nature of our worship.

Let us not "as though living on the earth" turn again to Sanctuaries of this world or altars set up on earth.

STORY 19

The Trees Choosing a King

JOTHAM'S PARABLE.

Read JUDGES 9. 7-23.

I. **Text.** " The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them " (v. 8).

II. **The Main Lesson.** Jotham, the youngest son of Gideon, escaped when Abimelech, the illegitimate son of Gideon, in order to be king, slew the rest of the 70 sons of his father, on one stone at Ophrah.

Before fleeing to Beer, Jotham stood on the top of Mount Gerizim and spoke this parable.

The Shechemites showed their folly in choosing a worthless king, because he was a relation.

There are many leaders who are accepted for one reason or another. Those whom the Apostle describes as " perverting the Gospel " (Gal. 1. 7) " zealously affecting you that ye might affect them " (Gal. 4. 17) forming parties, making separations and causing strife and divisions.

Many are turned from their fruitfulness by such ' bramble kings.' The end is always disaster.

Let us have our eyes alone on Jesus and our hearts in subjection to Him our only Lord.

III. **The Parable** (Judges 9. 7-15). Jotham hearing that the Shechemites had made Abimelech king, went and stood on the top of Mount Gerizim and lifted up his voice and cried :

Hearken unto me ye men of Shechem that God may hearken unto you.

The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign over us. But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness

wherewith by me they honour God and man and go to be promoted over the trees ?

And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou and reign over us.

But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness and my good fruit and go to be promoted over the trees ?

Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou and reign over us.

And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man and go to be promoted over the trees ?

Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come you and reign over us.

And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you then come and put your trust in my shadow : and if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon."

IV. The Rest of the Story Told.

vv. 16-20. *Jotham applies the parable to the men of Shechem.* " Now, if ye have done truly in that ye have made Abimelech king, and if ye have dealt well with Jerubbaal (Gideon) and his house, then rejoice ye in Abimelech and let him also rejoice in you, but if not, let fire come out from Abimelech and devour the house of Shechem and the house of Millo and let fire come out from the men of Shechem and the house of Millo and devour Abimelech."

v. 21. *Jotham flees to Beer.* " And Jotham ran away and fled and went to Beer."

vv. 22-23. *An evil spirit comes between the men of Shechem and Abimelech, and Jotham's parable is fulfilled.* " When Abimelech had reigned 3 years over Israel then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech:"

(His death is recorded in vv. 53-54).

V. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. GIDEON'S FAITHFULNESS IN REFUSING TO BE KING (8. 23). He recognized that Israel was to be a Theocracy. "Gideon said unto them (the men of Israel) I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you. The Lord shall rule over you."

It is a weakness of the natural man that he must lean on some arm of flesh.

The same mistake was made when in Samuel's day the people demanded a king, to the ultimate curse of the nation (1. Samuel 8. 5-7). How solemn the warning, "Put not your trust in princes."

2. ABIMELECH was Gideon's son by a concubine in Shechem (8. 31). It was this woman's brothers who stirred up the people to make Abimelech, the bastard son, king, saying, "He is our brother" (9. 1-3). They hired vain and light persons with money out of the house of Baal-berith to further their cause, and killed the 70 true sons of Gideon.

Well might Jotham complain of their ingratitude to Gideon their deliverer.

3. JOTHAM'S PARABLE ridiculed their foolish choice and foretold its disastrous end.

The Olive with its fatness (9).

The Fig with sweetness and good fruit (11).

The Vine with its good cheer for all (13).

All alike refused to turn aside from their proper functions to be made kings.

The Bramble alone accepted the position.

4. "TO GO TO BE PROMOTED" (9. 11 and 13). The love of promotion has turned many a fruitful branch into a barren and withered stick. "Seekest thou great things for thyself; seek them not."

5. TRUSTING IN THE SHADOW OF A BRAMBLE (15).

Such a worthless man as Abimelech was! Jotham well likened him to a bramble, a plant full of thorns. What would be the result of such misplaced trust? It would be

mutual destruction as we see was the case. Fire would come out of the bramble (Abimelech) and destroy the cedars of Lebanon (the Shechemites) and fire would come out of the men of Shechem and destroy Abimelech (20).

This history has been realised in many a community. They have chosen a bramble to reign over them and mutual mistrust and an evil spirit among them has brought about conflict and ruin.

See the fate of Shechem. "Abimelech took the city and slew the people that were therein and beat down the city and sowed it with salt." *See the fate of Abimelech* seeking to capture the Tower of Shechem, their last defence. "A certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech's head and all to break his skull."

So fire came from each to destroy the other as the parable foretold.

6. ONE IS YOUR MASTER, even Christ. How happy that company that give the Lord His rightful place among them. A true Church is an assembly of believers who confess

Christ as their only and all sufficient Lord.

The Scriptures as their only and all sufficient Authority.

The Holy Spirit as their only and all sufficient Guide.

VI. Application.

Beware of leaving your God-given service for promotion to rule.

Put no trust in brambles, they make bad kings.

OUTLINE.

The Parables of the Old Testament.

Balaam's Seven Parables,	Num. 23. 7, 18 ; 24. 3, 15, 19, 20,	21, 23
Samson's,	.. .. .	Judges 14. 12
The Ewe Lamb,	.. .. .	2 Sam. 12. 3
The Wise Woman of Tekoah,	.. .. .	2 Sam. 14. 6
The Son of the Prophets to Ahab,	.. .. .	1 Kings 20. 39
The Trees Choosing a King,	.. .. .	As above
The Poor Wise Man in a Little City,	.. .. .	Eccles. 9. 14
The Parable of Old Age,	.. .. .	Eccles. 12. 1-7

STORY 20

Jephthah—the Outcast who became a Saviour

Read JUDGES 11. 1-33.

I. Text. “ Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, If ye bring me home again to fight against the children of Ammon, and the Lord deliver them before me, shall I be your head ? ” (Judges 11. 9).

II. The Main Lesson. In this story we have an illustration of a great truth. In order to know Christ as Saviour *we must submit to Him as Lord*. “ If thou shalt confess with thy mouth, Jesus as Lord, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved ” (Rom. 10. 9). There is a danger in preaching the gospel of letting sinners think they can trust Jesus as Saviour, without yielding to Him as Lord. No, He says, as did Jephthah, that if He is to deliver He must be Head. He must be received as both Prince and Saviour. For God has made Him both Lord and Christ (Acts 2. 36 and 5. 31).

III. The Story Told. Judges 11. 1-33.

v. 1. *Jephthah had the misfortune to be the son of a harlot*. “ Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour and he was the son of an harlot : and Gilead begat Jephthah.”

v. 2. *The legitimate sons thrust him out of the house*. “ And Gilead’s wife bare him sons, and his wife’s sons grew up and they thrust out Jephthah and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father’s house ; for thou art the son of a strange woman.

v. 3. *Jephthah takes refuge in Tob and gathers a band round him*. “ Then Jephthah fled from his brethren and dwelt in the land of Tob : and there were gathered vain men to Jephthah and went out with him.”

v. 4. *The Ammonites make war against Israel.* “ And it came to pass in process of time that the children of Ammon made war against Israel.”

v. 5. *The Elders of Gilead send for Jephthah.* “ And it was so, that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob.”

v. 6. *They invite him to be their Captain.* “ And they said unto Jephthah, Come, and be our Captain that we may fight with the children of Ammon.”

v. 7-9. *Jephthah stipulates that if he does so and delivers them, he shall be their head.* “ And Jephthah said, Did ye not hate me and expel me out of my father’s house? And why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress? . . . If ye bring me home again to fight against the children of Ammon and the Lord deliver them before me, shall I be your head? ”

v. 10. *The Elders agree, calling God to witness.* “ And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, The Lord be witness between us if we do not so according to thy words.”

v. 11. *Then Jephthah is made head and captain and utters all his words before the Lord.* “ Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead and the people made him head and captain over them and Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord.”

v. 32. *So Jephthah leads them to victory.* “ So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them, and the Lord delivered them into his hands and he smote them with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.”

(See also “ Jephthah’s rash vow ” in “ Seventy Familiar Bible Stories,” Story 27, pp. 124-127).

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. GILEAD’S SIN EXPOSED. This man when he became a fornicator did not think his sin would be written in the Scriptures for all time. It is an illustration of the

Lord's words, "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed." What is spoken in secret is proclaimed on the housetop. So he begat a son upon who was a brand of shame.

2. "THE STRANGE WOMAN." The study of this hateful character in the book of Proverbs is a profitable one and should lead men to think ere they go into sin. Here are some truths about her :—

"Her house is the way to hell" (7. 27).

"Many strong men have been slain by her" (7. 26).

"None that go unto her return again" (2. 19).

"Her guests are in the depths of hell" (9. 18).

3. JEPHTHAH NEVERTHELESS WAS A MIGHTY MAN OF VALOUR whose name is found in Hebrews 11. 32, among the heroes of faith. Though the brothers reproached him with his birth, God blessed and used him. Gilead ate his sour grapes but Jephthah's teeth were not set on edge (see Jer. 31. 29). God who judges righteous judgment, knew that no blame lay on the innocent child and so He preferred him above the proud brothers. Of all foolish pride, perhaps the pride of birth is the most foolish, for it is often accompanied by lack of true nobility, as in the case of Jephthah's brothers.

4. JEPHTHAH AT TOB. Tob is in Syria, to the N.E. of Gilead which was E. of Jordan, part of the inheritance of the two and a half tribes. Jephthah was evidently a born leader, like David in exile he gathered round him a band of "vain" men, that is those not of any certain employment, ready to follow a good leader.

5. "NOW WHEN YE ARE IN DISTRESS." It is well that Jephthah was above petty revenge. He might have mocked them and turned the reproach on them, but in spite of their evil treatment of him he was willing to listen to and help them. In this we have a picture of Christ whom men despised and hanged on a tree, yet in their distress when they come to Him He is willing to forgive and save.

6. "COME AND BE OUR CAPTAIN" that we may fight against the Ammonites. It was a Saviour or Deliverer they needed, and they knew the one they had cast out to be a mighty man of valour. It is so with Christ. The sinner under the cruel bondage of sin and the oppression of Satan, desires a Deliverer, One who can and will free him from his enemies and appeals to Christ to come and save him.

7. JEPHTHAH'S ANSWER. If I come shall I be your head? He would only be a Saviour on condition he was restored to his place as Head of the household and of the community. They had rejected and cast him out, they must receive and restore him to the place that was his by right. So it is with Christ. He will not be Saviour unless He is Lord.

8. RECONCILIATION AND SALVATION. It is important to remember that there is no deliverance for the sinner from the power of his sins until he is at peace with God by the remission of his sins through the blood of Jesus. If, when we were sinners we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. Reconciled by His death. Saved (delivered) by His risen power.

9. VICTORY. If He is Head, He is Victor. In those who sanctify Him as Lord in their hearts, He is full Deliverer. They are more than conquerors through Him that loves them.

V. Application.

Beware of a spurious gospel that offers salvation to the one who is not truly submitted to Christ as Lord.

Sanctify Christ as Lord in your heart. Prove the Power of Him who is Captain of your salvation.

OUTLINES.

Christ as Lord.

In SALVATION,	..	..	..	Rom. 10. 9, R.V.
In SANCTIFICATION,	..	..	..	1 Peter 3. 15, R.V.
In SERVICE,	..	..	..	Col. 3. 24
In the SANCTUARY (the Church),				1 Cor. 12. 3 ; Eph. 4. 5

STORY 21

“That I may thrust out all your right eyes”

THE REPROACH OF NAHASH.

Read 1 SAMUEL 11. 1-15.

I. Text. ‘ On this condition will I make a covenant with you that I may thrust out all your right eyes ’ (v. 2).

II. Main Lesson. The terrible plight of the men of Jabesh-gilead, illustrates the sad state of the sinner with no Saviour and the enemy threatening to put out his eyes and leave him in eternal darkness. “ If there be no one to save us,” they said and then cried to the newly chosen King Saul. Who at their cry came to their rescue and gained a great victory for them. So the sinners’ only hope is to call upon the name of the Lord, who is both able and ready to save.

III. The Story Told (1 Samuel 11. 1-15). This history happened immediately after the choice of Saul, the son of Kish, to be king over Israel. It gave him his opportunity to vindicate their choice and establish him upon the throne.

v. 1. *Nahash the Ammonite encamps against Jabesh-gilead who unable to defy him ask for terms of peace.* “ Then Nahash the Ammonite came up and encamped against Jabesh-gilead and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make a covenant with us and we will serve thee.”

v. 2. *Nahash’s terrible terms—to thrust out all their right eyes for a reproach.* “ And Nahash answered them, On this condition will I make a covenant with you that I may thrust out all your right eyes and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel.”

v. 3. *The men of Jabesh ask for seven days respite.* “ The elders of Jabesh said, Give us seven days respite that we may send messengers unto all the coasts of Israel : and then if there be no man to save us we will come out to thee.”

vv. 4-5. *The messengers come to Gibeah and tell the news, Saul hears it.* “Then came the messengers to Gibeah of Saul, and told the tidings in the ears of the people and all the people lifted up their voices and wept. And behold Saul came after the herd out of the field and Saul said, What aileth the people that they weep? And they told him the tidings of the men of Jabesh.”

v. 6-7. *The Spirit of God comes on Saul and moves him to call all Israel together.* “And the Spirit of God came upon Saul and his anger was kindled greatly and he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel so shall it be done to his oxen. And the fear of the Lord fell on the people and they came out with one consent.”

v. 8. *Saul numbers them.* “When he numbered them in Bezek, the children of Israel were 300,000 and the men of Judah 30,000.

v. 9. *He sends to Jabesh to expect help on the morrow.* “They said unto the messengers, Thus shall ye say unto Jabesh, To-morrow by that time the sun is hot ye shall have help, and the men of Jabesh were glad.”

v. 10. *The men of Jabesh tell Nahash they will come out on the morrow.* “Therefore the men of Jabesh said, To-morrow we will come out to you and ye shall do with us all that seemeth good to you.”

v. 11. *On the morrow Saul wins a great victory over the Ammonites.* “It was so on the morrow, Sani put the people in three companies and they came unto the midst of the host in the morning watch and slew the Ammonites until the heat of the day, and they were scattered so that two of them were not left together.”

vv. 12-13. *Saul is acclaimed by all as king.* “And the people said to Samuel, Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? Bring the men that we may put them to death. And Saul said, There shall not a man be put to death this day, for to-day the Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel.”

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. **THE BRUTALITY OF THE AMMONITE DAYS.** We read of a further dishonour done to Israel by another of Nahash's descendants, Hanun, in II Samuel 10. 1-14, when David sent an embassy to sympathise with him on his father's death. He took David's servants and insulted them by shaving off half their beards and cutting off half their clothes and sending them away greatly ashamed. "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." Human nature, unrestrained by grace is bestial.

2. **THE THREAT TO PUT OUT ALL THEIR RIGHT EYES.** It is a solemn fact that Satan treats those who come under his power in this way. "The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, Who is the image of God, should shine in" (2 Cor. 4. 4, R.V.) ; just as the Philistines when they got Samson into their power put out both his eyes. *Sin blinds*—it robs the sinner of his mental eyesight, unbelief (spiritual blindness) is not a matter of the intellect but the result of sin, of moral perversion. The more a man sins the darker he becomes, till total blindness falls on him and he perishes in unbelief.

3. **FOR A REPROACH UPON ALL ISRAEL.** Every child of God who falls into unbelief is a reproach to the whole community of Christians. All the members suffer when some professor or prominent church member disgraces the name of Christ by open sin. *Note this.* When Satan aims at a believer he is not seeking so much to harm the saint as to bring reproach upon the Saviour. It is Christ he strikes at.

4. **IF THERE BE NONE TO SAVE US (3).** There is One who is able to save, only One. His name is Jesus, Jehovah the Saviour "I will be thy king, Where is any other that may save you" (Hosea 13. 10). "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4. 12).

He is able to save because He ever liveth to make intercession for us.

5. "THE SPIRIT OF GOD CAME UPON SAUL" (6).

(a) *We may first apply this to Christ.* Conceived of the Holy Ghost He was anointed with the Spirit at His baptism and came up in the power of the Spirit to do all the will of God. It was by the Eternal Spirit that He offered Himself without spot to God and thus won the great victory of the Cross by which He delivered His people from the power of the enemy.

(b) *We may then apply it to ourselves.* We have no power till this happens. "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (Acts 1. 8). It is only as we are enabled by the Spirit that we can win any triumph.

6. THE GREAT VICTORY. "Through death" the Lord Jesus "destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the Devil, and delivered them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2. 14-15). These men of Jabesh were held in fear by the tyrant Nahash till the Deliverer came and by a Great Victory delivered them. So at the Cross our Deliverer defeated our enemy and set us free. We enter by faith into that finished work and enjoy the liberty into which it brings us.

7. WHO IS HE THAT SAITH, SHALL SAUL REIGN OVER US? Bring the men that we may put them to death (12). Had the Lord this verse in mind when He told the parable of the pounds? (Luke 19. 27). "Those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them bring hither and slay them before Me." Though Saul wisely prevented bloodshed on that great day of salvation, yet the time is coming when it will be put into effect.

V. Application.

Let the sinner beware lest Satan put out his eyes.
Let him call upon the Lord who is ready to save.
Let us all give Christ His place as Lord.

STORY 22

“The Bleating of the Sheep”

A LESSON IN IMPERFECT OBEDIENCE.

Read I SAMUEL 15. 1-35.

I. **Text.** “Behold to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams” (I. Sam. 15. 22).

II. Main Lesson.

Disobedience is not condoned by partial obedience. Unless obedience regards the whole will of God it is not true obedience.

To obey *as far as I like only* is to be self-willed and not obedient at all.

Saul professing to have done God’s will was rejected for sparing Agag and the best of the sheep and oxen. “Because thou hast rejected the Word of the Lord He hath also rejected thee from being King” (v. 23).

III. The Story Told.

vv. 1-7. *Saul the King is bidden to go and destroy the Amalekites and slay oxen, sheep, camel and ass. He smites the Amalekites from Havilah to Shur.*

vv. 1-3. Samuel said unto Saul, “The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king : now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the Words of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord, I remember what Amalek did to Israel now go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have and spare them not, but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

v. 7. “And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur that is over against Egypt.

vv. 8-9. *Saul spares Agag and the people take the spoil.* “And he took Agag the King of the Amalekites alive and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword but Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the

sheep and of the oxen and of the fatlings and the lambs and all that was good."

vv. 10-12. *God tells Samuel that Saul has grieved Him.* "Then came the Word of the Lord unto Samuel saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be King for he is turned back from following me and hath not performed My commandment."

vv. 13-14. *Samuel comes to Saul and demands what the bleating of the sheep and lowing of the oxen means.* "And Samuel came to Saul and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord. And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears and the lowing of the oxen that I hear."

v. 15. *Saul excuses himself and the people on a false plea.* "Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed."

vv. 16-17. *Samuel tells Saul what the Lord had said to him.* "And Samuel said unto Saul, Stay and I will tell thee what the Lord hath said to me this night: and he said, Say on."

And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight wast thou not made the head of the Tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee King over Israel . . . Wherefore then didst thou not obey the Voice of the Lord but didst fly on the spoil and didst evil in the sight of the Lord."

vv. 20-21. *Saul repeats his excuse that the animals were spared for sacrifice.* "And Saul said, Yea, I have obeyed but the people took of the spoil to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal."

v. 22. *Samuel utters a memorable word.* "And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the Voice of the Lord? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."

v. 23. *Saul is rejected from being King.* “ Because thou hast rejected the Word of the Lord He hath also rejected thee from being King.”

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE AMALEKITES ORDERED. This has stumbled some, but let it be remembered that nations that sin are subject to the wages of sin, as are individuals.

Nations overtaken by immorality and wickedness perish under the judgment of God in various ways, by internal decay, by fearful disease, by civil strife and war, or by being beaten and destroyed by enemies. All these things are matters of history. That God should deal with the Amalekites in the same way and record it in His word for our instruction and national warning is no reason for finding fault with God's ways. Rather let us pray for our nation lest we also come under judgment.

2. SAUL'S HIGH POSITION ENTAILED RESPONSIBILITY. Anointed to be king, he was to be an example to the people of obedience (1). Some one put it thus : “ It is a privilege to have a responsibility but a great responsibility to have a privilege.” Whatever honour is put upon us involves a liability to honour God.

3. “ WHEN THOU WAST LITTLE IN THINE OWN SIGHT.” Many begin well, being lowly in mind at the first, but often success brings self-esteem and pride follows. Then comes failure. “ Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.” Keep lowly and God will bless you still.

“ He that is down ne'er fear no fall,
He that is low no pride.”

A dying saint said : “ We are often too great to be used of God, but never too little.”

4. PROFESSIONS OF OBEDIENCE that are insincere. So Saul said to Samuel : “ Blessed be thou of the Lord : I have performed the commandment of the Lord.” *But he had not.*

How many think God is satisfied with a little religiousness. "I went to church." "I said my prayers." "I gave something to the collection." "Have I not done the Commandments of the Lord?" And the daily life is godless, spent in worldliness and vanity without a thought of the will of God or of serving Him. Such protestations are unavailing.

5. PARTIAL OBEDIENCE IS NOT OBEDIENCE. Many a worldly man keeps some of the Commandments. He does not bow to idols nor swear, nor steal, nor commit adultery, nor bear false witness. Why? Because he prefers not to do so and has the common sense to see that these moral obligations tend to health and happiness, but that does not mean he is obeying God, nor that he loves holiness or desires to please God.

Two things make this clear :

- (a) *His motive* is entirely selfish.
- (b) *His obedience* only goes so far as he pleases. The rest of God's will is nothing to him.

6. THEY "SPARED ALL THAT WAS GOOD." Many do this : they turn from moral evil and live a worldly life, indulging themselves in the things of the world, saying, "I see no harm in it."

It is often the good things of this world that draw the heart from Christ.

It was "*all that was good*" that led the people to disobedience and sin.

7. SACRIFICES OF DISOBEDIENCE. How strange that Saul and the people should think that the fruit of disobedience should be offered to God in sacrifice.

It is like a thief offering God part of the ill-gotten booty as a bribe to help him.

How many "a gift to charity" has been made out of ill gotten wealth!

"O priests that despise My name." And ye say, wherein have we despised Thy name!

“Ye offer polluted bread upon Mine altar; ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil?” (Malachi 1. 7-8).

8. “TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE.” The sacrifice is itself, when a burnt offering, a type of the whole-hearted devotion and obedience of Christ our sinless substitute, to God.

If obedience is absent the sacrifice is mockery.

9. REBELLION AND STUBBORNNESS are said to be as vile in God’s sight as iniquity and idolatry. Self-will is of the essence of sin. Sin is lawlessness, the refusal of submission to authority. It is casting off the yoke of Christ. It is saying, “We will not have this man to reign over us.”

10. DISOBEDIENCE LOST A CROWN. It was so with King Saul, it is so with many a Child of God. “Let no man take thy crown.”

V. Application.

The chief thing in the believer’s life is the heart obedience of Faith and Love. Without this all sacrifice is a mockery and an affront to God.

Obedience in part is only self-will.

Let no man take thy crown.

Obedience that Pleases God.

Obedying from the HEART,	..	..	..	Rom. 6. 17
Obedience of FAITH,	..	..		Rom. 1. 5 ; 16. 26
Obedience of Love,	..	..	..	John 14. 15
Obedying the TRUTH,	..			Gal. 3. 1 ; 1 Peter 6. 22
Obedience unto RIGHTEOUSNESS,	...	..		Rom. 6. 16
Obedience unto DEATH,	..	..	..	Phil. 2. 8

STORY 23

Ishbi-benob, the Giant

DAVID NEARLY SLAIN.

Read II SAMUEL 21. 15-22.

I. **Text.** “ David waxed faint and Ishbi-benob thought to have slain David ” (15-16).

II. **The Main Lesson.** David, who triumphed so gloriously in his youth over Goliath, is now in his later years nearly slain by another giant, Ishbi-benob. He waxed faint. The lesson seems to be that sin had weakened David. He could not longer say—

“ My strength is as the strength of ten
Because my heart is pure.”

David's great sin had undermined his powers of endurance and this might have cost him his life, but for Abishai his nephew's timely aid.

III. The Story Told.

v. 15. *The Philistines attack Israel again and David goes out to battle with them.* “ The Philistines had yet war again with Israel ; and David went down and his servants with him and fought against the Philistines.”

v. 16. *He waxes faint and is set on by the giant Ishbi-benob and nearly slain.* “ And David waxed faint and Ishbi-benob, which was of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose spear weighed 300 shekels of brass in weight, he, being girded with a new sword thought to have slain David.”

v. 17. *Abishai rescues David.* “ But Abishai the son of Zeruah succoured him and smote the Philistine and killed him.”

v. 17. *David's men swear he shall not go out to battle again.* “ Then the men of David sware unto him, saying, Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel.”

vv. 18-22. *Three other giants were slain—four in all. Ishbi-benob by Abishai. Saph by Sibbechai the Hushathite. Goliath's brother, the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam, by Elhanan. A man with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot by Jonathan, son of Shimeah, David's brother.*

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. **SIN WEAKENS THE POWERS.** David after his great sin was no longer the warrior he had been before that tragedy in his life. Would we be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might we must not grieve the Holy Spirit within us by wilful transgression. Samson is an example, his sinful indulgence lost him his great strength.

2. **IT IS THE PRIVILEGE OF THE LORD'S SERVANTS TO FIGHT GIANTS.** The believers' enemies are no small ones. The world, the flesh and the devil are towering and powerful giants, everyone too strong for the natural man. Only those endowed with the Spirit from on high can meet them in battle. As Melanchthon said, "Old Adam is too strong for young Melanchthon." Yet he boldly withstood Giant Pope and Giant Pagan, the powers of Rome.

3. **"WAXING FAINT."** Even the greatest saints of God have at times their fainting fits, and are then in danger of Giant Despair and Giant Maul. Many are the calls in the Bible not to faint, "He giveth power to the faint" (Isa. 40. 29). We read of Jacob (Gen. 45. 26), Daniel (8. 27), Jonah (2. 7), and others fainting. But the Lord told us we ought always to pray and *not to faint* (Luke 18. 1). If we faint in the day of adversity our strength is small (Prov. 24. 10). So let us say with the apostle, "As we have received mercy *we faint not*" (II Cor. 4. 1) and remember we shall reap *if we faint not* (Gal. 6. 9). See also Heb. 12. 3 and 5).

4. **EACH AGE HAS ITS TEMPTATIONS.** David met Goliath in his youth. He met Ishbi-benob in his middle age. So there are dangers for youth and there are dangers

for full manhood and dangers for old age. The believer, till he lands on the eternal shore, is never beyond temptation nor out of danger from the assault of giants.

5. **ABISHAI TO THE RESCUE.** Abishai was the son of Zeruah, David's sister and therefore his nephew. This young man came to the rescue of his Royal Uncle and saved his life. It is the privilege of those who are strong to help the weak (Rom. 15. 1). There are times when all of us need help, hence the great value of Christian fellowship. A Christian should not walk alone. "Two" we read in Ecc. 4. 9 are better than one, "For if they fall the one will lift up his fellow, but woe to him that is alone when he falleth for he hath not another to help him up." And "if one prevail against him two shall withstand him." This was David's case when Abishai came to his help. A brother is born for adversity.

6. **DAVID NOT TO GO TO BATTLE AGAIN.** There comes a time when the servant of God must give way to the younger. It is good when he has grace to see the time has come and to do it gracefully. Often that time is hastened by failure as in David's case. Privileges are lost by sin that can never be recovered. May our bow abide in strength because of purity of heart maintained.

7. **A RACE OF HEROES.** Giant slayers (vv. 18-22). What a grand thing is a godly seed, a race of mighty men of God who generation after generation supply warriors for God. There are such noble families in our land. The Lord add to their number.

V. Application.

Keep the heart's life pure that we may not wax faint in battle.

Be ready to go to the help of a fallen or fainting brother.

Pray for grace for every age till the race is won, the fight fought.

STORY 24

The Well of Bethlehem

A STORY OF DAVID'S MIGHTY MEN.

Read II Samuel 23. 13-17 and I Chron. 11. 15-19.

I. Text. " Shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy ? " (I Chron. 11. 19).

II. The Main Lesson.

1. A STORY OF DEVOTION. These three brave men went in jeopardy of their lives to satisfy the desire of their beloved leader David, for a drink of the water from the well of Bethlehem.

2. A SELF DENYING ACTION. David refused to drink the water that had cost them so much to get for him. He poured it out before the Lord saying, " Is it not the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives ? " (II Sam. 23. 17), and " Shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy ? " (I Chron. 11. 19).

3. A REMARKABLE SIMILE. " Drinking blood " was afterwards used by the Lord Jesus as a simile of the faith of those who recognize that their salvation was purchased at the cost of His life Blood shed for them (John 6. 53, 54).

III. The Story Told (II Samuel 23. 13-17).

vv. 13-14. *David sees the Philistines in possession of Bethlehem, his native town.* " Three of the thirty chiefs (of David's mighty men), went down and came to David in the harvest time unto the cave of Adullam : and the troop of the Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephaim. And David was then in an hold and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem."

v. 15. *David expresses a longing for some water from the well at the gate of Bethlehem.* " And David longed and said, Oh that one would give me a drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate !"

v. 16. *Three of his men break through the Philistines and fetch it to David.* “And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David ”

v. 16. *He will not drink it but pours it out to the Lord.* “Nevertheless he would not drink thereof but poured it out unto the Lord.”

v. 17. *He likens the water to their blood.* “And he said, Be it far from me O Lord, that I should do this, is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mighty men.”

I Chron. 11. 19. *The other account of David's words.* “David said, My God, forbid it me that I should do this thing. Shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? for with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it.”

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. BETHLEHEM. This town, that has become a household and loved name in all Christian homes, as the birthplace of our Lord, is first mentioned in Genesis 35. 19, “Rachel died and was buried in the way to Ephrath which is Beth-lehem.” It means “The House of Bread.” It was possibly built by Ephrathah, the father of Bethlehem and called after both, “Bethlehem Ephrathah” in the famous prophecy in Micah 5. 2, of the birth of Him “whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting.” David is described as “the son of that Ephrathite of Beth-lehem Judah” (I Sam. 17. 12). It was the scene of Ruth's romance and of Samuel anointing Saul to be king (I Sam. 16. 4). It was the birthplace of David and of Great David's greater Son.

“Once in Royal David's city
 Stood a lowly cattle shed
 Where a mother laid her baby
 With a manger for its bed.”

2. **THE MIGHTY MEN OF DAVID AND THEIR EXPLOITS.** The three who did this great deed were: **JASHOBEAM**, a Hachmonite (I Chron. 11. 11) (the same as Adino the Eznite (II Sam. 23. 8). **ELEAZAR**, the son of Dodo and **SHAMMAH**, the son of Agee. They had other exploits to their account as we see from II Sam. 23. 8-12. **JASHOBEAM** (Adino) slew 800 (or 300, see I Chron. 11. 11), at one time with his spear. **ELEAZAR** smote the Philistines till his hand clave unto the sword and **SHAMMAH** defended a piece of ground full of lentils (or barley) against the troop of the Philistines and turned the tide of battle. Such splendid men had David made out of those who came to him to the cave of Adullam; all in distress, in debt or discontented (I Sam. 22.2).

3. **THE DARING OF DEVOTION.** Love is strong as death. Men and women moved by love have dared everything and willingly yielded their lives out of devotion to the object of their love. These brave men defied the whole army of the Philistines. Three of them broke through the ranks and while two held the enemy at bay, the other drew the precious water for David and brought it back unspilled to him. Such is the devotion that thousands have yielded to Christ, not counting their lives dear unto themselves for love of Him.

4. **DAVID'S GRACEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THEIR ACTION.** It would have been unbecoming of him to quench his thirst at such a cost to them. He could not appear so selfish. So he poured it out as a drink offering to the Lord. He felt to take it would be like drinking their blood.

5. **"DRINKING BLOOD."** When David likened the water these men brought him from the well of Bethlehem to their blood, he used words exactly similar to those used by the Lord at the Supper in the upper room. "For this is My Blood" (Matt. 26. 28). The remission of sins was procured for us by His shedding of blood, and so the "cup" of the New Covenant so full of blessing for us was the "Blood" of the New Covenant, it had cost Him His life blood to bring that cup of blessing to us. The same

language is found in John 6. 53, Jesus said, " Except ye . . . drink His blood ye have no life in you." David knowing the water had cost them the risk of life said, " Shall I drink the blood of these men ? " and the Lord Jesus probably having this incident in mind says in effect, This water of life I bring you cost my blood—but there is no other way of life. " Except ye drink His blood," you cannot have life. So faith receives the blood-bought water of life—thus " drinking His blood." The eating or drinking of blood in a literal sense was expressly forbidden (Lev. 7. 26-27).

V. Application.

Let us yield ourselves and all we have in true devotion to Him who redeemed us by His own blood.

Let us understand the great mystery of drinking His blood. Faith appropriated all His death meant to its own need.

Instances of Devotion.

David's Mighty Men,	..	..	..	As Above
Ruth to Naomi,	..	..	..	Ruth 1. 16
Ittai the Gittite to David,	..	..	..	2 Sam. 15. 21
Jonathan to David,	..	..	..	1 Sam. 18. 1
The Lord Jesus,	..	..	..	John 13. 1; Gal. 2. 20

Love

Is Strong as Death,	..	..	..	S. of S. 8. 6
Casts Out all Fear,	..	..	..	1 John 4. 18
Hides a Multitude of Sins,	..	..	..	Jas. 5. 20
Many Waters cannot Quench,	..	..	..	S. of S. 8. 7
Better than Wine,	..	..	..	S. of S. 1. 2 ; 4. 10
Suffers Long and is Kind—Never Faileth,				1 Cor. 13. 4, 8

STORY No. 25

The Disobedient Prophet

Read I. KINGS 13. 1-32.

I. Text. “ He laid his carcase in his own grave and they mourned over him saying, Alas, my brother ! ” (v. 30).

II. The Main Lesson. The Man of God out of Judah lost his life by disobedience. He went back with the old prophet in Bethel and ate and drank with him contrary to the express charge of the Lord.

The old prophet lied to him pretending a further word from the Lord.

When we have the word from the Lord we must not listen to the word of man however pious it may sound.

III. The Story Told (I. Kings 13. 1-32). Jeroboam the first king over the separated ten tribes had set up two altars, one in Bethel and one in Dan (12. 29), Jeroboam himself, presuming to act as a priest, offered incense upon them (32).

v. 1-6. *The unnamed Man of God out of Judah denounces judgment against the altar which is rent before the King's eyes.* Behold there came a man of God out of Judah by the Word of the Lord unto Bethel, and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. And he cried, O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord, Behold a child shall be born unto the House of David, Josiah by name and upon thee shall he offer the priests and men's bones. Behold the altar shall be rent and the ashes poured out.

When King Jeroboam heard it he put forth his hand saying, Lay hold of him, and his hand dried up so that he could not pull it in again.

The altar also was rent and the ashes poured out.

v. 6. *The King entreats that his hand may be restored. It was in answer to prayer.* The King said, Intreat now the

face of the Lord thy God that my hand may be restored. And the man of God besought the Lord and the King's hand was restored him again.

vv. 7-10. *The King invites the man of God home and he refuses.* The King said, Come home with me and refresh thyself and I will give thee a reward. And the man of God said, If thou wilt give me half thine house I will not go in with thee for so it was charged me by the Word of the Lord saying, Eat no bread nor drink water. So he went another way and returned not by the way he came to Beth-el.

v. 11. *An old prophet rides after him and finds him sitting under an oak.* "Now there dwelt an old prophet in Bethel and he went after the man of God and found him sitting under an oak and said, Art thou the man of God that camest from Judah, and he said, I am."

v. 15. *He urges him to come and eat bread and is told he may not.* "Then he said, Come home with me and eat bread. And he said, I may not, for it was said to me by the Word of the Lord thou shalt eat no bread nor drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that thou camest."

vv. 18-19. *The old prophet lies to him and brings him back.* "He said unto him, I am a prophet also as thou art, and an angel spake unto me saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house that he may eat bread and drink water. But he lied unto him."

So he went back and did eat bread and drank water."

vv. 20-22. *As they sat at the table the Word of the Lord came to the old prophet telling the man of God because he had been disobedient his carcase would not come unto the sepulchre of his fathers.* "And it came to pass as they sat at the table the Word of the Lord came unto the prophet that brought him back and he cried to the man of God, Thus saith the Lord, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord and camest back and hast eaten bread and drunk water thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers."

v. 23-26. *He goes on his way and a lion meets him and slays him, the ass and the lion standing by the body.* “After he had eaten and drunk he saddled for him the ass and when he was gone a lion met him by the way and slew him and his carcass was cast in the way and the ass stood by it, the lion also stood by the carcass, and men passed by and saw and when the prophet that brought him back heard thereof he said, It is the man of God who was disobedient.”

v. 28. *He goes to bring back the body and buries it in his own grave and mourns, Alas, my brother!* “And he went and found his carcass cast in the way and the ass and the lion standing by, the lion had not eaten the carcass nor torn the ass, and the prophet took up the carcass and laid it in his own grave and they mourned over him saying, Alas, my brother!”

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. **SCRIPTURE EXAMPLES.** Not all men of God who are disobedient are cut off in this way. This is well for us all.

But God chooses examples for instruction and warning as in this case.

They are recorded that we may learn the importance of obedience and the folly of being turned by others from the path of duty.

2. **LIFE AND SERVICE A PRIVILEGE.** It does not mean that because this man of God was cut off in this untimely way that his soul was lost, that great issue was decided on quite other grounds. As a real man of God he would not be lost, but life and service are great privileges and may be forfeited by disobedience. Many a servant of God has been disapproved for this cause (I. Cor. 9. 27) as Paul feared, lest he should be, and set aside from service, or even die (I. Cor. 11. 30).

Others have become dead branches bearing no fruit and taken away from service, cast forth as a branch and withered (John 15. 6). Let us seek the grace of continuance in faithfulness and obedience.

3. SIGNAL HONOUR MUST NOT LEAD A MAN OF GOD TO BE CARELESS. This man of God used so strikingly in rebuking Jeroboam the King who made Israel to sin, was because of his powerful testimony at once courted by the King and then by the old lying prophet. It is commonly so, men much used are flattered and invited by the world and the lifeless professors. They need to watch and pray and keep in the path of separation. The world's kisses are more dangerous than its kicks.

4. THE WILL OF GOD TRULY KNOWN MUST NEVER BE QUESTIONED. The man of God's instructions were definite and precise. He should have turned a deaf ear to all seductions. Is God variable and changeable saying, "Yea," "Nay."?

The Apostle disclaimed such conduct, a wavering and uncertain sound. "When I therefore was thus minded did I use lightness? that with me there should be Yea, Yea, and Nay, Nay, but as God is true our word toward you was not Yea and Nay." (II. Cor. 1. 17-18). So God is True, with Him is no variableness. Knowing His Will let us abide in it.

5. LYING PROPHETS ARE A DANGER. Such have lost all fear of God and sense of responsibility. They are a great snare to the younger who may, as in this case, be ruined by their deceit and led astray by their words.

Had this old prophet been faithful God might have used him to rebuke Jeroboam, but God who knows the heart saw he was a liar and set him aside for the younger man of God from Judah.

Beware of old prophets who have lost their spirituality and are dead unfruitful branches, they are often glib in lying.

6. LOOKING AND TURNING BACK is always dangerous. "Let thine eyes look straight on."

This is why the Lord bade His disciples when He sent them on their trial journey. "Salute no man by the way," for such greetings often turn to treatings, and eating and

drinking take the place of diligent pressing on in service. Jesus said, "No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God" (Luke 9. 62). "Remember Lot's wife."

There are sad instances of those who went back : John Mark (Acts 13. 13) and Demas (II. Tim. 4. 10) for examples.

7. ALAS, MY BROTHER ! This pitiful wail after the evil had been done is contemptible.

As the foolish old prophet carried the dead body of the one he had deceived to his own grave he must have felt remorse and shame at his wicked lying.

Sentimental lamentation as "Alas, my Brother !" does not restore the dead to life nor undo the evil done.

Nor does a wish to be buried by him avoid the judgment that will inevitably follow such a crime.

So one Sinner, and that an old prophet, destroyeth much good.

V. Application.

Let us keep to the narrow way of Obedience.

Let us pay no heed to those who would turn us aside by plausible lying.

Let us beware of being liars lest we destroy others.

Some Liars.

Jacob,	..	..	..	Gen. 27. 19
Sarah,	..	..	..	Gen. 18. 15
The Amalekite,	..	..	..	2 Sam. 1. 6
Gehazi,	..	..	..	2 Kings 5. 25
The Old Prophet,		..	..	As above
Samson,	..	..	..	Judges 16.10
Ananias and Sapphira,	..	..	..	Acts 5. 3

STORY 26

A Human Tigress—Jezebel

Read I KINGS 16. 31-33; 18. 4, 13 and 19; 19. 1-3; 21. 5-25;
and II. KINGS 9. 30-37.

I. **Text.** “The dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel and there shall be none to bury her.” (II. Kings 9. 10).

II. **Main Lesson.** Jezebel is perhaps the worst female character in the Bible. The daughter of a heathen king, she married Ahab, King of Israel, and stirred him up to work wickedness.

Her cruelty has become proverbial. She may be taken as a type of the wicked woman who opposes the worship of God, the apostate Church that comes under His judgment. As such she is referred to in Rev. 2. 20, “Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel which calleth herself a prophetess to teach and seduce My servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.”

III. The Story of Jezebel told in Chapters.

Chapter I. *She marries Ahab and incites him to idolatry.*

16. 31-33. “And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord and took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal and worshipped him.”

Chapter II. *She slays all the prophets of the Lord.*

18. 4. “It was so when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord that Obadiah took an hundred prophets and hid them by fifty in a cave and fed them with bread and water.”

v. 19. *Elijah gathers the prophets of Baal to Carmel.*
“Send and gather to me . . . the prophets of Baal,

four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves, four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table."

(For the scene on Carmel, see "70 Best Bible Stories," pages 97-100. Story 25.)

Chapter III. *Jezebel threatens Elijah's life.*

19. 1-3. "And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done . . . Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me and more also if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow at this time."

Chapter IV. *She incites Ahab to kill Naboth and take the vineyard.*

21. 5-14. "But Jezebel came to Ahab and said, Why is thy spirit so sad that thou eatest no bread?"

"And he said, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite and said, Give me thy vineyard for money or else if it please thee I will give thee another for it, and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard.

"And Jezebel said, Dost thou govern Israel? Arise and eat and be merry. I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth.

"So she wrote letters in Ahab's name. Proclaim a fast and set Naboth on high, and set two men to bear witness against him; thou didst blaspheme God and the king, and then carry him out and stone him.

"They did so, Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned and is dead."

Chapter V. *Elijah is sent to foretell her doom.*

vv. 17-25. "And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite. Arise go down to meet Ahab, behold he is in the vineyard of Naboth, he is gone down to possess it.

"Thou shalt speak unto him . . . In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.

"And of Jezebel also spake the Lord, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel."

Chapter VI. *The end of Jezebel at the hands of Jehu, the Son of Jehoshaphat, the Son of Nimshi. The dogs eat her body.*

II. Kings 9. 30. "When Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it and she painted her face and tired her head and looked out at a window, and as Jehu entered in at the gate she said, Had Zimri peace who slew his master ?

"And he lifted up his face to the window and said, Who is on my side ? Who ? And there looked out to him two or three eunuchs and he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down and he trod her under foot.

"And when he was come in, he did eat and drink, and said, Go see now this cursed woman and bury her, for she is a king's daughter, and they went to bury her, but they found no more of her than her skull and the feet and the palms of her hands."

vv. 36-37. *The Word of the Lord fulfilled.* "They came and told him and he said, This is the word of the Lord by His servant Elijah, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel, and the carcase of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the gate of the field in the portion of Jezreel, so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel."

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. AHAB'S SIN IN MARRYING A HEATHEN PRINCESS.

The law (Deut. 7. 3) expressly forbade marriage with the heathen nations for the very reason that came to pass in Ahab's case. "They will turn thy son from following Me that they may serve other gods." Ahab became a worshipper of Baal, the god of the Zidonians. Jezebel was the daughter of the king of the Zidonians, Ethbaal. Even Solomon was turned away from God to idolatry by outlandish women (Neh. 13. 26) Let the believer heed the warning of II. Corinthians 6. 14 and not be unequally yoked with unbelievers.

2. THE CRUELTY OF THE HEATHEN. It is solemnly true that "the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty" (Ps. 74. 20).

This "cursed woman," though a king's daughter, was no exception.

It is the gracious influence and words of Christ down the ages that has taught men to love one another.

Where there is no restraining grace the natural man "breathes out cruelty" (Ps. 27. 12). Men are "hateful and hating one another" (Titus 3. 3).

This Jezebel had slain all the prophets of the Lord that she could lay hands on and sought to slay Elijah.

3. THE WICKED ARE OFTEN VERY RELIGIOUS. It was so with Jezebel. She kept no less than 850 of Baal's priests and prophets, allowing them to eat at her table.

It is commonly so. Let anyone read the history of the cruellest and most wicked men in history and it will be found that they were exceedingly pious in their religion and as superstitious as the heathen. Think of the gorgeous ritual of Rome and the immorality of the Popes and their bloodthirsty murder and torture of the saints; of the cruelty of Philip II., the king of Spain who despatched the great Armada, and his piety and blinded superstition, and many another who divorced morality from religion.

Let us pray that our faith in Christ may be seen in our doing good unto all men.

4. GOD IS THE AVENGER OF HIS PEOPLE. Ahab and Jezebel may murder Naboth, but there is One above kings who will require it at their hands.

And not only of the Great and Powerful, but of all of us.

"That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter because that the Lord is the avenger of all such as we also have forewarned you" (I. Thess. 4. 6).

(For further teaching on this, see Story No. 24, "Thumbs and Toes cut off," p. 113, in "70 Familiar Bible Stories").

5. WOMEN WHO STIR UP MEN TO EVIL. (I. Kings 21. 25). "Whom Jezebel his wife stirred up." Women who should be the gentlest and most loving of God's creatures, when they are evil, are perhaps the most depraved. How many men have become godless, worldly, and even wicked under

the influence of a wife whom they chose for her outside appearance and found to be utterly worthless and provocative.

6. PAINTED FACES. Jezebel is the first woman of whom we read, "She painted her face" (9. 30). It is later described as the attire of a harlot (Prov. 7. 10). "For whom thou paintedst thine eyes and deckest thyself with ornaments" (Ezekiel 23. 40), and in Jer. 4. 30, "Though thou rentest thy face with painting, in vain shall thou make thyself fair."

From these scriptures we see that this custom is heathenish and disapproved of God. It is altogether unbecoming for any "woman professing godliness" (1 Tim. 2. 10) such are to "adorn themselves in modest apparel."

True beauty is never artificial.

7. JEZEBEL COULD REBUKE JEHU. "Had Zimri peace who slew his master." What excellent morality, but she might have turned it thus, "Shall Jezebel have peace who slew Naboth."

It is common for us to see the glaring faults of others and overlook our own. We remember our Lord's words about the beam in our eye and the mote in the brother's.

8. THE LORD'S WORD CAME TRUE. Ahab had died and the dogs had licked his blood (1. Kings 22. 38) as God had said, and now the royal widow's turn came. Her fate was worse. She was eaten of the dogs.

No one arranged or even foresaw it, but while Jehu was eating and drinking, the word of the Lord was being fulfilled on the fatal plot of ground stolen from Naboth.

All God's word comes true. Let the sinner beware. The Bible works out right every time.

V. Application.

Let us beware of Jezebels.

Let us take warning from her fate.

Let us beware of that Apostate Church of which she is a type (Rev. 2. 20).

Seven Sneezes—or Signs of Life

THE RAISING OF THE SHUNAMMITE'S SON.

Read II. KINGS 4. 18-37.

I. **Text.** “ The child sneezed seven times and the child opened his eyes ” (35).

II. **The Main Lesson.** The lesson here is of how to raise the dead, for the Servant of God is sent “ to raise the dead ” (Matt. 10. 8) not the physically dead but the spiritually dead by the preaching of the Gospel (see John 5. 25). The failure of the staff (31) in Gehazi's hand shews how it is not to be done. The seven sneezes are the first signs of life.

An aged Servant of God was told that a boy had professed to come to Christ and be saved. He thought for a moment and then asked, “ *Has he sneezed seven times ?* ”

If there is the gift of Eternal Life the evidences of it will soon be seen.

III. The Story Told.

Elisha having been provided by the Shunammite with a prophet's chamber rewarded her by the gift of a son.

The son one day died from sun-stroke and was laid upon the prophet's bed while the mother seeks for Elisha.

vv. 25-26. *Elisha sees her coming and bids his servant Gehazi enquire if it is well.* “ The Man of God saw her afar off and said to Gehazi his servant, Behold yonder is that Shunammite. Run now I pray thee to meet her and say, Is it well with thee ? is it well with thy husband ? is it well with thy child ? And she answered, It is well.”

v. 27. *She takes Elisha by the feet. He is ignorant of her trouble.* “ When she came to the man of God to the hill (Carmel) she caught him by the feet, but Gehazi came to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone, for her soul is vexed within her and the Lord hath hid it from me and hath not told me.”

v. 28. *She reveals her trouble.* “ Then she said, Did I desire a son of my Lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me?”

v. 29 *Gehazi is sent to lay Elisha's staff on the child's face.* “ Then said he to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins and take my staff in thine hand and lay my staff upon the face of the child.”

v. 30. *The mother refuses to leave Elisha.* “ And the mother of the child said, As the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth I will not leave thee, and he arose and followed her.”

v. 31. *Gehazi's Mission fails.* “ And Gehazi passed on before them and laid the staff upon the face of the child but there was neither voice nor hearing, wherefore he went again to meet him and told him, The child is not awaked.”

vv. 32-34. *Elisha stretches himself upon the child.* “ When Elisha was come into the house the child was dead and laid upon his bed. He went in therefore and shut the door and prayed unto the Lord.

And he went up and lay upon the child and put his mouth upon his mouth and his eyes upon his eyes and his hands upon his hands, and he stretched himself upon the child and the flesh of the child waxed warm.”

v. 35. *He repeats it and the child sneezes and opens his eyes.* “ Then he returned and walked in the house to and fro and went up and stretched himself upon him and the child sneezed seven times and the child opened his eyes.”

vv. 36-37. *He calls the mother and gives her child alive.* “ He called Gehazi and said, Call the Shunammite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him he said, Take up thy child. Then she went in and fell at his feet and bowed herself to the ground and took up her son and went out.”

IV. Instances of Raising the Dead.

There are in the Scriptures only seven cases of the dead being raised. (The case in II. Kings 13. 21. is not a case

in point as we are not told the man was dead—revivals of this kind are not uncommon).

They are :—

- (i) *Elijah raising the Widow's Son* (I. Kings 17. 21-23).
- (ii) *Elisha raising the Shunammite's Son* (II. Kings 4. 35).
- (iii) *The Lord raises the Daughter of Jairus* (Matt. 9. 25).
- (iv) *The Lord raises the Widow of Nain's Son* (Luke 7. 14).
- (v) *The Lord raises Lazarus* (John 11. 43.)
- (vi) *Peter raises Dorcas (Tabitha)* (Acts 9. 40).
- (vii) *Paul raises Eutychus* (Acts 20. 10).

It will be observed that there are two cases in the Old Testament; three in the Life of our Lord (recorded—probably more Luke 7. 22), and two in the New Testament.

No case has ever been substantiated since.

V. Other Lessons from the Stories.

1. A SEARCHING QUESTION. Is it well with thee? Is it well with the husband? Is it well with the child?

Gehazi while deliberately deceiving Naaman and his master Elisha replied to Naaman's question "Is all well?" (II. Kings 5. 21) with the lie, "All is well."

Many are thus deceiving themselves. Gehazi went out from the prophet's presence "a leper as white as snow."

2. DEATH is never in Scripture an end of existence but a ceasing to function and a change of sphere. So spiritual death is the spirit, that was made for communion with God, ceasing to function so that the unregenerate are "dead towards God," "dead in trespasses and sins" and "dead while they live."

The result of Gospel preaching in the power of the Spirit is to call the dead to life, even eternal life.

3. GEHAZI'S FAILURE. Like the disciples who could not cast out the evil spirit from the boy, this servant of the prophet failed to bring the child to life. "Why could we not cast him out?" was the disciple's word. It was because of their unbelief. "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

Gehazis never have the power of God resting upon them and are therefore never dead-raisers.

4. THE STAFF LAID ON THE CHILD. This may represent ceremonial, it never raises the dead, or formality, or pretentious claims to priesthood or other Staff-powers.

How much religion there is that leaves people dead toward God. Many a gilded staff, carried in grand procession by some alleged servant of God has proved as ineffective as Elisha's staff in the hand of the wretched Gehazi.

5. HOW THE DEAD ARE RAISED. Elisha as God's prophet is a type of Him who is the Great Prophet of Our God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is only by vital contact with Him that the dead are raised.

The action of Elisha in putting his mouth to the child's mouth, his eyes to his eyes, and his hands to his hands expresses graphically the thought of identification, and it is by the sinner's identification with Christ that he receives life. Life is found only in Christ. "He that hath the Son hath life" (1 John 5. 12).

6. THE SEVEN SNEEZES—OR SIGNS OF LIFE. How welcome to Elisha (and to the mother if she was listening to all that went on in that upper room) were those seven sneezes.

They evidenced the return of life. Often profession of life is not followed by the signs of life.

The Bible never uses the expression "we know we are saved" (though this is of course true) but "*we know that we have passed out of death into life.*" And the evidences of that new life are set forth in the Epistle of John. Let us recount seven of them:—

(a) *Obedience.* Hereby we know if we keep His commandments (1 John 2. 3-5).

(b) *Walking in Light.* If we walk in the light we have fellowship (1. 7).

(c) *Doing Righteousness.* "Every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him" (2. 29).

(d) *Ceasing to Live in Sin.* “ Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin ” (3. 9).

(e) *Love of the Brethren.* “ We know that we have passed from death unto life because we loved the brethren ” (3. 14 ; 4. 7).

(f) *The Witness of the Spirit* (3. 24 ; 4. 13 ; 5. 10 ; Rom. 8. 9 and 16). “ Because He hath given us of His Spirit.”

(g) *Overcoming the World.* “ Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world ” (5. 4).

These are Seven Loud Sneezes that tell of life.

VI. Application.

Let us pray as workers that we may have power to raise the dead.

Let us not rely upon a “ Staff ” or any other formality or instrumentality.

Let us manifest in our lives and look for in others, the evidences of life—the Seven Sneezes that none of the dead can give.

Life in Christ.

Life more Abundant,	..	..	..	..	John 10. 10
Life that is Life Indeed,	..	..	..	..	1 Tim. 6. 19, R.V.
Eternal Life,	..	..	..	..	John 3. 16
Newness of Life,	..	..	..	..	Rom. 6. 4
The Life of God,	..	..	..	..	Eph. 4. 18
Life Hidden in Christ,	..	..	..	..	Col. 3. 3
The Grace of Life,	..	..	..	..	1 Peter 3. 7
The Crown of Life,	..	..	..	..	Rev. 2. 10
The Life of Faith,	..	..	..	..	Gal. 2. 20
The Divine Nature,	..	..	..	..	2 Peter 1. 4

STORY 28

The Iron that did Swim

Read II. KINGS 6. 1-7.

I Text. “ Where fell it ? And he shewed him the place. And he cut down a stick and cast it in thither, and the iron did swim.”

II. Main Lesson.

The story may be used as a Parable. The lost axe head representing lost power for service.

Where fell it ? Suggests an enquiry as to the occasion or reason of lost efficiency.

The branch cut down may be likened to the truth of the cross, to restore the lost power and the command, “ Take it up to thee ” to the hand of faith stretched out to lay hold of the strength that is found in Christ.

III. The Story Told.

vv. 1-2. Some sons of the prophets complain to Elisha of the straitness of their dwelling and ask permission to seek a better place. “ And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us. Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan and take thence every man a beam and let us make us a place there where we may dwell. And he answered, Go ye.”

vv. 3-4. They ask Elisha to go with them. “ And one said, Be content, I pray thee, to go with thy servants. And he answered, I will go. So he went with them.”

vv. 4-5. They start to cut wood when one loses his axe head in the water and complains that it was borrowed. “ And when they came to Jordan they cut down wood, but as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water, and he cried and said, Alas, Master, for it was borrowed.”

v. 6. *Elisha recovers it by casting in a stick—the iron did swim.* “ And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he shewed him the place. And he cut down a stick and cast it in hither; and the iron did swim.”

v. 7. *Elisha bids him take it up.* “ Therefore said he, Take it up to thee. And he put out his hand and took it.”

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. **THE DESIRE TO EXTEND** (vv. 1-2). It is a good sign when the sons of the prophets desire to step out and enlarge their borders. It is for young men to do this; to carry the work forward. Not to be satisfied with what the previous generation did, nor their methods, but to look out for new fields of service and fresh methods to reach the masses. But without the Gospel and the Power of God all will be useless.

See, too, that you ask the Master to go with you (v. 3.)

2. **WORKING WITH BORROWED TOOLS** is sure to be a failure.

To copy others, to use other people's addresses, a kind of stealing condemned in Jeremiah 23. 30. “ Behold I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal My words, everyone from his neighbour.”

Seek to dig out the gold of truth for yourself from the mine of God's Word.

To affect other people's ways and methods is folly, for your greatest gift of your personality—nobody else has this unique gift—do not spoil your chief asset.

3. **THE AXE HEAD LOST.** It is a solemn mockery to attempt to serve God without the power of God. For the Gospel is not in word but in power, in much assurance, and in the Holy Ghost. As the Apostle declared, “ I will come to you shortly and will know not the speech of them that are puffed up but the power ” (1 Cor. 4. 19).

Many who still continue to work nominally for God are ‘ powerless ’—the axe head, the sharp effective part of the instrument has been lost. It has fallen from the shaft that held it.

What a useless thing is an axe-shaft without a blade !

4. WHERE FELL IT ? This is the question that such should ask themselves. Where did I lose my power in service ?

(a) *Is there some secret sin, unjudged and unforsaken, that accounts for it ?*

If so, there will be no power, no conviction or cut, for the blade has fallen from the shaft.

(b) *Is there a neglect of communion with God ?* Is the worker 'on his own,' trusting in his own skill, experience, or gift of speech. It is in vain. Work for Christ cannot be done without Christ. Did He not warn us to abide in Him, for He added, "Without Me you can do nothing."

(c) *Is there some quarrel or bitterness of heart with another ?* "First go and be reconciled" is the Lord's command. It is where brethren dwell together in harmony that God commands the blessing (Ps. 133. 1-3).

(d) *Is there a withholding of what is due to the Lord ?* Shall a man rob God ? "Bring ye all your tithes unto the storehouse and prove Me now, saith the Lord, if I will not open the windows of Heaven and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3. 10).

(e) *Are we feeding on stale manna ?* The same old thing again and again with no fresh springs, no living message from Heaven for the new occasion. Remember the manna corrupted if kept and was not fit for food.

A fresh message should be got for each fresh occasion. True it may be 'things old,' but it must be with 'new life and power.'

(f) *Is the world ensnaring the soul and thus robbing us of the Heavenly mind and spiritual character ?*

5. HE CUT DOWN A STICK—tree or branch. The term "Branch" is applied to Christ in the following passages :

Isa. 4. 2 "In that day shall the Branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious."

Jer. 23. 5. "I will raise unto David a Righteous Branch and a king shall reign . . . this is His name, The Lord our Righteousness."

Jer. 33. 15. "I will cause the Branch of Righteousness to grow unto David and He shall execute judgment and righteousness.

Zech. 3. 8. "Behold I will bring forth My Servant the Branch."

Zech. 6. 12. "Behold the Man whose name is the Branch."

These have been recognized as agreeing with the Four Gospels.

Matthew—A Righteous Branch, a *King*.

Luke—*The Man* whose name is the Branch.

Mark—Behold *My Servant* the Branch.

John—The Branch. His name is *Jehovah*.

It was this Holy One, the Branch, both man and God, servant and King, who was cut down. "Cut off from the land of the living" for us and for our sins.

6. HE CAST IT THITHER. The value of the death of Christ apprehended by faith and applied to our powerless state will cause the iron to swim. That is the lost power to return to us.

The death of Christ so apprehended means :—

(i.) *Our death to sin*. "I have been crucified with Christ." Let the worker reckon himself dead indeed unto sin and the power of His Risen Lord will be known.

(ii.) *Our forgiveness for past failure*. There is remission through the shedding of the blood. Let us wash and be clean that we may be strong.

He that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.

(iii.) *Our constraining power for future service*. Only as the dying love of Christ is realised is the believer constrained thereby, not to live unto himself, but to Him.

(iv.) *Our separation from the world*. It is by the Cross that we are crucified to the world and the world to us (Gal. 6. 14).

Let us then glory in the Cross and our lost power will be recovered.

7. TAKE IT TO THEE. There must be appropriating faith. Take it thee, to thyself, to thine own case. It is not enough to know these things, they must be laid hold of and acted upon. Put out then the hand of faith and take up the lost axe head and recover the power for service.

V. Application.

Beware of coming in in the Lord's service without the power of the Spirit.

Let the backslider return to the Cross, there to recover what he has lost.

Workers Who had No Power.

Gehazi,	2 Kings 4. 31
Samson,	Judges 16. 20
The Disciples and the Lunatic Boy, ..	Mark 9. 28
The Sons of Sceva,	Acts 19. 14
The Formalist,	2 Tim. 3. 5
The Elocutionist,	1 Cor. 4. 19
The Wise of this World,	1 Cor. 2. 5
The Man who did not Count the Cost,	Luke 14. 29
The Flesh-Minder,	Rom. 8. 7-8

The Siege of Dothan—An Angel Host

Read II. Kings 6. 8-23.

I. Text. “ The Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw : and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha ” (v. 17).

II. The Main Lesson.

“ The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him and delivereth them ” (Ps. 34. 7)

The Safety of the Believer is figured in this remarkable vision. Though unseen he is surrounded as was Elisha by God’s protecting grace. Angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation (Heb. 1. 14).

III. The Story Told (II. Kings 6. 8-23).

The King of Syria warring against Israel is frustrated by the knowledge of his plans and exposure of them to King Jehoram of Israel by Elisha who “ telleth the King of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bed-chamber ” (12). The King of Syria bids them spy out where Elisha is. They bring him word that he is in Dothan.

v. 14. *The King of Syria sends a great host to surround Dothan and capture Elisha.* “ Therefore sent he thither horses and chariots and a great host and they came by night and compassed the city about.”

v. 15. *Elisha’s servant rising early discovers it and tells his master.* “ And when the servant of the Man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master ! how shall we do ? ”

v. 16. *Elisha replies there are more with us than with them.* “ And he answered, Fear not : for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.”

v. 17. *Elisha prays for the young man's eyes to be opened and he sees the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round Elisha.* "And Elisha prayed and said, Lord I pray open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man: and he saw: and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

v. 18. *Elisha prays for the army to be smitten with blindness and they are.* "And when they came down to him Elisha prayed unto the Lord and said, Smite this people I pray Thee with blindness. And He smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha."

vv. 19-20. *Elisha leads them into Samaria.* "And Elisha said, This is not the way, neither is this the city: follow me and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. But he led them to Samaria, and when they were come Elisha said, Lord, open the eyes of these men that they may see. And the Lord opened their eyes and they saw; and, behold, they were in the midst of Samaria."

vv. 21-23. *The King of Israel would smite them, but Elisha forbids and bids him feed them and send them home.* "And the King of Israel said, My father, shall I smite them? and he answered, Wouldst thou smite those whom thou hast not taken captive? Set bread and water before them that they may eat and drink and go to their master.

And he prepared great provision and sent them away to their master. So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel."

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. ELISHA'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE KING OF SYRIA'S PLANS may serve to remind us of the omniscience of God. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good." Well might the Psalmist ask, "Whether shall I flee from Thy presence?" "Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising, Thou understandest my thought afar off, Thou compasses my path and my lying down and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a

word in my tongue but Lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether ” (Ps. 139. 1-4).

The King of Syria did not know this.

2. NO DEVICES OF THE ENEMY AVAIL AGAINST THE LORD'S PEOPLE. “ There are many devices in a man's heart: nevertheless the counsel of the Lord that shall stand ” (Prov. 19. 21).

No weapon formed against His people can prosper. We are not ignorant of the devices of Satan even. So the Believer does not fear.

As long as we are walking in communion with God we shall frustrate all the craft and power of our spiritual foes.

So “ though a host should encamp against me my heart shall not fear ” (Ps. 27. 3).

3. UNSEEN THINGS. There are many invisible realities that we cannot see.

Faith rejoices in “ things unseen ” (Heb. 11. 1).

“ Moses endured as seeing Him who is invisible (Heb. 11. 27).

He is a poor thing who refuses to believe in what he cannot see. The best things and mightiest forces are unseen. Indeed, all the Believer's treasures are unseen. He has an Unseen Saviour and Lord, and an Unseen Father in Heaven. He belongs to an Unseen Church, the body of Christ, he has unseen ministering spirits attending him and he looks forward to a better country unseen as yet.

So Elisha's servant little thought that his master had horses and chariots of fire surrounding him.

4. OPENED EYES. The Lord opened the servant's eyes in answer to prayer. How many have had their eyes opened. Here are some :—

HAGAR had her eyes opened to see a well (Gen. 21. 19).

BALAM had his eyes opened to see the Angel with the sword (Num. 22. 31).

ELISHA'S SERVANT as in our story (v. 17).

THE SYRIAN ARMY as in our story (v. 20).

DAVID—to see wondrous things in God's law (Ps. 119. 18).

THE BLIND MAN in John 9. 7.

THE TWO AT EMMAUS to recognize the Lord (Luke 24. 31).

Let us pray, " Lord, open Thou mine eyes."

5. HORSES AND CHARIOTS OF FIRE. How feeble must the King of Syria's horses and chariots have looked by comparison with these. It is not the only time that these ministering spirits appeared with chariots.

When Elijah went up into Heaven, Elisha had seen " *A chariot and horses of fire* " come to receive him (II. Kings 2. 11). In Ps. 68. 17, we read " The Chariots of God are 20,000 even thousands of Angels " and in Is. 66. 15, " Behold the Lord will come with fire and with His chariots like a whirlwind."

6. SURROUNDED—" round about Elisha." We must not think that Elisha is the only one protected thus. We read of the angels that they are " ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of Salvation." So all the Lord's people are thus attended though not allowed to see these angel attendants.

" As the mountains are round about Jerusalem so the Lord is round about His people " (Ps. 125. 2). They are kept by the Power of God.

7. LOVE TO ENEMIES. When Jehoram would smite the enemies that had been blinded and led by Elisha into Samaria, Elisha bade him feed them and send them home.

Thus anticipating the Lord's words, " If thine enemy hunger, feed him."

It is the most effective way to overcome him. Love is stronger than hate. Had they smitten this army the King of Syria would no doubt have raised another and come again to avenge them, as it was the Syrians came no more into the land of Israel.

V. Application.

The servant of God in the Will of God need never fear. Let him trust in the Lord.

STORY 30

Sennacherib's Army Destroyed

Read II. KINGS 18. 13-16 ; 19. 1-37.

I. Text. "That which thou hast prayed to Me against Sennacherib, king of Assyria, I have heard" (II Kings 19.20).

II. The Main Lesson. The great deliverance wrought for Hezekiah from the mighty Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, teaches us that it is no vain thing to trust in the Lord.

As Hezekiah spread the letter of defiance before the Lord, so let us learn to take our troubles to Him and seek His deliverance, for He has said, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble and I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify Me."

III. The Story Told. II. Kings 18. 13-16.

v. 13. *Sennacherib king of Assyria, takes the fenced cities of Judah. Hezekiah pays him a large sum.* "Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah and took them.

Hezekiah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, That which thou puttest on me will I bear. And the king of Assyria appointed three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the Lord and the king's house and cut the gold from the doors of the temple and gave it to the king of Assyria."

Chap. 19. 1-7. *Sennacherib having sent his Generals, Tartan, Rabsaris, and Rabshakeh against Jerusalem, Hezekiah goes in sackcloth into the house of the Lord and sends to Isaiah the prophet.* "And king Hezekiah rent his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth and went into the house of the Lord and sent Eliakim to Isaiah. Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that are left.

Isaiah said, Be not afraid of the words with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. Behold I will send a blast upon him and he shall return to his own land and fall by the sword in his own land."

vv. 8-13. *Rabshakeh sends an insulting message to Hezekiah.* "So Rabshakeh sent messengers again unto Hezekiah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trusteth deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be delivered unto the hand of the king of Assyria."

vv. 14-19. *Hezekiah spreads the letter before the Lord in the house of the Lord.* "And Hezekiah received the letter and went up into the house of the Lord and spread it before the Lord, and Hezekiah prayed, O Lord God of Israel, which dwellest between the Cherubims, Thou art God, even Thou alone. Bow down Thine ear and hear, open Lord Thine eyes and see and hear the words of Sennacherib which hath sent to reproach the Living God.

Now therefore, O Lord our God, save us that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou are the Lord God, even Thou only."

vv. 20-34. *Isaiah sends the king an encouraging answer.*

"And Isaiah sent to Hezekiah saying, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, That which thou has prayed to Me against Sennacherib I have heard. This is the word that the Lord hath spoken concerning him; The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee and laughed thee to scorn. The daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. Whom hath thou reproached and blasphemed, even against the Holy One of Israel.

But I know thy abode and thy rage against Me. Therefore I will put my hook in thy nose and my bridle in thy lips and turn thee back by the way thou camest.

Therefore, thus saith the Lord, concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city nor shoot an arrow there. I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake and for my servant David's sake."

v. 35. *Sennacherib's army is destroyed by the Angel of the*

Lord. “ And it came to pass that night that the Angel of the Lord went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred and four score and five thousand : and when they arose early in the morning behold they were all dead corpses.”

v. 36. *Sennacherib returns to Nineveh and is murdered there by his sons.* “ So Sennacherib returned and dwelt at Nineveh, and as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword and they escaped into the land of Armenia, and Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.”

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. **JEHOVAH THE ONLY TRUE GOD.** Modernists are never tired of saying that Israel's God was a tribal deity. This is partly ignorance and partly malice. Hezekiah, in spite of the brag of Sennacherib's generals, of what his god Nisroch had done, nevertheless addresses God as He who made the Heavens and who was God (even Thou alone) of all the kingdoms of the earth (15). He prays that all those kingdoms might know “ that Thou art the Lord (Jehovah) God, even Thou only.”

2. **GOD IS NOT MOCKED.** Sennacherib and his generals gave a challenge to God and defied Him. But God, the Living God is not mocked, and this story illustrates the fact that God will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. So the Assyrian king and his generals were humbled and their brag and boast turned to ridicule.

The stately, dignified language of vv. 21-34 is very striking. “ He that sitteth in the Heavens ” has ever laughed at the petty malice of those who have raged against Him (Psalm 2. 4).

Yet His holy scorn is as ever tempered with mercy; v. 29 shews that His anger has no malice in it. Peace and plenty would be restored to them after the lesson learned.

3. **FAITH IN FACE OF TERRIBLE FACTS.** Hezekiah did not hide the fact of the king of Assyria's conquests, v. 17-18.

He had destroyed the nations and their lands and cast their gods into the fire.

But the reason was they were no gods, only wood and stone, the work of their own hands—Hezekiah's God was otherwise. He was The God—the only True God, maker of Heaven, of Sennacherib and Assyria and its generals.

Faith's opportunity is in the day of trouble. Abraham considered his own body as good as dead, but that fact did not hinder his faith—against hope he believed in hope, and so did Hezekiah (Rom. 4. 18-19 R.v.).

4. THE LETTERS SPREAD BEFORE THE LORD. This is the best way to deal with all troublesome letters. Prayer is essentially taking counsel with God—as David did when he went in and sat before the Lord.

The Lord is Our Wonderful Counsellor. Learn to spread your needs and troubles before Him.

5. FOR MINE OWN SAKE AND FOR MY SERVANT DAVID'S SAKE. God has regard to His own glory first. His Holy Name must be vindicated. Then He has regard to His promises and He had covenanted with David. "The sure mercies of David" and this He could not break.

6. "THE ANGEL OF THE LORD" is both the Saviour and the avenger of God's people. We have seen (see "The Mysterious Visitant," pp. 43) that this wonderful being was Our Lord Jesus in His pre-appearances. Here He goes forth in judgment for the avenging of His people (Cp. Revelation 19. 11-16).

7. THE ARMY DESTROYED. Many armies have in past history been destroyed by some sudden calamity or plague. This is no unknown calamity. The only distinctive feature is that it occurred in one night and that it is attributed directly to the Angel of the Lord.

The mystery of such calamities is as yet unsolved. We shall know when we know as we are known.

Meanwhile faith does not talk of God's severity as hard

or cruel, but recognizes it as part of His providence (Rom. 11. 22 and 33).

8. FAITH REWARDED. God always honours faith, because faith honours God (John 3. 33). Those that trust in the Lord will ever find Him "absolutely trustworthy." "Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him."

V. Application.

Do not fear in the evil day.
Commit thy way unto the Lord.
Take the letter into His presence.
Trust also in Him.

The Story in Outline.

1. The Mighty Tyrant, ..	..	.	..	..	18. 13
2. The Mocking Generals, ..	..	..	..	..	17
3. The Man of God's Resource, ..	..	..	..	..	19. 14
4. The Message from God, ..	..	..	..	..	20
5. The Merciful Deliverance, ..	..	..	..	..	32
6. The Massacre at Midnight	..	..	..	..	35
7. The Murder of the King, ..	..	..	..	..	37

STORY 31

How They Built the Wall

Read NEHEMIAH 3. 1-32 ; 4. 10-23.

I. Text. " So built we the wall ; for the people had a mind to work " (Nehemiah 4. 6).

II. The Main Lesson. The building of the wall of Jerusalem may illustrate the building of the Spiritual house of which each believer is a living stone (1 Peter 2. 5) of which Paul described himself as a wise master builder (1. Cor. 3. 10) and warns each one to take heed how he builds on the only true foundation, which is Christ Jesus.

The difficulties and trials, the courage, perseverance and faith of these builders should encourage us who are workers for Christ seeking out the living stones and seeking to build up those who are in Christ.

III. The Story Told.

Chap. 4. 10-12. *The men of Judah are discouraged by the much rubbish and the attacks of the enemy.* " And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed and there is much rubbish, so that we are not able to build the wall, and our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see till we come among them and slay them and cause the work to cease. The Jews said to us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us they will be upon you."

v. 13-14. *Nehemiah takes precautions and encourages the leaders of the people.* " Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places . . . the people after their families with the swords and spears and their bows.

And I said to the nobles, rulers and the rest of the people, Be not afraid of them. Remember the Lord which is great

and terrible and fight for your brethren, your sons and daughters, wives and houses.”

v. 15. *The enemy are discouraged and the work goes on.* “When our enemies heard that God had brought their counsel to nought, . . . we returned all of us to the wall, everyone unto his work.”

vv. 16-18. *After that half work, while half stand on guard, and the buiiders wrought with a sword in one hand.* “From that time forth half of my servants wrought in the work and the other half held spears, shields and bows, and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah. They which buided . . . everyone with one hand wrought in the work and with the other held a weapon. He that sounded the trumpet was by me.”

vv. 19-20. *Nehemiah arranges that when the trumpet sounded all should gather to him.* “And I said, The work is great and large and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another. In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us. Our God shall fight for us.”

vv. 21-23. *So night and day watch was kept. Nehemiah and his men did not put off their clothes all night.* “So we laboured in the work and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared. Likewise, said I, Let everyone with his servant lodge within Jerusalem that in the night they may be a guard to us and labour in the day. So neither I nor my brethren, servants nor guard, put off our clothes, saving for washing.”

Chapter 3 gives details of the part each played. It should be read very carefully.

IV. Some other Lessons from the Story.

I. WORKERS MUST BE WATCHERS. We are never out of danger. The more earnest for God the more shall we be singled out for attack. Therefore watch and pray.

Our adversary, the Devil, goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. But we are not ignorant of his devices and are safe if abiding in Christ.

2. OUR DANGERS ARE INCREASED BY SEPARATION. "Separated upon the walls, one far from another" (v. 19).

There should be a gathering centre, and this is provided by the Lord. He calls us to meet Him and His people around the Table of the Lord each first day of the week. Let us not forget this, lest being separated we run greater risks.

3. OUR CONFIDENCE IS IN OUR GOD. "Our God shall fight for us," but this does not mean that we must not be on guard, putting on the whole armour of God, as we have it described in Eph. 6. 11-18.

4. JERUSALEM DESCRIBED. In Chapter 3 we learn a great deal about the City as it was in that day.

No less than *ten gates* are named, as follows :—The Sheep Gate (1); The Fish Gate (3); The Old Gate (6); The Valley Gate (13); The Dung Gate (14); The Gate of the Fountain (15); The Water Gate (26); The Horse Gate (28); The East Gate (29); and the Gate called Miphkad (31). Beside these we have *Five Towers* named : The Tower of Meah (1); The Tower of Hananeel (1); The Tower of the Furnaces (11); The Tower which liest out from the king's high house that was by the court of the prison (25); and The Tower by the Water Gate (26).

Besides these Gates and Towers, we have *other places mentioned* :—The *Broad wall* (8), possibly a parade on the wall—a broad walk, the "*Throne of the Governor*" (7), probably the seat of judgment, which generally took place in the gate of the city. The *Wall of Ophel* (27) and the *Wall of the Pool of Siloah* by the *king's garden*, the *stairs that go down from the City of David* (15). The *Sepulchres of David* and the *Pool* and the *House of the Mighty* (16). The *Armoury* (19), and the *Court of the Prison* (25).

We seem at the mention of these interesting places to have taken a personally conducted tour in imagination round the Holy City.

5. SOME OF THE BUILDERS AND WHERE THEY WORKED. First the *High Priest* and his brethren are named, they

built the Sheep Gate. We then find the *Goldsmiths* (8) and the *Apothecaries* doing their bit. One goldsmith's son is specially mentioned, named Malchiah (31) and *the Goldsmiths and the Merchants* are those who also did the end of the wall connecting up with the Sheep Gate first named (32). The *Rulers* are frequently mentioned (14, 16, 17, 18 and 19). In one place *Daughters* are specially mentioned as doing this rough work (12) as are the *Priests of the plain*.

All this tells of a loving zeal that broke down differences and set all to work. They had a mind to work. So are people willing in the day of the Lord's power.

6. A SAD EXCEPTION. The Tekoites repaired part but "*their nobles put not their necks to the work of the Lord*" (5). These ignoble nobles stood aside while others laboured to build the city.

It reminds us of the disadvantage to which 'nobles' are subject because of self-esteem, pride of family, riches and ambition, so that the Holy Ghost should record "*not many wise men, after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called*" (I. Cor. 1. 26).

Better be born the meanest serf and be among the called and elect of God, than earth's greatest noble and be left with no hope. The Countess of Huntingdon thanked God for the little letter "m" in that verse. It does not say "not any," but "not many," and she was of the few.

7. SOME BUILT OVER AGAINST THEIR OWN HOUSES (vv. 10, 23, 28 and 29) probably where their houses were close to or even as Rahab's, on the wall.

It is good to begin Christian work over against our own houses. The Lord bade those He healed do this, "Go home and tell," and "Go home and shew."

8. THERE IS MUCH RUBBISH (4. 10). This is one of the chief troubles with the Christian worker. There is so much rubbish taught and spread in print, that prejudice and misconception obscure the truth of God, and priestcraft and formalism hinder the simplicity of the Gospel.

A Roman priest who came into the light said, "Yes, we professed to hold the great truths of the Gospel, but they were *covered with rubbish*. Anyone who enters an R.C. place of worship can see this at a glance.

9. THE BUILDERS NOT ONLY BUILT, BUT THEY FORTIFIED AND EVEN SANCTIFIED THEIR WORK. In v. 1 we read twice, "they sanctified it; in v. 8, "They fortified Jerusalem." It is well to make our work doubly sure.

V. Application.

Put your hands to the work of the Lord and help build and fortify.

Begin "over against your house."

Watch and pray as you work, for the enemy is on the alert.

OUTLINE.

Some Builders.

The Builder with no Foundation,	..	..	Matt. 7. 26
The Builder who could Not Complete,	..	..	Luke 14. 30
The Builder with Bad Materials,	Ezek. 13. 10 ;	1 Cor. 3. 15	
The Slothful Builder,	.. .. .	..	Eccles. 10. 18
The Foolish Builders,	.. ..	Psa. 118. 22 ;	Matt. 21. 42
The Great Builder of the Church,	..	..	Matt. 16. 18
The Wise Master Builder,	..	..	1 Cor. 3. 10
The Silent Builders,	.. .. .	..	1 Kings 6. 7
The Watchful Builders,	..	..	Neh. 4. 18
The Builder of the Heavenly City,	..	..	Heb. 11. 10

Tobiah, the Slave, the Ammonite

ONE OF THE MIXED MULTITUDE.

Read NEHEMIAH 2. 10, 19-20 ; 4. 1-9 ; 6. 1-19 ; 13. 1-9

I. Text. " They separated from Israel all the mixed multitude " (Neh. 13. 3).

II. Main Lesson. There is always found among the people of God a " mixed multitude." Those who though numbered with them are not truly of them. They are a cause of trouble and should as far as possible be avoided.

Tobiah is an illustration of this and the way in which Nehemiah dealt with him, shows the courage and faith needed to deal with such. Unregenerate men, however pleasing, must not be invited to put their hand to the work of God.

III. The Story Told. Nehemiah having obtained permission from king Artaxerxes to go up to Jerusalem to rebuild the city, comes to it and inspects the ruins and encourages the people to rebuilt the walls (about 445 B.C.).

Chap. 2. 10. *Sanballat and Tobiah are grieved at his coming.* " When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel."

vv. 19-20. *They mock Nehemiah, who tells them God will prosper the work, but that they have no part in it.* " When Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian heard it, they laughed us to scorn and despised us and said, What is this thing that ye do? Will ye rebel against the king?

Then answered I, The God of Heaven will prosper us, therefore we will build, but ye have no portion nor right nor memorial in Jerusalem."

Chap. 4. 1-3. *Sanballat and Tobiah ridicule the efforts of the builders.* " When Sanballat heard that we builded the wall he was wroth and took great indignation and mocked the Jews. What do these feeble Jews? Will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they make an end

in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are buried? Tobiah was by him and said, even if a fox go up he shall even break down their stone wall."

v. 4-6. *Nehemiah commits the matter to God and goes on with the work.* "Hear O our God, for we are despised; and turn their reproach upon their own head . . . for they have provoked Thee to anger before the builders. So built we the wall and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof for the people had a mind to work."

v. 7-9. *Sanballat and Tobiah try to hinder, but are watched against.* "It came to pass that when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabians and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, they were very wroth and conspired all of them together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to hinder it. Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God and set a watch against them day and night."

Chap. 6. 1-19. *Sanballat and Tobiah try treachery.*

v. 2. "Then Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, Come let us meet together in some one of the villages. But they thought to do me mischief."

v. 3. *He replies he is doing a great work and cannot come.* "I sent messengers unto them saying, I am doing a great work so that I cannot come down; why should the work cease whilst I leave it to come down to you?"

Yet they sent unto me four times and I answered them after the same manner."

v. 5-7. *They send an open letter alleging rebellion and setting up a king.* "Then sent Sanballat his servant with an open letter. It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel and hast appointed prophets to preach, There is a king in Judah. Come therefore and let us take counsel."

v. 8-9. *Nehemiah refuses and denies the charge and prays.* "Then I sent unto him saying, There is no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands."

v. 10. *Shemaiah suggests that Nehemiah should take refuge in the Temple from fear. Nehemiah scorns the advice.* “Afterwards I came to the house of Shemaiah and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God within the Temple and let us shut the doors of the Temple for they will come to slay thee.

And I said, Should such a man as I flee? I will not go in.

Lo, I perceived that Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.”

Chap. 13. 1-9. *Nehemiah separates the mixed multitude from the people.*

vv. 1-3. “On that day they read in the book of Moses that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come unto the congregation of God for ever.

Now it came to pass where they had heard the law that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude.”

v. 4. *Eliashib the priest was allied to Tobiah and had allowed him a chamber in the house of God.* “Eliashib the priest having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, was allied unto Tobiah, and he had prepared for him a great chamber where aforetime they had the meat offerings, etc.”

v. 7. *When Nehemiah hears of it he casts out Tobiah's household stuff and cleans the chamber.* “I came to Jerusalem and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God, and it grieved me sore; therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber, then I commanded and they cleansed the chambers, and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God.”

IV. Some other Lessons from the Story.

1. THE “MIXED MULTITUDE.” The first mention of this multitude is in Exodus 12. 38. At the Exodus we read, “A mixed multitude went up also with them.”

There are generally those who join themselves with the people of God from various motives. The unconverted relatives of believers, those who love religious things but

have no heart for Christ, those who make the Church a field for ambition or gain, display or popularity, such represent to-day the "mixed multitude."

In Numbers 11. 4, we read without surprise, "The mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting . . . and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish we did eat in Egypt freely, the cucumbers, the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic . . . there is nothing at all beside this Manna."

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh. Christ, the Heavenly Manna, has no sweet savour for them.

2. SPIRITUAL THINGS DESPISED. To such the building of the city, the work of the Lord in Salvation, the building of Living Stones into His Spiritual House, the Holy Temple (i. Peter 2. 4-5) is a matter for derision.

The Church of God seems so feeble a thing in their sight that they mock at it, as Tobiah did when he said "Even if a fox go up he shall even break down their stone wall. Despise ye the Church of God? (1 Cor. 11. 22).

3. CONTEMPT TURNS TO OPPOSITION AND THEN TO FALSE CHARGES AND CONSPIRACY. Derision having failed to move the workers, then force is attempted and when that is guarded against, a plot is formed, first to trap Nehemiah and then to put him to fear and then an attempt to set up a king is alleged.

But as Paul said, who was engaged in a greater building, "None of these things move me."

4. SHOULD SUCH A MAN AS I FLEE? Noble words! The Christian should recall the dignity of his position as a Child of God and Servant of the Most High God. Such as man as I am by Grace, should I flee and be ashamed of my Lord. God forbid.

No work of God is ever done without opposition, but if it is God's work His servants need not fear.

5. "I AM DOING A GREAT WORK, I CANNOT COME DOWN." Not only the dignity of his calling as a Servant of God, but the dignity of the work too. All service for God is a great

work. Refuse to be turned aside from it or hindered in it. Disregard the enemy, do not waste time disputing with them. Of blind guides of the blind, Jesus said, "Let them alone." Get on with the work. Controversy will do no good.

6. **THE MIXED MULTITUDE SEPARATED.** It is impossible always to do this. Indeed the Lord said of the wheat and tares, "Let both grow together until the harvest."

Those who have sought by inquisitional methods to distinguish between the true and the false have often rooted up the wheat instead of the tares. Rome with its Inquisition tortured and burnt the Saints of God, the noblest of the Children of God, and thought they were doing God service in their blind zeal.

But this is a different thing from joining hands with the world in so-called Christian service. Such mixtures always fail. Introduce worldly people and worldly expedients, and all spiritual effectiveness ceases.

7. **TOBIAH'S GOODS CAST OUT.** Nehemiah acted courageously and resolutely when he threw Tobiah's things out of the sacred chamber. A strong hand is often needed with old standing abuses, or when such a one as a priest favours his own kith and kin to the dishonour of God.

It was in this spirit of fearless courage that the Reformers cast out the winking madonnas and miracle-working shrines from the places of worship. Superstition is filling many of them again with images and pictures, to the dishonour of God.

8. "YE HAVE NO PORTION NOR RIGHT NOR MEMORIAL IN JERUSALEM." This is true of all unregenerate persons. Sinners still in their sins, those who reject the Lord Jesus and refuse His Love, His Salvation and His Lordship, have no right to put their hands to the work of God.

V. Application.

Beware of the friendship of the world. Specially in spiritual things which they cannot understand.

Avoid the mixed multitude.

Isaiah Sees the Lord on His Throne

Read ISAIAH 6. 1-13.

I. Text. "These things said Esaias when he saw His Glory and spake of Him" (John 12. 41).

II. The Main Lesson.

Isaiah who had pronounced six woes upon his nation (5. 8-22) now sees his own sinfulness and cries "Woe is me."

He is purged of sin, called and responds and then commissioned and sent.

We learn how God cleanses, calls and commissions His servants.

III. The Story Told.

vv. 1-2. *Isaiah has a wonderful vision of the Lord enthroned in holiness.* "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a Throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the Temple: above it stood the Seraphims, each one had six wings, with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly."

v. 3. *All cry "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord."* "And one cried to another and said, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts the whole earth is full of his glory."

v. 4. *The door posts move and the house is filled with smoke.* "And the posts of the doors moved at the voice of Him that cried and the house was filled with smoke."

v. 5. *Isaiah is convicted of sin at the sight.* "Then said I, Woe is me for I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King the Lord of Hosts."

vv. 6-7. *He is purged with a live coal from the altar.* "Then flew one of the Seraphims unto me having a live

coal in his hand which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar and he laid it to my mouth and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips and thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin purged."

v. *He hears a voice calling.* "Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send and who will go for us. Then said I, Here am I, send me."

vv. 9-10. *He is sent to a rebellious people to harden their hearts.* "And he said, Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed and understand not; and see ye indeed but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat and make their ears heavy and shut their eyes lest they . . . convert and be healed."

vv. 11-13. *Isaiah asks "How long?"* "Then said I, Lord, how long? and He answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant and the land be utterly desolate."

v. 13. *Yet there was to be a remnant saved.* "Yet in it shall be a tenth and it shall return and shall be eaten . . . so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof."

IV. New Testament References to this Vision.

(a) In John 12. 39-41, we read, "They could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes . . . that they should not be converted and I should heal them. These things said Esaias when he saw His glory and spake of Him."

This passage refers the Vision to Christ. It was He whom Isaiah saw high and lifted up upon the Throne to whom the Seraphims cried, Holy, Holy, Holy.

(b) It is also quoted in Matthew 13. 14-15. after the Parable of the Sower, and Mark 4. 12. and Luke 8. 10. in the same connection.

(c) Paul quotes it to the Jews who came to the prison to hear him in Acts 28. 25-27. It was fulfilled in them, therefore He turned to the Gentiles.

V. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. **THE GLORY AND HOLINESS OF OUR EXALTED GOD.** This Vision of Christ confirms those Scriptures where we read of God having highly exalted Christ at His Own right hand. So that we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour with all power in Heaven and Earth. It may be read with the Vision of Him in Rev. 1. 13-18. It had the same effect on John as on Isaiah.

Let us fear, lest we forget the Holiness and Majesty of Our Lord Jesus.

2. **SERAPHIMS.** These are only named in this passage. The word means "burning Ones" and reminds us of the words, "Who maketh His angels spirits and His ministers a flaming fire" (Ps. 104. 4).

The Living Creatures of Ezekiel 1. 5-13. were in many respects like them—for they too were "like burning coals of fire and lamps, and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning" and they went "as a flash of lightning."

We know that there are unseen intelligences, principalities and powers in the Heavens of which we have only very occasional glimpses in the Bible.

3. **"WOE IS ME."** The first necessity for one whom God can use and send, is to know his own state as a sinner, an unclean thing in God's sight.

Specially the lips which express the thoughts and intents of the Heart are defiled. No self-righteous person can serve a holy God. To cover sin is to invite judgment, to go to others under false pretences can be no good. I go as a sinner whom God has graced and whose sin is purged, or I must not go.

God shows us the plague of our own hearts, before he sends us our fellow-sinners.

4. **"THY SIN IS PURGED."** A live coal from the Altar may be likened to the Word of the Cross coming to the heart in the living power of the Holy Ghost.

The Finished Work of Christ is the only ground of remission.

Till I have apprehended the value of the Death of Christ and by faith applied it to my own case I cannot preach to others.

Only forgiven sinners can reach other sinners.

5. "WHOM SHALL I SEND AND WHO WILL GO FOR US?" This remarkable language shows us the Lord Jesus speaking ("I") as the Executive of the Godhead ("Us").

The true worker has to be "Sent." He must not run unsent. "How shall they preach except they be sent?" (Rom. 10. 15).

The unsent missionary soon returns, for nothing but a Divine Commission with Enabling Grace will lead to the body being presented as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12. 1).

6. "Go." The commission comes with a word of power as it did to Gideon. "Go in this thy might, have not I sent thee?" Our Lord's command, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" needs to be translated into a personal commission. Only the sent one hears that word "Go." It is effectual as was the word for Peter and Andrew and James and John, "Follow Me and I will make you Fishers of Men."

7. THE HEART MADE HEAVY (10). It is not that the Lord does not wish men to hear and convert and be saved, but that judicial hardening falls upon a people who have so long resisted light that it no longer appeals to them.

The Lord quoted this passage as justifying Him in speaking in Parables. Only those who have ears to hear hear. A Parable is like the Pillar of Fire and Cloud—darkness to the proud who will not hear but light to those whose hearts are humble and tender (see Exodus 14. 20).

VI. Application.

Have we found out our uncleanness in God's sight?

Has our sin been purged?

Have we responded, "Here am I, send me"?

OUTLINES.

CONVICTION,	...	.....	“ Woe is me.”
CLEANSING,	...	...	“ Thine iniquity is purged.”
CALLING,	...	...	“ Who will go ? ”
CONSECRATION,	...	...	“ Here am I, send me.”
COMMISSION,	...	...	“ Go.”
COMMUNION,	...	...	“ How long ? ”

A SIMPLER FORM.

v. 5. “ WOE,”	...	...	Sin revealed.
v. 7. “ LO,”	...	...	Sin purged.
v. 9. “ Go,”	...	...	Sent.

“ Thine Iniquity is Purged.”

By the BLOOD OF JESUS it is—

Put Away,	..	..	..	Heb. 9. 26
Unremembered,	..	..	..	Heb. 8. 12
Remitted,..	..	..	..	Acts 10. 43
Gone for Ever,	..	..	Isa. 43. 25 ; 44. 22	
Ended,	..	..	..	Dan. 9. 24
Departed from,	..	..	..	2 Tim. 2. 10

Similes Used of Sin Purged.

- Scarlet made white as snow (Isa. 1. 18).
- Crimson made white as wool (Isa. 5. 18).
- Blotted out as a thick cloud (Isa. 44. 20).
- Cast into the depths of the sea (Micah 7. 19).
- Put behind God's back (Isa. 38. 17).
- Purged with hyssop (Isa. 51. 7).
- Nailed to the Cross (Col. 2. 14).
- Removed as far as the East from the West (Psa. 103. 12)

Ezekiel and the Sun Worshipers

Read EZEKIEL 8. 5-18.

I. **Text.** “Behold at the door of the Temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men with their backs toward the Temple of the Lord and their faces toward the East; and they worshipped the Sun toward the east” (v. 16).

II. The Main Lesson.

The degeneracy of true worship by the introduction of idolatrous novelties into the Temple is depicted in the scene that Ezekiel was called to witness.

It illustrates a tendency of the human heart to turn to superstition and false objects of veneration. It is seen in the Apostasy. Wherever unregenerate persons are introduced into the Churches there will be “a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels dwelling in the things which he hath seen vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind” (Col. 2. 18, R.V.), a subjection to ordinances after the commandments and doctrines of men “which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship and humility and severity to the body, but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh” (Col. 2. 23, R.V.).

III. The Story Told.

(i.) vv. 5-6. Ezekiel is told to look toward the North and beholds at the Gate of the Altar

The Image of Jealousy

in the entry.

(ii.) vv. 7-12. He is brought to the door of the Court and sees a Hole in the Wall in which he digs and finds a Door and is bidden go in. He does so and sees

Every form of creeping things and abominable beasts and idols

depicted on the walls and Seventy of the Ancients with Jaazaniah in their midst burning incense.

(iii.) vv. 13-14. He is taken to the Door of the Gate of the Lord's house to the North and sees

Women weeping for Tammuz.

(iv.) vv. 15-16. Then in the inner Court of the Lord's house between the porch and the altar he sees *about twenty-five men with their faces to the East and they worshipped the Sun.*

v. 18. "Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them."

IV. The Vision Explained.

Ezekiel, although in Chaldea, was carried in spirit to Jerusalem, where he saw again the glory of God. In five years time both the city and the Temple were to be destroyed and that glory to depart. The prophet is to be shown the justification for this great coming judgment. The God of Israel ever represents Himself as *a jealous God* (Ex. 20. 5; 34. 14; Deut. 4. 24; 6. 15), and because He loved Israel He was "provoked to jealousy" (3) when they set their affections on other objects. It is even so to-day (see I. Cor. 10. 22). We are told that the Spirit that dwelleth in us "lusteth to envy" (Jas. 4. 5). Our God desires all our love.

One after another the prophet is shown the idolatrous practices of his people, and each is said to be a greater abomination than the last (6. 13, 15).

There are four, let us look at them. (i) The first is *the image of jealousy* standing in the altar gate of the temple, an idol such as Manasseh set up (II. Chron. 33. 7) in the very sanctuary of God. (ii) The second abomination was *the secret worship of the reptile gods of Egypt* (10), just as can be seen now in the tombs and temples of Egypt. The walls of the hidden resort were covered with pictures of animals and creeping things, and seventy elders of Israel, led by Jaazaniah,

were offering incense to them, saying, "Jehovah has forgotten us." (iii) The third abomination was *women sitting in the gate of the temple weeping for Tammuz* (14). Tammuz is not referred to elsewhere in the Bible, but on the authority of Jerome, is said to be identified with the worship of Adonis, a sensuous superstition that indulged the women's love of false emotion, weeping for the supposed death of one who had no existence in fact. (iv) The fourth abomination was *the sun worship of Baal* in the porch of the temple itself, a daring affront to the most High God, accompanied, as it was, by signs of contempt, "Lo, they put the branch to their nose" (17). Was it a light thing that the elect people should thus provoke their God to anger? Was there not cause for the impending fall of their city and temple?

V. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. THE SIMPLICITY THAT IS IN CHRIST. The worship of God is not a matter of ceremonial, incense or of wafers and other such outward matters, but must be "in Spirit and in Truth." It should be simple and sincere, a thing of the heart, a faith rejoicing in the unseen and not occupation with the seen and material.

The Apostle wrote to the Corinthians fearful lest they should be turned away from "the Simplicity that is in Christ" (II. Cor. 11. 3).

2. HEATHEN PRACTICES introduced into the worship of God. That an image of Baal should be erected in the Temple itself, "The Image of Jealousy" (*i.e.* provoking God who is a jealous God (Ex. 20. 5 and I. Cor. 10. 22) was terrible. It was worse to find the backs of the worshippers turned to God (the Holy of Holies was to the West) and their faces to the East in Sun worship.

Anyone who has read "The Two Babylons," by Hislop, will know how large a part of the so-called worship of Christendom is heathen. The adoration of a woman and child, the telling of beads, incense, bells, the priestly robes and mitre, and much else.

It becomes every true child of God to come out from such things lest they be partakers of their plagues.

3. WHAT IS WORSHIP? It is the adoration of God as revealed in Christ, expressed in a contemplation of His worthship in praise and joyful acknowledgment of all He is to His people. It differs from *Prayer*, since prayer is occupied with our needs. It differs from *Thanksgiving*, since that is occupation with our blessings. It is occupation with the Lord Himself in all His excellences that constitutes true worship.

Read Psalm 145 and the rest of the Psalms to the end of the Book of Psalms and you will find no prayer, no thanks expressed, but only contemplation and adoration of the Blessed God. "I will extol Thee, my God, O King. I will bless Thy name for ever and ever" (Psalm 145).

4. THE TRUEST EXPRESSION OF WORSHIP is when the Lord's people meet on the Lord's day around the Lord's table to eat the Lord's supper and to shew the Lord's death and to remember Him in the breaking of the bread (the Lord's body) and in the drinking of the cup of blessing (the blood of the Lord) until the Lord's return. May our seat at His table never be empty. No priest, no vestments, no ritual, no liturgy are needed, only true worshippers recognizing One Lord in their midst, One Authority, the Sacred Oracles, and One Guide and Teacher, the Holy Spirit. Happy is the people who is in such a case.

VI. Application.

In a day when most are indifferent as to the manner and form of worship, let us be found faithful to the revealed will of God and worship, not with outshow display of things seen, but in spirit and in truth, let us worship the Father.

STORY No. 35

The Heart of a Beast

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S HUMBLING.

Read DANIEL 4. 1-37.

I. Text. " Let his heart be changed from man's and let a beast's heart be given unto him, and let seven times pass over him " (Daniel 4. 16).

II. Main Lesson.

By the terrible experience Nebuchadnezzar went through he was taught some salutary lessons.

" That the Most High ruleth in the Kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men (v. 17).

That a continuance in evil brings judgment even upon Kings (v.27).

That those that walk in pride God is able to abase (v. 37).

III. The Story Told. Daniel 4. 1-37.

Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, dreamed a dream as follows—

vv. 10-17. " Thus were the visions of my head in my bed ; I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. The tree grew and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth.

The leaves thereof were fair and the fruit thereof much and in it was meat for all : the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof and all flesh was fed of it.

I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven ; he cried aloud and said thus, Hew down the tree and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves and scatter his fruit : let the beasts get away from under it and the fowls from

his branches ; nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field, and let it be wet with the dew of heaven and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth : let his heart be changed from man's and let a beast's heart be given unto him ; and let seven times pass over him.

This matter is by decree of the watchers and the demand by the word of the holy ones : to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the Kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever he will and setteth up over it the basest of men."

vv. 18-19. *Daniel (Belteshazzar) is called upon to give the meaning—he is astonished for an hour and then interprets and adds.*

" My Lord the dream be to them that hate thee and the interpretation to thine enemies."

vv. 20-26. *The interpretation.*

" The Tree . . . it is thou, O King."

" They shall drive thee from men and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field and they shall make thee eat grass as oxen and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven and seven times shall pass over thee till thou know that the Most High ruleth in the Kingdom of men . . . Whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule.

v. 27. *Daniel's advice to the King.*

" Wherefore, O King, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee and break off the sins by righteousness and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor ; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility."

vv. 28-33. *The Dream fulfilled.*

" All this came upon the King Nebuchadnezzar.

At the end of twelve months he walked in the Palace of the Kingdom of Babylon. The King spake and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house

of the Kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty ?

While the word was in the King's mouth there fell a Voice from Heaven saying, O King Nebuchadnezzar to thee it is spoken : The Kingdom is departed from thee.

The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar, and he was driven from men and did eat grass as oxen and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hairs were grown like eagle's feathers and his nails like bird's claws."

vv. 34-37. He is recovered and praises God.

"At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes unto heaven and mine understanding returned unto me and I blessed the Most High.

Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honour the King of Heaven, all whose works are truth and His ways judgment : and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. **PRIDE.** There is no sin that is more hated of God than Pride. "Pride and arrogancy . . . do I hate" (Prov. 8. 13). "Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord." (Prov. 16. 5). Yet none is so common.

The man who has least to be proud of is often most full of pride. It takes many forms:—

There is pride of race.
And pride of face.
And pride of place,
And pride of grace.

But all pride is abominable in the sight of God, for man has nothing to be proud of, a sinner, unclean and guilty in God's sight.

2. **HIS BOAST.** "Is not this great Babylon which I have builded by the might of my power and for the honour of my majesty."

"My power"—"My majesty"—and so soon his power was to depart from him and his majesty become like a beast.

"He that exalteth himself shall be abased."

3. "A BEAST'S HEART." This fearful visitation was not only to humble the proud king but is to be taken as an illustration of the retribution that falls upon the sinner.

He is given a beast's heart—as David when he contemplated his own state said, "I was as a beast before Thee." (Ps. 73. 22).

Many a man yielding himself to his own animal passions becomes so defiled in heart and mind so debased in conscience and such a servant to his lusts, that he may well be said to have a beast's heart.

The Cretans were such. The Apostle describes them as "always liars, evil beasts, idle gluttons" (Titus 1. 12 R.V.) and Peter speaks of those who are "as natural brute beasts made to be taken and destroyed" (II Peter 2. 12), and Jude says of such "What they know naturally as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves" (10).

The Anti-Christ will bear the name of "The Beast" (Rev. 19. 20).

4. THE GREAT TREE in Nebuchadnezzar's dream reminds us of the Tree of which the Lord spake in the Parable of the Grain of Mustard Seed. "It grew and waxed a great tree and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches thereof (Luke 13. 19).

Each tree prefigures a great unnatural development of worldly power in the one case Babylon (the type) and in the other Christendom (the anti-type) in the shadow of which evil persons and powers find shelter (See also Ezekiel 17. 23: 31. 13).

Each is doomed to be destroyed.

5. "A WATCHER AND A HOLY ONE." This expression is unique. It serves to remind us that there are Holy Eyes watching and beholding our actions. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good" (Prov. 15. 3).

"The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the

whole earth to shew Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him ” (II. Chron. 16. 9).

“ Thou God seest me.”

6. RESTORING GRACE. Yet Nebuchadnezzar was spared. His understanding returned and he blessed and honoured God.

God who knows the heart knows where discipline and chastening will be effective and as He is able to abase so he is able to restore.

Like Ahab and Manasseh who were greatly humbled for their sins, yet on confession were given a further opportunity.

V. Application.

TO THE SINNER. Beware lest judgment fall suddenly. Break off thy sins by righteousness.

TO ALL. Beware of Pride. Walk humbly with Thy God.

12 Beasts to which the Sinner is Likened.

The <i>Leopard</i> which cannot change its spots,	Jer. 13. 23
The <i>Dog</i> returning to its vomit and	
The <i>Sow</i> washed but returning to wallow in the mire,	2 Pet. 2. 22
The <i>Goat</i> separated from the sheep,	.. Matt. 25. 32
The <i>Ox</i> going to the slaughter,	.. .. Prov. 7. 22
The <i>Lion</i> greedy of its prey,	Psa. 17. 12
A <i>Backsliding Heifer</i> ,	Hosea 4. 16
<i>Ravens</i> ,	Matt. 7. 15
The <i>Fox</i>	Ezek. 13. 4 ; Luke 13. 32
<i>Horse</i> and <i>Mule</i> ,	Psa. 32. 9
The <i>Ass</i> ,	Job 11. 22

John the Baptist—Forerunner

HIS TESTIMONY TO CHRIST.

I. **Text.** “ Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist ” (Luke 7. 28). “ John did no miracle but all things that John spake of this Man were true ” (John 10. 41).

II. **The Main Lesson.** John the Baptist was the Forerunner, the messenger to go before the Lord to prepare the elect nation for His coming. He baptized the Lord and made Him known to Israel. He declared His deity, His death and the baptism of the Holy Spirit with which He would baptize. He died as a martyr to the truth at the hand of Herod. He prepared a people for the Lord.

III. **The History of John the Baptist.** There is so much written of John the Baptist that it is difficult to summarize it, but we will do it in seven chapters.

Chap. i. *His Coming Foretold in Prophecy.* Isaiah 40. 3, “ The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord.” Malachi 3. 1, “ Behold I will send my messenger and he shall prepare the way before Me.” Malachi 4. 5, “ Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.” (See Matt. 17. 12-13, Mark 9. 13). Luke 1. 13-17, “ Many of the children of Israel shall He turn to the Lord.” Luke 1. 67-79, “ Thou shalt go before the Lord to prepare His ways.”

Chap. ii. *His Birth.* Luke 1. 57-66. “ His name is John.” “ What manner of Child shall this be? ”

Chap. iii. *His Description and Ministry.* Matt. 3. 1-12, “ 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 same John had his raiment of camels’ hair and a leathern girdle about his loins and his meat was locusts and wild honey.”

Chap. iv. *His Baptism.* Matt. 3. 5-6, 13-17. "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." "Then cometh Jesus . . . to be baptized of him. But John forbade Him saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee and cometh Thou to me." "Jesus said, Suffer it to be so now, for thus it behoveth us to fulfil all righteousness. And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up out of the water and lo the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Him, and lo a Voice from heaven saying, This is My Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased."

Chap. v. *His Preaching.* John 1. 6-8, 15-36. "John came for a witness to bear witness of the Light that all men through Him might believe." "This is He of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me, for He was before me. No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." "That He should be made manifest to Israel therefore am I come." "Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending . . . the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost and I saw and bear record that this is the Son of God."

Chap. vi. *His Imprisonment.* Matt. 14. 1-5. "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."

Chap. vii. *His Death.* Matt. 14. 6-12. "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 instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger, and the king . . . 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.”

IV. Some other Lessons from the Story.

1. THE LORD JESUS AND JOHN BAPTIST. John was the cousin of the Lord (Luke 1. 36 or near kinsman). It was a strange thing that He should leave him to perish in prison, when He who had come to preach deliverance to the captives and the opening of prison to them that are bound, could have released him with a word. It reminds us that some are called to glorify God by death. While some by faith “Escape the edge of the sword,” others in the same faith are “slain by the sword” (see Heb. 11. 34 and 37). Faith accepts and rejoices in the will of God. Like his Master, John was to be made perfect through suffering and glorify God by death.

2. JOHN’S TEACHING. The teaching of John was very full. He bore testimony to Christ :

(a) *As the only Begotten Son* (John 1. 18) (God only begotten R.V.M.) *in the Bosom of the Father*. The One who was before him (that is in eternity) and at His baptism he declared Him to be “The Son of God” (John 1. 34) and heard the Voice from heaven, “This is My beloved Son.”

(b) *As the Lamb of God, the Sin Bearer* (John 1. 29). The One of whom the prophet had spoken, led as a Lamb to the slaughter. Wounded for our transgressions. Bruised for our iniquities. Upon whom God laid the iniquity of us all.

(c) *As the One who would baptize with the Holy Spirit*. His own baptism was with water unto repentance but the Lord Jesus would baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire. That baptism took place on the Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 1. 5-8, 2. 1-4.

(d) *As the Bridegroom* (John 3. 29). He himself was the Friend of the Bridegroom which standeth and heareth Him and rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom’s voice. (cf. Matt. 25. 1-13).

3. JOHN'S HUMILITY. He described himself as :

(a) " The voice of one crying in the wilderness " (John 1. 23).

(b) As unworthy to loose the Lord's shoe latchet (John 1. 27).

(c) He said, " He must increase but I must decrease " (John 3. 30).

4. YET THE LORD BORE TESTIMONY TO HIM :

(a) No greater prophet had ever arisen. He was more than a prophet. The greatest of them born of women.

(b) He was no reed shaken by the wind. He was no soft man dwelling in palaces (Matt. 11.7).

(c) He was, Elias foretold, the forerunner of the Lord (Matt. 17. 12-13).

V. Application.

Whose faith and courage follow.

Whose testimony to Christ let us receive.

The Baptism of which he spoke let us see that it is ours.

The Seven References to the Baptism of the Spirit in the New Testament.

Matt. 3. 11 and Luke 3. 16 : " He shall baptise you with (en=in) the Holy Ghost and with fire."

Mark 1. 8 : " He shall baptize you with (no preposition in the Greek) the Holy Ghost."

John 1. 33 : " The same is He which baptizeth with (He baptizing in) the Holy Ghost."

Acts 1. 5 : " Ye shall be baptized with (in) the Holy Ghost not many days hence."

Acts 11. 16 : " Ye shall be baptized with (in) the Holy Ghost."

1 Cor. 12. 13 : " For by (in) One Spirit were we all baptized into one body."—From " *The Spirit Led Life*," by GEO. GOODMAN.

STORY No. 37

In the Synagogue at Nazareth

Read LUKE 4. 16-30.

I. Text. " This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears " (v. 21).

II. The Main Lesson.

The Lord claimed to be the One of whom Isaiah spake as the Anointed of God, the Messiah.

His testimony was refused, for no prophet is accepted in His own country. They said, " Physician heal Thyself," and they sought to destroy Him.

He is still despised and rejected of men. Let us be among those who accept Him " for to as many as received Him to them gave He power to become the children of God."

III. The Story Told. (Luke 4. 16-30).

v. 16. *The Lord comes to Nazareth where He was brought up and stands up in the Synagogue to read.*

" And He came to Nazareth where He had been brought up : and, as His custom was He went into the Synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up for to read."

vv. 17-19. *He reads in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah Ch. lxi. vv. 1-2.*

" And there was delivered to Him the Book of the Prophet Esaias and when He had opened the book He found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor ; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the Captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

v. 20. *He closes the Book and sits down—all eyes are on Him.*

" And he closed the Book and He gave it again to the

minister and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the Synagogue were fastened on Him."

v. 21. *He tells them that the Scripture was fulfilled.*

"And He began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears, and all bear Him witness and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth."

v. 22. *They say, Is not this Joseph's Son?*

"And they said, Is not this Joseph's Son?"

vv. 23-24. *He tells them no prophet is accepted in His own country.*

"And He said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician heal Thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum do also here in thy country. And He said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country."

vv. 25-27. *He reminds them that Elijah had to find refuge with a Gentile widow; and Naaman, a Gentile leper, was cleansed while those in Israel went unblest.*

"But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias when the great famine was throughout all the land, but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.

And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet and none of them was cleansed saving Naaman the Syrian."

vv. 28-30. *They are enraged at this and seek to throw Him over the brow of the hill.*

"And all in the synagogue when they heard these things were filled with wrath and rose up and thrust Him out of the city and led Him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built that they might cast Him down headlong.

But He passing through the midst of them went His way."

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. THE LORD'S CLAIM TO BE THE ONE OF WHOM THE PROPHETS WROTE.

John 5. 39. " Search the Scriptures for they are they which testify of Me."

John 5. 46. " Had ye believed Moses ye would have believed Me for he wrote of Me."

Luke 18. 31. " Behold we go up to Jerusalem and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished."

Luke 22. 37. R.v. " I say unto you that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, And he was reckoned with the transgressors : for that which concerneth Me must have fulfilment."

In this last passage the Lord claims that the Great Substitutionary Chapter, Isaiah 53, referred to Him, for He quotes v. 12 as of Himself.

After His Resurrection when He walked with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, He began at Moses, and on all the prophets He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself (Luke 24. 27) and later told them " All things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and in the prophets and in the Psalms concerning Me " (v. 44).

2. HE WAS GOD'S ANOINTED. The Christ, the Messiah.

" The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He hath anointed Me."

Christ means the Anointed One. To this agree the words of Peter in the House of Cornelius. " God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good and healing " (Acts 10. 38).

We recall how at His baptism the Spirit of God descended upon Him like a Dove.

3. THE PROGRAMME OF CHRISTIANITY.

The Lord quoting Isaiah 61. 1-2 gives a list of six things He had come

to do. They may be called the programme of Christianity. They are

- To preach the Gospel to the poor.
- To heal the broken-hearted.
- To preach deliverance to captives.
- To give sight to the blind.
- To bring liberty to the bruised.
- To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

We note three times the word "Preach." For the Lord's work was and to-day is done by preaching. "It has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

The Sower sows the Word and that word produces in the heart that receives it conversion, life and fruit.

These six things are wrought not in the physical—for the day of the redemption of the body is not yet (Rom. 8. 23) but in the Spiritual realm. He restores the soul and brings Salvation, liberty and joy to Satan's Captives.

4. "PHYSICIAN HEAL THYSELF" (23) which means, 'what you did in Capernaum do here in your own city.' Notwithstanding the gracious words He spoke, they required some display of miraculous power.

It is the trouble the Lord had to contend against all through His earthly ministry.

"Shew us a Sign"—Do something startling. Even Herod wanted to see a miracle. But the Lord would never submit to this curiosity. He knew it was of no value (see Luke 16. 31). Men who refuse the light of truth are not convinced by signs and wonders (John 4. 48 : 20. 29)

To-day the crowd rushes after the sensational miracle worker (faith healing, campaigns etc.) but the results are disappointing and do not stand the test of time, for sensation soon dies down.

5. NO PROPHET IS ACCEPTED IN HIS OWN COUNTRY. They could not believe that their Carpenter could be their Messiah—their Saviour and their God.

Yet truth always comes in lowly guise. God has ever wrought with the small, the feeble things (See I. Cor. 1. 26-27) that no flesh should glory in His sight.

That no prophet has honour in his own country only shews the blindness of men. Familiarity breeds contempt, often quite undeserved.

It was not the Lord's fault but theirs that they failed to behold His glory (John 1. 14) and gave Him no honour.

6. GRACE AND TRUTH. He was full of Grace and Truth. These were exhibited in all His actions. They appear here.

They wondered at the gracious words He spoke (22) but when He told them the truth they were filled with wrath (28).

Men love to hear smooth things (Isaiah 30. 10) but are angry when rebuked in righteousness.

7. ELIJAH AND ELISHA were sent to Gentile strangers—the widow of Sarepta and Naaman the Syrian. There were many widows and many lepers in Israel at the time, but to none of them was the blessing given, for in Ahab's wicked reign things were evil and the people unbelieving. So God blessed some from the heathen.

The Lord taught much the same (Matt. 21. 31) when He said, "Verily I say unto you, the publicans and the harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you."

The Privileged People missed the blessing through unbelief. Let us take warning.

8. THE ENMITY OF THE HUMAN HEART. That these men among whom Jesus had lived for 30 years should have seen no beauty in Him to desire Him (Isaiah 53. 2.) and when roused by the truth He spake sought to throw Him over the rocks and kill Him, reveals the fact that "the mind of the flesh," the unregenerate heart "is enmity against God" (Rom. 8. 7). "Ye must be born again."

V. Application.

Let us see that we are not offended in Him.

Let us hear His words of Grace and Truth.

Let us receive, not reject Him.

What a Word is This!

SEVEN WORDS OF POWER SPOKEN BY OUR LORD.

I. Text. “What a word is this, for with authority and power He commandeth the unclean spirits and they come out” (Luke 4. 36).

“What manner of Man is this that even the winds and the sea obey Him?” (Matt. 8. 27).

II. Main Lesson. The Lord chose to do His miracles *by His Word*. Just as at Creation “He spoke and it was done,” so in His earthly ministry He spoke and the work was done. Thus it was true “He sent His word and healed them.”

He has chosen His Word as the medium of blessing to men.

What He did by His spoken word in the days of His flesh He does now by His written word through the Spirit.

“Thy touch has still its ancient power,
No word from Thee can fruitless fall.”

Let the sinner hear the Word of the Gospel and the spiritual miracles (of which the Lord’s earthly miracles were a type and illustration) will follow.

Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God and all things are possible to Him that believeth.

The Seven Mighty Words chosen, are illustrations of the present work of Grace through the Gospel—the Power of God unto Salvation.

III. The Seven Mighty Words.

1. THE CALL TO THE DEAD. “Talitha cumi” (Mark 5. 41). “Young man, I say unto thee, arise” (Luke 7. 14) and “Lazarus, come forth” (John 11. 43). These three are taken together as they illustrate the text “The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live” (John 5. 25). With a commanding word the Lord

calls the dead to life. It is so with the Gospel, "Hear and your soul shall live" (Isaiah 55. 3).

2. "BE THOU CLEAN" (Matt. 8. 3). With a word the leper is cleansed. So the unclean may hear and be clean. "Now ye are clean through the word that I have spoken unto you."

3. "RISE, TAKE UP THY BED AND WALK." The palsied man (Matt. 9. 6) and the man at the pool (John 5. 8) both heard this mighty word. So the believer may at His word arise from the dead and walk in newness of life.

4. "THOU ART LOOSED" (Luke 13. 12). The woman whom Satan had bound was freed with a word. So the sin-bound may hear the Gospel and be set free, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

5. "RECEIVE THY SIGHT" (Luke 18. 42). Bartimæus heard and saw. So the Word of God entering "giveth light." The Gospel shines into the darkness and brings spiritual sight. The unbeliever (blind) becomes a believer (seeing).

6. "EPHPHATHA" (Mark 7. 34). He said to the deaf and dumb, "be opened" and both ear and tongue were open and loosed. So with those who are spiritually deaf (never hearing) and dumb (never witnessing) can at a word be healed.

7. "STRETCH FORTH THINE HAND" (Matt. 12. 13). So withered hands that never worked for the Lord may at a word be stretched forth in happy service.

IV. Other Lessons from the Seven Mighty Words.

1. THE PLACE OF THE WORD IN SALVATION. We read "Thou hast magnified Thy Word above all Thy Name" (Ps. 138. 2).

The *Living Lord* Christ speaks to us through the *Written Word*. The Scriptures are for us one and the same voice. The Lord asserted this, "Had ye believed Moses ye would have believed Me, for he wrote of Me, but if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words" (John 5. 46-47).

Moreover He said, "The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life" (John 6. 63).

Salvation comes to us through the written word. It is called The Word of Salvation, The Word of Life and The Word of the Gospel.

What Christ did in His lifetime by his spoken word He does now through the inspired oracles "The Word of God" (I. Thess. 2. 13).

2. THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER illustrates this. It is the first of all the parables (Mark 4. 13) and it teaches that the work of Christ in the salvation of men is to be done through the word. "The Sower soweth the Word."

It has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. So salvation comes to us by receiving and obeying the Word of the Gospel. The Gospel is the Power of God.

3. CHRIST STILL SPEAKS THESE MIGHTY WORDS. Let the sinner hear and obey the Gospel and it will be the Word of Power to him from the Lord.

The dead will live.

The unclean be cleansed.

The impotent will walk.

The sin-bound be freed.

The blind will see.

The deaf and dumb hear and speak.

The withered hand be restored to service.

Will you not listen ?

4. HOW FAITH RECEIVES THE QUICKENING WORD. It does not wait to feel or "realize," as is commonly said, but Faith hears what the Lord says in His word, *accepts it as true and relies and acts upon it.*

Thus when God assures the sinner of His Love (as He so often does in the Gospel), Faith says, "We have known and believed the Love that God hath towards us." Faith believes God and behaves toward God as if what He says is true, as it is. From that time forth he treats God as One who loves him.

So when God testifies to us that Christ died for our sins,

faith hears and accepts it as true and rejoices in it. Believing God, he rests on that finished work and knows his sins remitted.

When God testifies of Christ in the Gospel that He is both Prince and Saviour seated at His right hand, faith believes and rejoices in the fact and looks to Christ as his Lord to be obeyed and his Saviour to deliver.

5. **NO OTHER WAY.** “Neither is there salvation in any other.” It will be readily understood that we can know nothing of Christ except through the Bible or the Gospel preached. Not a thing about Him is revealed elsewhere. Revelation has ceased, the word of Christ is perfected. In it alone we can find Him. So it is with Salvation. Only in the Bible is it to be discovered. So as to the future, only in the Bible is anything revealed as to the great eternity beyond this life. Only through the Word are the miracles wrought of which we speak. The mighty words, the words of power, are spoken through the written word in the power of the Spirit of God.

V. Application.

Hear, believe, and obey, and the power will be known.

OUTLINES.

Names of the Word of God—the Gospel.

The Word of His Grace (Acts 20. 32).

The Word of Reconciliation (II. Cor. 5. 19).

The Word of Life (Phil. 2. 16).

The Word of Salvation (Acts 13. 26).

The Word of His Power (Heb. 1. 3).

The Word of the Gospel (Col. 1. 5).

The Word of Truth (Jas. 1. 18).

The Word of God and of Christ (Heb. 4. 12 ; Col. 3. 16).

ACROSTIC.

GOOD NEWS

OF

SALVATION

PROCLAIMED TO

ENEMY

LAND.

OR

GRACE ABOUNDING

OVER

SIN

PARDONED SINNERS

ENTER INTO

LIBERTY.

Five Cries For Mercy

I. Text. "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18. 13).

II. Main Lesson. The Five Stories all remind us that God "delighteth in mercy." The nature of mercy as exemplified in these incidents is our main Lesson.

Mercy has three meanings :—

(a) *Kindness or Beneficence* (Eleos) as in Matt. 9. 13 ;
Luke 1. 50.

(b) *Compassion or Pity* (Oiktirmos) as in Rom. 12. 1
and II. Cor. 1. 3.

(c) *Propitiated and therefore Propiteous* (Hileos) as in
Heb. 8. 12 and Luke 18. 13.

All these set forth the qualities of God as revealed in Christ. He shews kindness to all, sending His rain on the just and unjust (Matt. 5. 45). He is slow to anger and of great mercy.

Then He has pity on the needy and sinful and the ignorant, and He extends mercy (forgiveness to the guilty who repent and turn to Him), on the ground of the sacrifice of Christ.

III. The Five Stories Told. Each is so familiar that only a necessary verse is given.

(i.) *Blind Bartimæus* (Mark 10. 46-47). "Blind Bartimæus, the son of Timæus, sat by the wayside begging, and when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth he began to cry out and say, 'Jesus Thou Son of David, *have mercy on me.*'"

(ii.) *The Ten Lepers* (Luke 17. 11-13). As Jesus went to Jerusalem he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee and as He entered into a certain village there met Him ten men that were lepers which stood afar off : and they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, *have mercy on us.*"

(iii.) *Canaanitish Woman* (Matt. 15. 21-22). “ And Jesus departed unto 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.’”

(iv.) *The Father of a demon-possessed boy* (Matt. 17. 14-15). “ There came to Jesus a certain man kneeling down to Him and saying, Lord *have mercy on my son* for he is a lunatic and sore vexed, for oftentimes he falleth into the fire and oft into the water.”

(v.) *The rich man in Hades* (Luke 16. 23-24). Sometimes spoken of as a Parable. “ In Hades he lift up his eyes, being in torment, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom, and he cried and said, Father Abraham *have mercy on me* and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue for I am tormented (in anguish, R.V.) in this flame.”

IV. Some Thoughts on Mercy.

The attributes of Mercy are :—

1. SOVEREIGNTY. While we read that God delighteth in mercy, yet we are told that He has mercy on whom He will have mercy (Rom. 9. 18).

Mercy cannot be claimed or forced, it is the attribute of royalty—the right of the Sovereign.

Sinners must be warned that mercy is not to be had at their pleasure. It is the sovereign prerogative of God. Let them seek it at His hand without delay, lest in retributive justice they are hardened and no longer desire it nor feel their need.

2. COMPASSION. How often we read this of Our Lord Jesus. He had compassion. He was moved with pity. As the children sing :

“ He knew how wicked man had been,
He knew that God must punish sin,
So *out of pity* Jesus said
He'd bear the punishment instead.”

3. PROPITIATION OR JUSTICE. Mercy must never be shown at the expense of justice. Therefore it is based on sacrifice. The publican's prayer is literally: "God be propitiated toward me the sinner." But since "Grace has found a way to save rebellious man," Mercy is said to rejoice against judgment (not against justice), (James 2. 13). Justice having been satisfied at the cross, judgment is put aside and mercy extended to the sinner who believes.

4. GRACE. The guilty plead for mercy. Those who plead "not guilty" of course ask for justice and judgment in their favour.

The man who says, "I've done my best," is not a subject for mercy, but one who justifies himself and meets with righteous judgment.

A prisoner at the bar who pleads "Not Guilty," does not immediately ask for mercy. Mercy is for the guilty.

V. The Five who sought Mercy.

1. The blind man, Bartimæus, may be said to represent *the spiritually blind*, the unbeliever whose eyes Satan has blinded. "*In whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the Gospel of the Glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them*" (II. Cor. 4. 4 R.V.).

This represents a large class. Unbelief is a thing to be ashamed of. "The Lord upbraided them for their unbelief" (Matt. 11. 20; Mark 16. 14). He said: "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have written" (Luke 24. 25).

He declared it to be a thing of the will, not of the understanding (Except ye see signs and wonders ye *will not* believe). Men are wilfully ignorant and unbelieving because they refuse to hear the word of the Lord. Light is come, but they love darkness and will not come to the light. Let us such do as Bartimæus did and cry for mercy—"Lord that I may receive my sight."

2. The Ten Lepers stand for *The Unclean*, those whose whole mind, life, heart and thoughts are defiled by sin.

How many such there are. Let them cry for mercy as another leper did, Lord if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean. In infinite mercy He will say, "I will, be thou clean."

3. The Canaanitish woman stands for *The Gentile Stranger*—described in Ephesians 2. 11-12. "Gentiles in the flesh . . . without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world."

How many such there are. Living Christless, Godless, hopeless lives. Let them emulate this Canaanite and cry for mercy. They will not call in vain.

4. The father of the demon-possessed lad is an example of many *who have wicked children*, often the subjects of much prayer.

How many such one meets. Let them be encouraged to pray. The prayers of Godly parents are heard in Heaven. The God of all grace Who delighteth in mercy will answer in His own way and time.

5. *The rich man in Hades* is a terrible warning from the lips of the Lord, that if mercy is not sought in this life it is not to be found in the other world. It is the cry for mercy that found no answer.

"Too late, too late, will be the cry,
Jesus of Nazareth has passed by."

VI. Application.

"Seek ye the Lord while He may be found. Call ye upon Him while He is near."

ACROSTIC.

Mercy is	Not for	M ERIT.
"	Offered to	E VERYONE.
"	On ground of	R EDEMPTION.
"	Found in	C HRIST.
"	By those who	Y IELD.

STORY No. 40

Mary and Martha at Home

Read LUKE 10. 38-42.

I. Text. "A certain woman named Martha received Him into her house and she had a sister called Mary" v. 39.

II. The Main Lesson. The duties of home life should not be allowed to interfere with our communion with the Lord. Simple things are all that are needed. To sit at Jesus' feet and hear His word is the better part.

III. The Story Told. Luke 10. 38-42.

v. 38. *Martha receives Christ into her house.* "Now it came to pass as they went that He entered into a certain village, and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house."

v. 39. *Her sister Mary sat at Jesus' feet.* "And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word."

v. 40. *Martha complains that Mary has left her to serve alone.* "But Martha was cumbered about much serving and came to Him and said, Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me."

vv. 41-42. *The Lord's reply.* "And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful and Mary hath chosen that good part that shall not be taken away from her."

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. HOMES VISITED BY JESUS.

- (a) *The Carpenter's Shop* at Nazareth, where He was brought up (Luke 2. 51).
- (b) *Simon's*, where He healed his wife's mother.
- (c) *Zacchæus'*, where He brought salvation to the house.

- (d) *Matthew's*, where He attended the feast made for Him.
- (e) *The Pharisee's*, where the woman who was a sinner wept at His feet.
- (f) *Jairus'*, where He raised his little daughter.
- (g) *Bethany*, where they made Him a feast.
- (h) *The Upper Room*, where He instituted the Lord's supper.
- (i) *The House of Cleopas*, where He was known in the breaking of bread.

Let the Lord Jesus be an honoured guest in our homes. (See also "The Feast at Bethany," 70 *Familiar Stories*, No. 49, pages 200-3).

2. THE TWO SISTERS. Mary and Martha represent different types. One the busy worker, the other the devout worshipper. Each is to be commended, but work and worship should go hand in hand. Those who are of different temperaments should bear with one another.

3. "CUMBERED." It is easy to take on so much that there is little time for meditation and prayer. This should be avoided. God never calls us to do too much, if we do so, it is because some is not of His appointment.

4. "MUCH SERVING." Martha no doubt wished to do special honour to her Guest and provide a variety of dishes. When He said "One thing is needful," He no doubt meant, one dish was all that was necessary. He did not want the sisters to prepare Him an elaborate meal of several courses. It was better to have a simple meal with love and fellowship. Was He thinking of Prov. 15. 16-17?

5. "CAREST THOU NOT?" This was the word used by the disciples on the lake, "Carest Thou not that we perish?" and now Martha suggests the Lord is indifferent to her. How little she understood the heart of her Lord. He had come from Heaven because He cared so much. Remember the exhortation "Casting all your care upon Him for He careth for you."

6. "THE BETTER PART." The food of the soul is more important than that of the body. To commune with the Lord and hear His word, a greater feast than any spread table could provide.

David said, "One thing have I desired of the Lord and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in His Temple" (Ps. 27. 4).

7. "AT HIS FEET." It is an interesting study to look up all those found at the feet of Jesus. The lame, blind, dumb and maimed (Matt. 15. 30). The women after His resurrection (Matt. 28. 9); Jairus (Mark 5. 22); the Syrophenician woman (Mark 7. 26); the woman who was a sinner (Luke 7. 38); the demoniac healed (Luke 8. 35); the Samaritan leper (Luke 17. 16); Mary when Lazarus died (John 11. 32); at Bethany (John 12. 3).

Let us take our place there too and learn of Him.

V. Application.

Let us be "Anxious not to serve Thee much, as to serve Thee faithfully."

Beware of being cumbered with care or overwork or riches. Let us find time to sit at the Lord's feet.

The Seven "Marys" of the Bible.

- | | | | | | |
|--|----|----|----|----|--------------|
| 1. Mary (more correctly Mariam), the mother of Our Lord, | .. | .. | .. | .. | Luke 1. 27 |
| 2. Mary of Magdala, | .. | .. | .. | .. | Matt. 27. 56 |
| 3. Mary, the mother of James and John, | .. | .. | .. | .. | Matt. 27. 56 |
| 4. Mary, the wife of Cleophas, | .. | .. | .. | .. | John 19. 25 |
| 5. Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus, | .. | .. | .. | .. | Luke 10. 39 |
| 6. Mary, mother of John Mark, | .. | .. | .. | .. | Acts 12. 12 |
| 7. Mary, a believer in Rome, | .. | .. | .. | .. | Rome. 16. 6 |

The Friend at Midnight

Read LUKE 11. 5-13.

I. **Text.** “ Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth ” (v. 8).

II. **The Main Lesson.** In teaching His disciples to pray, the Lord told them parables to enforce the need of importunity in prayer. Not much speaking, but often coming and continuing instant in prayer. It is one of the Three Parables on Prayer in this Gospel.

i. The Friend at Midnight (Luke 11. 5-8).

ii. The Unjust Judge (Luke 18. 1-8).

iii. The Pharisee and the Publican (Luke 18. 9-14).

The Lord added a moral to each in turn.

To the first (11. 9) “ I say unto you, Ask . . . seek . . . knock (as persistently as the friend at midnight) and ye shall receive, find and it shall be opened.”

To the second (18. 1) “ Men ought always to pray and not to faint.”

To the third (18. 14) “ Everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

III. **The Parable Related.** “ And He said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves ; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him ? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not : the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed ; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.”

IV. Other Lessons from the Parable.

1. HOW THE LORD TAUGHT PRAYER.

(a) *By Practice* (1) He was praying and His disciples no doubt heard Him, for it was usual to pray aloud.

(b) *By Pattern* (2) Giving the Lord's prayer in a shortened form (cf. Matt. 6. 9-13).

(c) *By Parable* (5) The Parable of the Friend at midnight.

(d) *By Precept* (9) Bidding us ask, seek and knock.

(e) *By Promise* (10) That all who ask shall receive.

(f) *By Parental Example* (11) Would a father give a child who asked bread or fish, a stone or a scorpion? How much more will the Heavenly Father give to His asking children.

2. IMPORTUNITY means insistence. The friend at the door gave no rest to the sleeping household till his need was supplied. So the Lord would have us pray as those who are determined to be blessed.

Jacob held the angel saying, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me" (Gen. 32. 26).

Esau although he had forfeited the birth-right, nevertheless urged his prayer, "Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me even me also O my father, and Esau lifted up his voice and wept" (Gen. 27. 38).

Elijah prayed for rain, sending his servant seven times to look for the answer. So let us pray as those who give God no rest till He grant our request. Not that He is unwilling, but there are often hindrances to be overcome (cf. Dan. 10. 12-14).

3. ASK—SEEK—KNOCK. Asking is only a part of prayer. It must be followed by Seeking—for "what Thou givest them, they gather," that is faith expects. looks for, and takes all proper steps to obtain the blessing sought and asked; and knocks, that is, persists as the friend knocked at the door at midnight. "Men ought always to pray and not to faint." Idle prayer is profitless.

Prayer is the language of Faith, but Faith never stops at words, it sets to work to receive, obtain and make use of the blessing.

4. THE HOLY SPIRIT given in answer to prayer (13). Every true believer receives this when he believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. He receives the Spirit "by the hearing of Faith" (Gal. 3. 2-6), just in the same way as he is justified, but he is not always "Filled with the Spirit" as he should be and often sensible of his need he turns to his Heavenly Father for that fulness that the circumstances and often some special demand call for, he is assured that it will be given. (13).

5. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN "MUCH SPEAKING" and "IMPORTUNITY." In the sermon on the Mount, the Lord told us we are not heard for our much speaking. But often coming and holy insistence in prayer are not vain repetitions. Much speaking is a weariness, but often coming is a joy. "The prayer of the righteous is His delight."

V. Application.

Let us pray without ceasing, often coming with holy boldness and loving insistence.

OUTLINE.

Marks of a True Friend.

Loveth at all times,	Prov. 17. 17
Shows himself friendly,	Prov. 18. 24
Faithful in wounding,	Prov. 27. 6
Rejoices the heart by sweet counsel, ..	Prov. 27. 9
Should show pity,	Job 6. 14
Sticketh closer than a brother,	Prov. 18. 24
<i>Jesus</i> said, "Ye are My friends if ye do whatsoever I command you,"	John 15. 14
Can we say of Him, " <i>This is my Friend?</i> " ..	S. of. S. 5. 16

The Parable of the Eye

Read LUKE 11. 34-36.

I. **Text.** "When thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light" (v. 34).

II. **Main Lesson.** "Take heed therefore that the light that is in thee be not darkness" (35). The eye is the window of the body, but there is an inner eye, which is the window of the soul. If that window is not clean it will admit no light and the soul will be in darkness.

III. **The Parable in full.** "The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single thy whole body also is full of light, but when thine eye is evil thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light" (Luke 11. 34-36).

IV. **The Parable Interpreted.** This little parable of the eye appears in Luke's gospel only. Let us take it to pieces and examine each part. Note them.

(a) *Two Lights* are mentioned.

"*The Light of the Body,*" that is the eye.

"*The Light that is in thee,*" that is the spiritual eye.

(b) Observe that *the Eye has no inherent light*. It only lets the light in. It might therefore be rendered "Window." The window of the body is the eye. So too with the eye of the soul, that is the capacity for discerning or receiving truth. It too has no inherent light. Man originates no truth. He can receive light, he has in himself none and can make none. His inner eye is merely a window.

(c) *Illustration.* A man was once enlarging a window when a friend passing asked, "Making more light?" No, was the reply, "Only enlarging the window to let more in."

(d) *If the eye or window of the body is not single but evil, the light is hindered and the result is darkness or blindness. Single means "free from defect."* To have defective eyesight means, of course, blindness in part or if wholly defective, then total blindness, that is the eye is *Evil*—in a bad state. So with the *Eye of the Soul*, if that is defective or evil, then the soul is in darkness. We are to take heed that it is not so (35).

(e) *If the eye is free from defect, then the whole body is full of light. How beautiful a gift is good eyesight. "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun" (Ecc. 11. 7).*

(f) *Full of light with no part dark* means to rejoice in Christ the Light, in the Word of God which is Light; to be enjoying a free and happy conscience with no guilt upon it, and in turn, to shine as a light.

V. Other Lessons from the Parable.

1. WHAT DARKENS THE EYE OF THE SOUL?

(a) *The Veil of Unbelief* (II Cor. 3. 14) "Their minds were blinded, for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away."

(b) *Refusal, of the Light* (Rom. 1. 21) "Because, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful . . . their foolish heart was darkened."

(c) *Pride*. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Rom. 1. 22 and Obad. 3).

(d) *Ignorance* (Eph. 4. 18) "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts."

(e) *Hatred*. "He that hateth his brother is in darkness" (I John 2. 11).

(f) *Sin*. "Hidden things of darkness" (I Cor. 4-5). "Works of darkness" (Rom. 13. 12). Unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5. 11).

(g) *Satan*. "The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not (II Cor. 4. 4).

2. WHAT IS THE LIGHT THAT ILLUMINES THE SOUL.

“ God is Light.”

“ Christ said, I am the Light.”

“ The Word is a Light to my path.”

“ Ye (the saints) are the Light.”

“ The gospel is the Light ” (II Cor. 4. 4).

All these will shine into the heart if the window is clean.

3. KEEP THE WINDOW OF THE SOUL CLEAN. Just as the eye has a supply of water (tears) to keep it clean, with lashes to keep away dust, and eye brows to shelter it, and lids to protect, so the eye of the soul is protected of Christ, if we trust Him, for He promises “ I will keep thee as the apple of My eye.”

4. HOW TO LET THE LIGHT IN. “ Receive with meekness the engrafted word.” “ Harken diligently unto Me.” Come to the Light, rejoice in it and see that you walk in it and you will have no part dark.

5. NO PART DARK. A very small grain of dust may cause the eye pain and hinder its usefulness. See then that no evil is allowed, no unconfessed sin, nothing that conscience condemns, and the whole life will be full of light.

VI. Application.

TO THE UNBELIEVER. Come to the Light.

TO THE CHILD OF GOD. Walk in the Light.

TO THE SAINT. Reflect the Light.

The Eye of Faith.

Sees the Invisible,	..	..	Heb. 11. 27 ; Rom. 1. 20
Sees Jesus Exalted and Crowned,	..	..	Heb. 2. 9
Through a Glass Darkly,	..	..	1 Cor. 13. 12
Sees Afar Off,	..	..	Heb. 11. 13 ; 2 Peter 1. 9
Sees Clearly,	..	..	Matt. 7. 5

STORY No. 43

The Parable of the Empty House

Read MATT. 12. 43-45, LUKE 11. 21-26.

I. **Text.** “ He findeth it empty, swept and garnished.”
(Matt. 12. 44).

II. **The Main Lesson.** It is quite possible for an unclean spirit to go out of a man, that is for a moral cleaning up to take place, and reformation in life and conduct under some strong appeal, feeling or emotion, or radical change of circumstances or company, or some high enthusiasm without any real salvation or regeneration. The result is not lasting, for there is no keeping power. The evil spirits return and the man is worse afterwards. Only Christ received as Lord and Saviour and the Holy Spirit indwelling the heart can effect a permanent change.

III. **The Parable at Length.** “ 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 ”
(Matt. 12. 43-45).

IV. Other Lessons from the Parable.

1. “ **MY HOUSE.**” It is a sad state of things for a man when an unclean spirit speaks of his soul as my house. Yet it is true. Uncleanness is an obsession that takes hold of the mind and becomes a vile habit of evil thinking. It is described in Titus 1. 15 “ Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled,” and in Jude 8 “ There filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion (control) and speak evil of dignities.” It is thus that the Prince of the Power of

the air, that wicked spirit, "works in the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2. 2). It is written of some who enter the doors of shame, "they that go in unto her never return. . . ."

2. "GONE OUT." Why does the evil spirit go out of the man in this way? Because as is described in Hebrews 6. 4, the man comes under holy influences such as "*Enlightened*," new truths are brought to his mind and old forgotten ones come with renewed force to the guilty heart. "*Tasted of the Heavenly Gift*," that is, had some experience of the realities of heavenly things, the gospel, the promises, the way of overcoming, he has sampled or "tasted" these things but never "eaten," that is, received them in true submission and obedience of faith. There is all the difference between "tasting" and "eating," as one said, "Between food in the mouth and six inches lower down." It is "he that eateth Me shall live by Me." "*Partaken of Holy Spirit*," that is, has come under the deep convictions of that Holy One and thus "*tasted the Good Word*" and the "*powers of the coming age*." These solemn exercises cause the unclean spirit to go out of the man for a time.

3. MODERN EXAMPLES. These holy influences are to-day represented by such experiences as

(a) *Searching Gospel Appeals* that alarm the mind with fears of coming judgment and cause an effort to be made to throw off sin and cease evil ways. But being only an emotional matter leading to a moral effort alone it does not last.

(b) *Illness or Calamity with Fear of Death*. How many on a shipwreck have vowed to be better, or in sickness with Death knocking at the door, have promised to reform, and for a time have become religious and devout in attendance at church, etc.

(c) *Enthusiasm of some New Cult* that has promised great things to those who "join." Carried away with the stream they have found new excitement, new thrills in immense gatherings. new friends and novel practices, all of which

have kept them going for a time. Wonderful outward changes of conduct have led them to believe that the unclean spirit will never return. Alas !

4. " WALKING THROUGH DRY PLACES SEEKING REST AND FINDING NONE." The reader is referred to the matchless allegory of " Satan walking in dry places," by Christmas Evans given in my book, " What to Teach and How to Reach the Young " (pp. 36-39). The unregenerate man finds the spiritual land a " dry place " and affording no rest for his soul. Only those who are born from above turn the wilderness into springs of water and passing through the Valley of Baka make it a well. The unsaved man in spite of his wonderful moral change and temporary cleaning up, can only say as did unregenerate Israel in the days of Malachi, " Behold what a weariness it is " (1. 13), and " have snuffed at it." To attempt to be a Christian without a vital knowledge of Christ is dry work.

5. FINDETH IT EMPTY, SWEEPED AND GARNISHED. The word " *empty* " lets us into the secret. There is no Heavenly Guest in the heart. There is no indwelling sanctifying Holy Ghost there. " Though the Lord stood at the door and knocked " (Rev. 3. 20), the door was never opened to receive Him and sanctify Him as Lord in the heart. " If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His."

" *Swept* " suggests a moral tidying up, a changed life, a cleaning of the unclean ways, a sweeping away of evil associations. Yes, a good deal of sweeping has been done, and the house is tidied but still empty. It is also " *Garnished* " that is " adorned." Some brand new religious furniture has been moved into it, a fair show in the flesh is made and often a new phraseology adopted, all of which is most pleasing to the eye and gratifying to the flesh of the natural man. Like Herod when he heard John the Baptist, " he did many things and heard him gladly." A Christless heart, be it ever so " swept and garnished," is still an unregenerate heart.

6. "I WILL RETURN TO MY HOUSE." The law of reversion to type, not only showed the vanity of the theory of evolution but taught us that in the spiritual realm the same prevails. The unregenerate sinner must sooner or later "revert to type." There is no such thing as "evolution" in the spiritual realm, no one gradually progresses from a sinner to a saint. All outward influences fail to change the inward lost condition. There is no "spiritual selection" as it has been shewn that there is no "natural selection" that can change a species. A sinner remains a sinner until "born from above" by an act of new creation (John 3. 3; II Cor. 5. 17; Gal. 6. 15).

7. THE LAST STATE WORSE THAN THE FIRST. It is "impossible to renew again to repentance" the sinner who has "tasted" so much but has rejected Christ, while he thus persists (Heb. 6. 4). All Christian workers know how hardened is the sinner who has once promised so fair and talked so freely of a change and has reverted to his sins. In II Peter 2. 20-22, the Apostle is probably quoting the Lord's words when he tells us "The latter end is worse with them than the beginning" and says that if after "having escaped the pollutions of the world" they are again "entangled and overcome" it were better never to have known the way of righteousness. He likens them to a "Sow that was washed returning to her wallowing in the mire."

8. OUR LORD'S EXAMPLE OF TEMPORARY MEN.

The man who built on the sand (Matt. 7. 26-27).

The man who began to build and was not able to finish (Luke 14. 30).

The virgins who took no oil in their vessels (Matt. 25. 3).

The son who said, "I go Sir," and went not (Matt. 21. 30).

The guest who came in without a wedding garment (Matt. 22. 12).

The barren fig tree (Luke 13. 6).

9. THE SECRET OF CONTINUANCE. The secret of new life is to receive Christ by faith as Lord and Saviour, to rest on His finished work and not our own righteousness,

to sanctify Him as Lord in our hearts, when He will give us His Holy Spirit to indwell our bodies so that they become temples of the Holy Ghost. No longer empty, but filled with the Spirit.

V. Application.

TO THE PROFESSOR. Look to your foundations. Do not mistake a moral change of life for a regenerate heart. Receive Christ as Lord and Saviour that you may have the Spirit.

TO THE CHRISTIAN. Make your calling and election sure.

OUTLINE.

The Believer Filled

- | | | |
|------|---|---|
| With | 1. The Holy Ghost, | } All spoken of
Philip in Acts
6. 3. 5. and 8
R.V. |
| | 2. Faith, | |
| | 3. Grace, | |
| | 4. Power, | |
| | 5. Wisdom, | |
| | 6. Fruits of Righteousness (Phil. 1. 11). | |
| | 7. Good works (Acts 9. 36). | |
| | 8. Joy (John 6. 24 ; 1 John 1. 4). | |
| | 9. The Goodness of the Lord | |
| | | (Psa. 107. 9 ; 33. 5). |

The Wicked are Full of :

Cursing and Deceit (Psa. 10. 7) ; Subtlety and Mischief (Acts 13. 18) ; Shame (Hab. 2. 16) ; Unrighteousness (Rom. 1. 29).

STORY No. 44

The Parable of the Master of the House Returning

Read LUKE 12. 35-48.

I. **The Text.** " Be ye therefore ready also : for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not " (Luke 12. 40).

II. **The Main Lesson.** The master of the house has gone to a wedding and the servants await their lord's return. They do not know when he will come or if he will need a meal or not after the journey. A meal is prepared and the faithful servants with their loins girded and lights trimmed and burning are waiting to open the door immediately he knocks. Presently he comes and is so pleased by their readiness that he bids them sit down and dine, he has already done so, and as they enjoy the meal they had prepared for him, he, their master, comes forth girded to serve them. Let us be ready thus when our Lord comes.

III. **The Parable in Full.** (Luke 12. 35-38) " Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord when He will return from the wedding ; that, when He cometh and knocketh, they may open to Him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching : verily I say unto you that He shall gird himself and make them to sit down to meat and will come forth and serve them. And if He shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants."

IV. Other Lessons from the Parable.

1. **THE LORD JESUS AS MASTER OF THE HOUSE.** The children of God are regarded as a household. It is called " The Household of Faith " (Gal. 6. 10) and " The House-

hold of God ” (Eph. 2. 19 ; 1 Tim. 3. 16) ; “ Whose house are we ” (Heb. 3. 6). The Lord Jesus is called “ *The Master* (or Lord) *of the House* ” in Mark 13. 35 and Luke 14. 21.

2. THE LORD JESUS IS COMING AGAIN.

The Promise is Certain. He Himself said, “ If I go away I will come again and receive you unto Myself that where I am there ye may be also ” (John 14. 3).

The Angels Confirmed it. “ This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.”

The Time is unknown. “ It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power ” (Acts 1. 7). “ Be ye therefore ready also, for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not.” (Luke 12. 40).

It will be Sudden. “ Behold I come quickly ” (Rev. 22. 7 and 12 and 20). “ In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye ” (1 Cor. 15. 52).

It is described in 1 Thess 4. 16, “ The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first : then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

3. HOW SHALL WE BE “ FOUND ” AT HIS COMING ?

First let us see that we are not

(a) *Sleeping.* “ Lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping ” (Mark 13. 36).

(b) “ *Standing Idle.* ” “ He found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye all the day idle ” (Matt. 20. 6).

(c) *Beating our fellow-servants and drunken* (Luke 12. 45). “ My lord delayed his coming . . . and begin to beat the men-servants and maid-servants, and to eat and drink and to be drunken.”

(d) *Unprepared.* “ And prepared not himself ” (Luke 12. 47).

But rather let us be

(e) “ *Found in Christ* ” (Phil. 3. 9). “ 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.”

(f) *In Peace* ” (II Peter 3. 14). “ Be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace without spot and blameless.”

(g) “ *Unto Praise and Honour and Glory.* ” “ That the trial of your faith . . . might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ ” (I Peter 1. 7).

(h) “ *A faithful and wise servant* ” whom His Lord hath made ruler over His household, to them meat in due season. Blessed is that servant whom His Lord, when He cometh shall find so doing ” (Matt. 24. 45-46).

4. WHERE IS THE PROMISE OF HIS COMING ? Our Lord anticipates that some will say, “ My Lord delayeth His coming,” and to unbelief His absence seems a long time. Peter says in his Epistle (II Peter 3. 4) that men will say, “ Where is the promise of His coming ? ” and so it has come to pass. Many now are giving up faith in an actual bodily coming. But to do so outrages the Scriptures quoted which cannot be spiritualized. He will come in like manner as He was seen to go.

5. THE DELAY EXPLAINED.

(a) Our Lord gave us to understand that the time would in our estimation be long. In the Parable of the Servants, Matt. 25. 19, He said, “ *After a long time* the Lord of those servants cometh.” John denied that the Lord had said that he would be alive when the Lord came (John 21. 23). Paul expected to die before the Lord came (II Tim. 4. 6), and so did Peter (II Peter 1. 14).

(b) Peter tells us that the reason of the delay is *the long suffering of God*. He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance and

also that *God does not reckon time as we do.* “ One day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day ” (II Peter 3. 8-9).

6. HOW TO BE READY WHEN THE LORD COMES.

(a) *To keep a good conscience* with no unconfessed and unjudged sin upon it.

(b) *To be walking and living by faith* in Him.

(c) *To be busy in His service* that we may be found so doing.

(d) *To be walking in love* with all His people, so that no quarrel or evil thing may be found disturbing our and their peace. To be found of Him in peace.

(e) *To know and do our Lord's will* (Luke 12. 43).

7. THE REWARD AT HIS COMING. “ He will make him ruler over all that He hath ” (Luke 12. 44). And see Matt. 25. 21, “ 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.”

V. Application.

One is your Master, even Christ.

Remember the dignity of being a member of the household of God and learn how to behave as such (1 Tim. 3. 15).

Watch ! for ye know not the hour.

ACROSTIC.

How Should we be Found ?

F AITHFUL (Matt. 24. 45).

O CCUPIED (Luke 19. 13).

U NTO PRAISE AND HONOUR (1 Peter 1. 7).

N OT SLEEPING (Mark 13. 36 ; 1 Thess. 5. 6).

D ILIGENT (2 Peter 3. 14).

STORY No. 45

The Ten Lepers Cleansed

Read LUKE 17. 11-19. -

I. Text. Were there not ten cleansed ? But where are the nine ? (v. 17).

II. The Main Lesson. The ingratitude of the nine lepers who were cleansed, in not returning to give thanks to the Lord, is the prominent thought. The example of the Samaritan leper is set before us as showing what is due from one who has been cleansed. The saved sinner should become a worshipper.

III. The Story Told. (Luke 17. 11-19).

v. 11. *The Lord passes through Samaria and Galilee on His way to Jerusalem.* “And it came to pass as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.”

vv. 12-13. *Ten lepers standing afar off cry for mercy.*

“And as He entered into a certain village there met Him ten lepers that were lepers which stood afar off and they lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.”

v. 14. *They are told to show themselves to the priest and as they went they were cleansed.* “And when He saw them He said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests, and it came to pass as they went they were cleansed.”

vv. 15-16. *One, a Samaritan, turns back to give thanks.* “And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back and with a loud voice glorified God and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks : and he was a Samaritan.”

vv. 17-18. *Jesus asks, Where are the nine ?* “And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed ? but where are

the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger."

v. 19. *He tells him his faith saved him.* "And He said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole."

IV. Other Lessons.

1. "AFAR OFF." Lepers were not allowed to mingle with the people. The regulations are given in Leviticus 13. 45-46. The leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent and his head bare and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip and shall cry, Unclean, Unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean, he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be." He was, moreover, shut out from the temple and all its worship. Such is the Holy Spirit's figure of sin. "We are *all* as an unclean thing." So by nature and practice we are "Far off" (Eph. 2. 13). We do well, as did these lepers and as did the Publican in the parable, to stand afar off and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

2. "WHOSOEVER SHALL CALL on the name of the Lord, shall be saved." This is illustrated by the lepers. They "lifted up their voices." None ever cried to Jesus in vain. They asked for "Mercy," that is pity or compassion. No merit nor works, only their desperate need, was their plea.

" O Saviour I have naught to plead
On earth beneath or Heaven above
Except my own exceeding need
And thine exceeding Love."

3. GO SHOW YOURSELVES UNTO THE PRIEST. In the case of the leper in Matt. 8. 1-4, the Lord added, "And offer the gift that Moses commanded for a testimony unto them." The ritual for the cleansing of a leper is given in Leviticus 14. 2-32. It was most elaborate and took eight days. It will repay study as some of the things have valuable lessons—as

vv. 4-7. *The two birds, one killed over running water,*

the other dipped in the blood and water and released, typifying Christ in death and resurrection.

vv. 8-9. *The washing and shaving of the body.* That is putting off the defilement and energy of the flesh.

vv. 10-18. *The various offerings and then the blood and oil* put on the thumb, great toe and right ear, and the rest of the oil put on the head. A figure of sanctification by blood and anointing by the Spirit.

We learn from this that the cleansing of a sinner from his guilt and defilement and his sanctification to God is no light matter.

4. "AS THEY WENT THEY WERE CLEANSED." A most important illustration of the "Obedience of Faith." "As they went" the miracle happened. Faith must not only believe but *obey* the gospel or no cleansing follows. The gospel tells us of the death of Christ for our sins, of His risen power as Prince and Saviour at God's right hand. This is good news to be believed, but unless we go to Christ it will not avail us. The miracle follows the obedience of faith.

5. THE GRATEFUL SAMARITAN. One of the despised race—whom the Jew spat upon—was the only one who came back to give thanks. The greater the misery, the greater the praise should be. He "Glorified God" and fell on his face. Did he appreciate or instinctively feel the fact that Jesus was God (1 Tim. 3. 16, Heb. 1. 8) and that worship was due to Him? The Lord Himself called his action, Giving glory to God (18). Let us who are cleansed not forget it—but like Thomas say adoring, "My Lord and my God."

6. WHERE ARE THE NINE? All the nine were cleansed and therefore must have had faith—for it was their faith shewn in obedience that saved them—but they did not return to give thanks. A solemn lesson is here. It is not all who are cleansed from their sins who *become worshippers*. How many who believe themselves to be true Christians are habitually absent from the Lord's Table, the place of worship. "Yet the Father seeketh such to worship Him."

Ingratitude is a grievous sin.

“ Blow, blow thou wintry wind,
 Thou art not so unkind
 As man’s ingratitude ;
 Thy tooth is not so keen
 Because thou art not seen,
 Although thy breath be rude.”

“ Neither were thankful ” (Rom. 1. 21), is a mark of the unregenerate.

7. “ THY FAITH HATH SAVED THEE.” Only, of course, instrumentally. It is Christ who saves. Our faith is but the medium He uses. There is no virtue or merit in faith. It is the beggar’s hand that takes the gift. The cup that receives the water of life. The look that sees the serpent lifted up and lives. The ear that hears and his soul lives. The lips that taste the living bread.

V. Application.

Let the sinner obey the gospel and he will be cleansed.

Let the saint become a worshipper and return to give thanks.

Clean Things.

A Clean Heart,	..	..	Psa. 51. 10
Clean Hands,	..	..	Psa. 24. 4
Clean Robes,	..	..	Rev. 7. 14
Clean Vessels,	..	..	Isa. 66. 20 ; 52. 11
Clean Bodies,	..	..	Heb. 10. 22 ; 2 Kgs. 5. 14
A Clean Land,	..	..	Ezek. 39. 16
Clean Chambers,	..	..	Neh. 13. 9
A Clean House,	..	..	Lev. 14. 48

Who then can be Saved ?

Read LUKE 18. 18-30.

I. Text. " Who then can be saved ? "

" With men it is impossible but with God all things are possible " (Matt. 19. 25-26).

II. The Main Lesson. The rich, young ruler who came to Jesus and went away sorrowful was used to teach several outstanding lessons.

(1) *The Danger of Riches.* How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God.

(2) *That Salvation is impossible with men.* Neither law keeping nor selling all and giving to the poor will purchase eternal life.

(3) *That Eternal Life is the Free Gift of God.* Not of work ; nor of merit.

(4) *The One Thing the Young Man lacked was a Heart for Christ.* A golden idol took His place there.

III. The Story Told. There are three accounts of this incident. Matt. 19. 16-26 ; Mark 10. 17-27 ; and Luke 18. 18-27.

Luke 18. 18. *A certain ruler enquires for Eternal Life.* " And a certain ruler asked Him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life ? "

v. 19-20. *The Lord refers him to the Law.* " Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou Me good ? None is good, save one, that is God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother."

v. 21. *He claims to have kept these.* " And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up."

v. 22. *Jesus tells him he lacks one thing and bids him sell all and follow Him.* " Now when Jesus heard these

things, He said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing : sell all that thou hast and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven : and come, follow Me."

v. 23. *He goes away very sorrowful being very rich.* " And when he heard this he was very sorrowful : for he was very rich."

vv. 24-25. *Jesus comments on the snare of riches.* " When Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, He said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God ! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

v. 26. *They ask, Who then can be saved ?* " And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved ? And He said, The things that are impossible with men are possible with God."

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE YOUNG MAN. He had *riches* and they are good if rightly used. He had *youth* and that is a delightful gift. He had *respect and honour*, for he was a ruler. He was *moral*—well brought up and that is splendid. He was *religious* and that is better than profanity and godlessness. He was *attractive and loveable*, for the Lord looking on him, "loved him" (Mark 10. 21). He was *enthusiastic and earnest*, for he ran and knelt before the Lord in the open place. Yet he went away unsaved to the astonishment of the disciples (26). The one thing that mattered was missing.

2. HIS QUESTION. " What shall I do to inherit eternal life ? " (Matt. 19. 16, What good thing ?) This was an earnest but ignorant question. Even in worldly things inheritance is never by doing. The Prince of Wales inherits the throne by birth, not by doing good things. It is so in the spiritual realm. Eternal life is not inherited by doing. It is the free gift of God to those who believe. It is the saints' inheritance in Christ. " By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified." Salvation is " not

of works" (Eph. 2. 9), "not by works of righteousness which we have done" (Titus 3. 5).

3. THE RIGHT USE OF THE LAW. If salvation and eternal life are not by the law, why did Jesus refer him to the commandments? Because *by the law is the knowledge of sin*. The Lord wanted to shew him his own heart, that there was a golden idol there, that prevented him from following Christ. So far from keeping the commandments he was breaking the spirit of them in his love of money. Were eternal life to be had by selling all he had he would not do it. Money was more to him than life.

4. WHAT WAS THE ONE THING LACKING that made all the other excellent qualities of no avail? What one thing would have made all the others profitable? It was this—*A heart for Christ!* But Christ had no attraction for him and his money had. That was the trouble. Zaccheus also was a rich man and he was willing without being required, to give half his goods to the poor and restore four fold to those he had wronged. What made the difference? The answer is simple. *He received Christ.*

5. THE DANGER OF RICHES. Money gives a man the opportunity of indulging himself and living in carnal pleasures and most do it. It puffs up with pride and self esteem. It makes the heart covetous, it so occupies the mind that the claims of Christ and the responsibilities of life are forgotten and neglected. How hardly then shall such enter the kingdom. There is no need to make the needle's eye refer to the small gate into the city. No evidence is forthcoming that the small gate was ever called the needle's eye in our Lord's day. The camel was the largest animal they knew and the needle's eye, the smallest hole they knew—this suffices.

6. "IMPOSSIBLE." The Lord stated a solemn fact that salvation is impossible with men. Christianity is the only religion that takes away all man's hope in himself. Other religions offer life for prayers, fastings, pilgrimages, self inflicted penances, indulgences and other works of the

flesh, but God says with men it is impossible. Man cannot blot out his guilt; nor change his heart; nor cease from sin. Salvation is impossible to man. But with God all things are possible.

7. **ETERNAL LIFE** is the free gift of God. It is found "in Christ," not *from* Him, but *in* Him. "God hath given us eternal life and that life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Receive Christ as Lord and Saviour and in Him you will have life.

V. Application.

Beware of losing life by the pursuit of earthly gain.
Abandon hope of life by doing.
Receive Christ and in Him you will find life.

ACROSTIC.

Salvation.

To be SAVED includes:

SALVATION from the wrath to come.
ACEPTANCE as God's child.
VICTORY over indwelling sin.
ETERNAL LIFE.
DELIVERANCE from Fear of Death.

Three Questions.

Are there few that be saved?	..	..	Luke 13. 23
Who then can be saved?	..	..	Luke 18. 26
What must I do to be saved?	..	..	Acts 16. 30

STORY No. 47

The Nobleman's Son

Read JOHN 4. 46-54.

I. **Text.** "The man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him" (v. 50).

II. **The Main Lesson.** The simplicity and power of faith. The man believed the word Jesus had spoken. Without signs or wonders, without seeing anything he accepted and acted on it, and when he arrived home he found the word had effected the cure. Jesus heals by His word, faith believes and rejoices in it and proves it to be true.

III. **The Story Told** (John 4. 46-54).

v. 46. *Jesus comes again to Cana where His first miracle had been wrought.* "So Jesus came again unto Cana of Galilee where He made the water wine."

vv. 46-47. *A nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum asks Him to come and heal his dying son.* "And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum, went unto Him and besought Him that He would come down and heal his son : for he was at the point of death."

v. 48. *Jesus answers him.* "Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe."

v. 49. *The nobleman entreats Him to come.* "The nobleman said unto Him, Sir come down ere my child die."

v. 50. *Jesus tells him his son lives.* "Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way ; thy son liveth."

v. 50. *The man believes and goes.* "And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way."

v. 51. *His servants meet him and report the son well.* "And as he was going down his servants met him and told him saying, Thy son liveth."

v. 52. *He enquires when.* "Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him."

v. 53. *The father recognizes that it was at the same hour Jesus said, Thy son liveth.* “ So the father knew that it was at the same hour in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth ; and himself believed and his whole house.”

v. 54. *This was the Lord's second miracle.* “ This is again the second miracle that Jesus did when He was come out of Judea into Galilee.”

IV. **Signs and Wonders.** Since so many are troubled about miracles, healing, tongues, etc., it will be helpful to state the Bible teaching upon the subject.

(a) *Miracles* occurred in the Bible at stated periods. At Creation, at the Exodus, in the days of Elijah and Elisha, at the appearing of Christ and at the beginning of the churches. Since then and between these periods, very little miraculous appears. Miracles are not for every day use. They served as attestation of the new order of things introduced at the periods named, or as occasions of special judgment.

(b) *The miracles wrought by the Lord* were all of them beneficial—doing good and were in the nature of parables. They were enacted parables to teach spiritual truths. They bore no relation or resemblance to the freak miracles and absurd lying wonders alleged to be wrought by Romanism.

(c) *The Lord did not encourage us to look for signs and wonders.* Faith does not need them. I can trust my Lord without Him giving me a sign or doing a miracle for me. He sternly rebuked the “ seeking after a sign.” “ A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign ” (Matt. 16. 4). “ Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe ” (John 4. 48). “ Blessed is he who hath not seen and yet hath believed ” (John 20. 29). “ Why doth this generation seek after a sign ? ” (Mark 8. 12).

(d) *The Lord told us that miracles would not convince those who refused His word.* “ If they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead ” (Luke 16. 31). Faith rests on the word of God, not on miracles.

(e) *The Lord did not come to heal everyone.* “ The day of the redemption of the body is not yet ” (Rom. 8. 23), therefore sickness, suffering and death still have their place in God’s order. At the Pool of Bethesda there was a multitude of sick folk, but the Lord only healed one. At the grave of Lazarus the Lord called one from the dead. A quaint writer remarked, “ He said, Lazarus, come forth or all the dead might have risen.” The resurrection of the body is not yet. The Lord left his cousin, John the Baptist, in prison ; the day of the abolition of prisons, the liberation of the physically bound is not yet.

(f) *The Lord warned us that miracles would be wrought by the wicked.* “ For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets and shall shew great signs and wonders insomuch that if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect, Behold I have told you before ” (Matt. 24. 24). Therefore beware of miracle-mongers. Faith may be called on to accept the word of God in spite of miracles.

(g) *The signs we are to look for are found in the word of God and in the signs of the times.* That is, we may compare the Bible with the newspaper and see how the one is confirmed by the other. No other signs are needed nor given (Matt. 12. 39 ; 16. 3).

(h) *Miracles ceased when the need for them no longer existed.* Christianity does not require miraculous attestation, the lives of millions of believers evidence the truth of the Gospel. No one need be in doubt who will enquire. Witnesses to Christ are in every place.

(i) *Nevertheless the Lord answers prayer generally through natural means but often in wonderful ways for He is not limited.*

V. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. CANA. Cana was about 30 miles from Capernaum, so that the nobleman had to put up somewhere on the way home. It was the next morning that his servants met and told him of the sudden recovery, “ Yesterday at the seventh hour.”

2. A NOBLEMAN. It is interesting to find such a one coming to Christ, since we read, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called . . . that no flesh should glory in His sight" (i Cor. 1. 26). The Countess of Huntingdon thanked God for the "m," that it did not say "not any," but "not many."

3. THE SIMPLICITY OF FAITH. We scarcely have a simpler example of true faith than this "The man believed the word that Jesus had spoken." Note some points about it.

(a) Faith rests on the bare word of God.

(b) Jesus through His Word does the miracle, faith believes and rejoices in it.

(c) Faith required no sign or wonder.

(d) Faith did not need to see or feel anything. Faith believes and acts on the Word of Christ.

(e) Faith goes in dependence on the Word.

(f) Faith thereby proves it true.

(g) Faith continues (53).

(h) Faith leads others to believe (53).

4. THE POWER OF THE WORD (See "What a Word is this," p. 192). Again we see that the Lord effects His work by His word. He sent His word and healed them. He spake and it was done. What He did in the days of His flesh by His spoken word, He does now by His written word, "Hear and your soul shall live."

5. AT A DISTANCE. The word acted upon the Son though 30 miles away. This encourages us to pray for those at a distance. Time and space are limitations that do not affect the Divine Power.

VI. Application.

Have confidence in the Word of Christ.

Let it dwell in you richly.

As you obey, it will be effective in your life.

The Unjust Steward

Read LUKE 16. 1-13.

I. Text. "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." (Luke 16. 8).

II. The Main Lesson.

The Children of Light should show foresight and make such use of the mammon of unrighteousness as to gain them the love of others.

The Lord makes the Parable the basis of several lessons.

(a) He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful in much.

(b) To those unfaithful in earthly matters God will not entrust the true riches.

(c) Or if unfaithful with another's, will not give them their own.

(d) We cannot serve two masters.

III. The Story Told (Luke 16. 1-13).

vv. 1-8. *The Lord Tells the Parable as follows :*

"There was a certain rich man which had a steward ; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee ? Give an account of thy stewardship ; for thou mayest be no longer steward.

Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do ? for my lord taketh away my stewardship : I cannot dig ; to beg I am ashamed.

I am resolved what to do that when I am put out of the stewardship they may receive me into their houses.

So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord ? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said to him, Take thy bill and sit down quickly and write fifty. Then he said to another, And how much owest thou ? And

he said, An hundred measure of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill and write fourscore. And the lord commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely, for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."

v. 9. *The Lord applies the Parable.* "I say unto you, make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness that when ye fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations."

v. 10. *He says,* "Faithful or unjust in least is faithful or unjust in much."

"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."

v. 11. *The unrighteous mammon and the true riches.*

"If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon who will commit to your trust the true riches?"

v. 12. *Another's and your own.* "And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?"

v. 13. *Two Masters.* "No servant can serve two masters for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

IV. Some other Lessons from the Parable.

1. THE TWO CLASSES. "Children of this world and Children of Light." To which do we belong? In Ps. 17. 14 the "men of the world" are described as those which have their portion in this life." The Children of Light should have their affections set on things above and not on things on the earth (Col. 3. 1-2).

"Ye were once in darkness but now are ye light in the Lord, walk as children of light."

2. BE CAREFUL NOT TO THINK THE LORD COMMENDED THE WICKED ACTION OF THE STEWARD. On the contrary He stigmatizes him as an *unjust* steward, one of the children of the world, who had wasted his Lord's goods and then defrauds him.

The Lord says in effect, if wicked men of the world show forethought and plan for the future, should not the Child of God? Should a worldling be wiser in his generation than the child of God in his? Note the expression "wiser in his generation." It is never wise to be wicked or to do wrong. It *may* be wise *in time* ("in his generation"), it is folly *in eternity*.

3. It has been suggested that the unjust steward MADE UP THE REDUCED ACCOUNTS OUT OF HIS OWN POCKET. But this is to make him a "just" steward and not an unjust one. The Parable does not need this.

4. MAKE FRIENDS. This is always good advice so long as the friends are worthy ones. To use our means to win love is wise forethought.

The "everlasting habitations" seems to mean enduring affection—that will have pity in the day of adversity, "when ye fail" (v. 9).

5. "FAITHFUL IN THE LEAST." Faithfulness in little things shows character and principle. To the honest man nothing is too small for honesty. If he has practised being true in small things he need not fear failure in the greater.

But to be unjust in little things certainly means unreliability in greater.

The Lord chooses His servants thus. The faithful in a few things ("a very little") received a great reward in Luke 19. 17.

6. THE TRUE RICHES (11) are committed of God to those faithful in temporal things.

What are these?

(a) Rich towards God (Luke 12. 21).

(b) Rich in faith (James 2. 5).

(c) Rich in good works (I. Tim. 6. 18).

(d) Poor yet making many rich (Rev. 2. 9; and II. Cor. 6. 10).

(e) Enriched in everything (II. Cor. 9. 11).

It means to be full with the blessing of God.

7. FAITHFUL IN ANOTHER MAN'S (12). Most of us are entrusted at times with things belonging to others.

Let us be faithful or God will not entrust us with what is our own.

It is the principle of "them that honour me I will honour."

Joseph was faithful as a servant and he was made a great master.

8. "TWO MASTERS." Divided interests never succeed. If you are for Christ, be all for Him; do not allow other things to dispute with Him the love of your heart or the devotion of your life.

V. Application.

Be wise as serpents but harmless as doves.

Be faithful that God may honour you with nobler service.

Wisdom and Foresight.

NOAH (Gen. 6. 22 and Heb. 11. 7) prepared the Ark against the day of the Flood.

JOSEPH (Gen. 41. 49) gathered corn in the plenty against the famine.

RAHAB (Joshua 2. 21 and Heb. 11. 31) bound the red cord in the window.

The PRUDENT MAN (Prov. 22. 3 and 27. 12) foresees the danger and hides himself.

The ANTS (Prov. 30. 31) prepare in summer against the winter.

The WISE WOMAN (Prov. 31. 21) provides double garments for her household against the winter.

The Widow and the Unjust Judge

Read LUKE 18. 1-8.

I. **Text.** "Men ought always to pray and not to faint" (v. 1).

II. **The Main Lesson.** This parable like that of the Friend at Midnight, enforces importunity in prayer. Man, being a dependent being, ought always to pray. He must not faint, that is, grow weary in prayer. For though God does bear long with His people, He will certainly answer them and take up their case. No true prayer falls to the ground, but persistence and perseverance are required of us. Not that God is unwilling, but we must shew our resolve and determination and not be careless and indifferent in our prayers:

III. The Parable Recounted.

"He spake in parable unto them to this end that men ought always to pray and not to faint, saying, There was in a city a judge which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterwards he said within himself. Though I fear not God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubleth me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge His own elect which cry, day and night unto Him, though He bear long with Him? I tell you He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh shall He find faith in the earth?"

IV. Other Lessons from the Parable.

1. **THE UNJUST JUDGE.** Like the Steward in the parable (p. 230), we note that the Lord stigmatizes this judge as "unjust." Three things marked him as an unjust and unrighteous man and unfit to be a judge.

(a) *He feared not God.* A man who has no fear of God before his eyes cannot be trusted. He does what he

likes, is lawless and a danger to the community. There is nothing to restrain him from acting on any wicked or foolish impulse of his own evil mind.

(b) *He regarded not man.* He was utterly selfish, without compassion or thought for *any* but himself, a miserable, self-centred creature. How differently does the Lord teach us. "Look not every man on his own things but on the things of others." We should have a loving regard for others.

(c) *He dispensed justice from wrong motives.* Even when it was justice, often it was not that. "Because this widow troubleth me!" and "weary me," a fine reason for an administrator of the law to act! He was indeed an unjust judge. How much have Christians suffered at the hands of such, all down the ages.

2. THE WIDOW'S PLEA. "Avenge me of mine adversary." This does not mean that she sought an unworthy revenge on some enemy. The word for avenge is "to do judgment" or "to give full justice." God is said to be the Avenger—that is, the Just Judge of the widow (1 Thess. 4. 6), we are not to take justice into our own hands, "Beloved, avenge not yourselves" (Rom. 12. 19).

3. "IMPORTUNITY" is the word the Lord used of the Friend at Midnight (Luke 11. 8). That word means "bare-facedness," an obstinate determination to get his way, and he got it. Here the Lord uses two expressions, "continual coming" and "crying day and night." Such is the kind of prayer that prevails with God. Not much speaking but continual, day and night, coming and crying. It indicates:

(a) A fixed desire (b) a steady determination and (c) faith that will not be refused. Lord teach us so to pray.

4. "HIS OWN ELECT." What a beautiful word the Lord uses for His people. Election is the sovereign grace of God shewn to unworthy objects in calling them out of darkness and death to be a people for His own possession. It is a great thing to be numbered among them, the

“called and elect.” But our responsibility is to make sure that we are among them. To make our calling and election sure (II Peter 1. 10), that is to see that nothing points the other way. To give all diligence in our walk that it may evidence the fact.

5. THE ANSWER TO PRAYER DELAYED. Prayer is answered in four ways :

(a) *Direct* when the petition desired is granted at once.

(b) *Different*, Sometimes our prayers do not really express our highest need, so our loving Father gives us something different, that really meets that need.

(c) *Delayed*. We need often to wait on God, that is, to attend His time. There may be reasons for delay for our profit. The flesh is always in a hurry. Faith can wait.

(d) *Denied*. Prayer is sometimes denied as in the case of Moses (Deut. 3. 26), of Paul (II Cor. 12. 8), and of the Lord Himself (Mark 14. 36). Prayer does not dictate to God, it trusts Him to do best.

(e) HE WILL AVENGE—SPEEDILY. The saints of God have to suffer now ; in this they partake of the fellowship of His sufferings and fill up what remains of the sufferings of Christ (Phil. 3. 10 ; Col. 1. 24), but when the day of the avenging of the elect come, it will be speedy judgment on those who were enemies to His people.

(f) SHALL HE FIND “THE FAITH” ON THE EARTH ? This is a solemn word of the Lord, “When the Son of Man cometh,” in that day what will be the state of the nominal church ? Modernism, priestcraft, science falsely so called, and other cults have destroyed the faith of many and have turned them to fables. “The Faith,” that is the Word of God, the Truth that is in Christ, will that be found on the earth ? Is it safely held in our hearts ?

V. Application.

Let us pray and not faint.

Let us hold fast the Faithful Word, the Faith once for all delivered to the saints.

Labourers in the Vineyard

Read MATT. 20. 1-16.

I. **Text.** “ They received every man a penny ” (v. 10).

II. **The Main Lesson.** In order to understand this parable we must look at what goes before it. The rich young ruler had gone away exceeding sorrowful and the Lord had said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom. Then Peter said (Matt. 19. 27; Mark 10. 28; Luke 18. 28), “ Lo, we have left all and followed Thee.” What shall we have? To which the Lord replied that those who have left home or friends or goods for His sake would not miss their reward, and then He told the parable, beginning “ For ” as if in explanation of what He had said.

The parable teaches that those who insist on their rights will get them. “ Whatsoever is right, I will give you.” But grace gives liberally so that the last received as much as the first. If we “ Take what ours is and go our way,” we shall be poor indeed ” (13). Better trust to Him who can say “ I am good ” (15). Peter would be poorly off if he only got what he merited. What he had left; his all—a few fishing things—was not much. Let us not talk in terms of merit with God (Rom. 11. 6) rather look for grace.

III. **The Parable Told** (Matt. 20. 1-16). “ For the kingdom of Heaven is like unto 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 market place, 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 said unto then, Why stand ye here, all the day idle ?

They said 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 the even was come the lord of the vineyard said to the 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 with us which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, 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."

IV. Other Lessons from the Parable.

1. THE NAMES OF OUR LORD. "An householder. (1) The "Lord of the vineyard" (8) and the "goodman of the house" (11). How often did the Lord draw His own portrait in the parables. Sometimes He is the Sower, at others the Shepherd, again He is a Bridegroom or a Merchant and so on. They make an excellent study. Here He is a "Householder" or as He often said, "The Master of the House"—"whose house are we" (Hebrews 3. 6), the household of faith. He is also Lord of the Vineyard directing each as to his allotted service, and He is the "goodman of the house," who looks after the good or well-being of it.

2. "GO WORK TO-DAY IN MY VINEYARD." We are called to service. Others may spend their lives in pleasure or vanity, but the child of God recognizes His voice "Son, go work." Our first business then is to say, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" A servant does not do anything he likes, he takes instructions from his Master.

3. "STANDING IDLE." "Let none hear you idly saying, There is nothing I can do." The fields are white unto harvest and the labourers are few. We must not stand idle. If we present ourselves to the Lord for service, saying "Here am I, send me." He will use us. Be not like the man who hid his talent in a napkin and was condemned as a wicked and slothful servant.

4. THE REWARD OF GRACE. The acquiring of merit is a Romish idea that is utterly foreign to the Word of God. Our Lord taught us (Luke 17. 10), "So likewise ye when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." How many of us have done all our duty? Let us not then glory in the merit of any works of ours, but rejoice in the Grace of Our Lord Jesus and expect nothing but as of grace. To be sent off with "Take that thine is and go thy way," would be a sad pronouncement for any of us to hear. We should go away very poor indeed. But if we leave our reward in the hands of Him who is Good, we like the last in the parable may be graced with far more than we have merited. In their case, twelve times more.

5. "ONLY ONE HOUR." There are many who by circumstances or because of illness or other handicap have only wrought one hour. Their opportunity of service was very limited, like those whom no man hired (7). What joy to know that the Lord is good and that their reward will be "even as the first." That in this the last will be first. And some who have sought for merit or reward may find that the first are last.

V. Application.

Beware of saying "We have forsaken all and followed Thee, What shall we have?" You may get "What is right" only. And if the Lord dealt with us on the ground of our deserts it would go ill with us. Trust in the Grace of Him who is Good.

The Wicked Husbandmen

Read MATT. 21. 33-46 ; MARK 12. 1-12 ; LUKE 20. 9-19.

I. **Text.** “ This is the heir, come let us kill Him ”
(Mark 12. 7).

II. The Main Lesson.

This Parable recorded by three Evangelists was one of the closing appeals to the guilty nation by the Lord Jesus, ere He left them to the judgment so soon to fall on them.

It describes the Attitude of the Nation to their Messiah.

They had stoned and killed their prophets and now that God had sent His “One Son, His well-beloved,” though they recognize Him as the Heir, they kill Him.”

It is a solemn word to all who reject Christ.

III. The Parable recounted.

“A certain man planted a vineyard and set an hedge about it and digged a place for the winefat and built a tower and let it out to husbandmen and went into a far country.

And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. And they caught him and beat him and sent him away empty.

And again he sent unto them another servant and at him they cast stones and wounded him in the head and sent him away shamefully handled. And again he sent another and him they killed and many others, beating some and killing some.

Having yet therefore one Son, his Well-Beloved, he sent him also last unto them saying, They will reverence my

Son. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir, come let us kill him and the inheritance shall be ours.

And they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard. What shall therefore the Lord of the vineyard do ?

He will come and destroy the husbandmen and will give the vineyard unto others."

IV. Other Lessons from the Parable.

1. OUR LORD'S CLAIM TO DEITY. In this Parable, Jesus claims to be the One Son, the Well-beloved of the Father. To this also agrees His Word in John 3. 16 " God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son."

He further claims to be the " Heir " as we read in Hebrews 1. 2. " His Son whom He hath appointed Heir of all things."

He contrasts Himself with the prophets who had gone before Him. They were Servants but He is The Son (Heb. 1-2 ; 3. 5-6).

2. ISRAEL AS A VINEYARD. . In likening Israel to a Vineyard the Lord is following the prophets (Isaiah 5. 1-3). " Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching His Vineyard : My well-beloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill, and he fenced it and gathered out the stones thereof and planted it with the choicest vine and built a tower in the midst of it and he looked that it should bring forth grapes and it brought forth wild grapes."

Jeremiah 2. 21. " I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed, how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto Me ? "

3. " THEY WILL REVERENCE MY SON." This was what the Lord had a right to expect, but alas, men have despised and rejected the Saviour. Indeed, man's great and chief sin lies in this that He the Light is come into the world and men love darkness rather than light. Condemnation is not only because of Sin but for the rejection of

Christ. It is not the *Sin-question*, for Sin has been met in the death of the Saviour for all who believe but the *Son-question*. For if He is rejected nothing avails.

4. "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED." Our Lord applies Psalm 118. 22. to Himself. He is the stone rejected by the builders whom God has made the Headstone of the Corner.

5. THE KINGDOM TAKEN FROM ISRAEL and given to a nation bringeth forth the fruit thereof (see Acts 13. 46 and 28. 28). God has a new Election, "A Holy Nation" (1. Peter 2. 9) who will show forth the excellencies of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvellous light.

6. FRUIT EXPECTED. "Herein is My Father glorified that ye bring forth much fruit."

V. Application.

To the Unsaved — Beware lest any is found a Christ Rejecter. For God has sent His One Son, His Well-beloved.

To the Believer—See that we bear fruit.

The Lord Jesus as the "Stone."

The Stone the builders refused (Psa. 118. 22).

The Stone of Stumbling (Isa. 8. 14).

The Foundation Stone (Isa. 28. 16).

The Stone laid by God (My Servant the Branch) (Zech. 3. 9).

The Stone cut out without hands that smote Daniel's image (Dan. 2. 34-45).

The Stone on which some fail, and that falls on some (Matt. 21. 44).

The Rock on which the Church is built (Matt. 16. 18, and 1 Cor. 3. 11).

The Chief Corner Stone, Elect, Precious (1 Peter 2. 6-8).

The Living Stone (1 Peter 2. 4).

A Lawyer Tempts The Lord

Read MATT. 22. 34-40 ; MARK 12. 28-34.

I. **Text.** “ Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God ” (Mark 12. 34).

II. **The Main Lesson.** Love is the fulfilling of the law. Love to God and love to man sum up the whole duty of man, and moreover disclose the purpose of the gospel which is to effect in man by the indwelling Spirit, what the law could never bring about. To know these things is to be “ not far from the Kingdom.” But to be in the Kingdom one must convert (Matt. 18. 2) and be born again (John 3. 3).

III. **The Story Told** (Matt. 22. 34-40 ; Mark 12. 28-34).

Mark 12. 28. *One of the Scribes who was a lawyer (Matt. 22. 35) tempts Him by a question as to the greatest commandment.* “ And one of the Scribes asked Him which is the first commandment of all ? (“ The great commandment in the law.” Matt. 22. 36).

vv. 29-31. *The Lord answered, Love to God and Love to Man.* “ And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear O Israel ; The Lord Our God is One Lord : and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind and with all thy strength : This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.” “ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (Matt. 22. 40).

vv. 32-33. *The lawyer approves the answer and says, Such love is better than all sacrifices.* “ And the scribe said unto Him, Well Master, thou hast said the truth : for there is One God ; and there is none other but He : and to love Him with all the heart and with all the under-

standing and with all the soul and with all the strength and to love his neighbour as himself is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

v. 34. *The Lord replies, Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God.* “ And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, He said unto him, Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask Him any question.”

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. IN MEEKNESS INSTRUCTING THEM THAT OPPOSE THEMSELVES (II Tim. 2. 25). This incident took place in the temple (Mark 11. 27) after the Pharisees and Sadducees had each in turn tried to catch Jesus in His speech. The Lord had endured this contradiction of sinners against Himself very patiently and had instructed them in each case and put them to silence. In the case of this lawyer who tempted Him, He instructed him so graciously that He won his heart and was able to commend him. We learn from this how to treat objections and opponents.

2. REASONING AS TO THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT? The Pharisees with their minute and fanciful reasoning used to discuss much as to which of the laws of Moses was first in importance. They talked of “ heavy and light commands,” etc., and argued as to the respective value of each, just as the Romanist to-day tries to distinguish between venial sins and mortal sins, but the Lord sweeps all such trifling aside and goes at once to the root of the matter. Sin is sin—disobedience and rebellion against God, the action is but the symptom of the disease within.

3. “ ALL THE LAW IS FULFILLED IN ONE WORD, even in this thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself ” (Gal. 5. 14; Lev. 19. 18). So wrote the apostle and he adds the reason, “ Love worketh no ill to his neighbour ” (Rom. 13. 9-10). “ He that loveth another, hath fulfilled the law.” The law touches the heart. When love reigns, where the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, the actions and words will be kind and harmless and the spirit generous and affectionate.

4. THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD. The Ten Commandments were given on two tables of stone. The first could be summed up in the words, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," and the second table in the words, "And thy neighbour as thyself." Now the Law is written by the Spirit, not on tables of stone but upon the fleshy tables of the heart, not with ink but by the Holy Spirit (II Cor. 3. 3), in all who believe on the Lord Jesus. Love to God then is to be :

(a) "*With all the Heart.*" Not the obedience of fear or force, but the affections engaged to please God, because His great love has won our love. Our hearts go out in desire and are moved with love towards God because we know Him, for to know God is to love Him.

(b) "*With all thy soul.*" The soul is the "ego," the man himself. It is not that man has a soul, he *is* a soul (see Gen. 2. 7 ; I Cor. 15. 45). So his love is to carry his whole manhood with it, even his body is presented a loving, living sacrifice (Rom. 12. 1).

(c) "*With all thy mind.*" Our love is to be intelligent (the lawyer calls it "the understanding," v. 33). The greatest aim of life is to know God so as thereby to become like Him. All our mental powers should be devoted to the study of His excellencies that our love may not be fitful and sentimental but based on our knowing and understanding God and His love (Jer. 9. 23 ; I John 4. 16).

(d) "*With all thy strength.*" That is with an activity and devotion that considers no labour, no trouble too much for Him. Whatever we do for His name, we do it with all our might.

5. BETTER THAN ALL WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND SACRIFICES. How often do the prophets declaim against offerings and sacrifices that have no love or truth in them (Isaiah 1. 11-15) "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the Lord . . . I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs or of he goats. . . . Bring no more vain oblations," and see Psalm 51. 16, "Thou desirest not sacrifice else would I bring it. Thou

delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart." The same is true to-day. In 1 Cor. 13. 3, the apostle says, "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and though I give my body to be burned and have not love, it profiteth me nothing." "Go thou and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice." The formalist and ritualist may bring their ceremonies and feasts and other things but God requires the faith that works by love.

6. NOT FAR FROM THE KINGDOM. The *sincere* man is not far away. Let him read the word and walk in its light and if he continues in his sincerity he will find Christ and enter the Kingdom by faith in Him.

The *instructed* man, who knows the letter of the Word is not far off. Let him obey the gospel that he knows so well and he will enter the Kingdom.

The *contrite and broken heart* is very near indeed. One step to Christ and he will pass in.

The *true seeker* is not far. For the seeking Saviour and the seeking sinner soon meet.

But let none rest just outside the door. Or like Abner they may perish at the very gate of the city of refuge and "die as a fool dieth" (II Sam. 3. 33).

V. Application.

Learn that God desires love to Himself and to man.

See that you enter the kingdom by faith in Christ, then love will be yours.

Love to God and Man.

Love to God is **L**OYAL

OBEDIENT

VICTORIOUS

ETERNAL

To man is **L**OWLY

OPEN-HEARTED

VIRTUOUS

EVER READY

The Parable of the Talents

Read MATT. 25. 14-30.

I. **Text.** “ After a long time the Lord of these servants cometh and reckoneth with them.” (v. 19).

II. The Main Lesson.

Man is a responsible being. He is therefore likened to a servant (though he may not be one in fact) who owes service to the Lord who made him.

Each has certain ability and the opportunity of life is the talent entrusted to him. He will be accountable for his use of that opportunity to the extent of his ability.

The rewards will be proportioned to the measure of faithfulness in trading.

The disgrace and ruin of the wicked and slothful servant is the Lord's warning to those who fail in the responsibility of life.

III. The Parable recounted (Matt. 25. 14-30).

“ 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 five talents went and traded with the same and made other five talents and likewise he that had 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.

So he that received five talents came and brought other five talents saying, Lord, thou deliveredst me five talents: behold I have gained beside them five talents more. 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.

He also that had two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst me two talents : behold I have gained two more 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 received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hadst not sown and gathering where thou hadst not strawed : and I was afraid and went and hid thy talent in the earth : lo there hast thou that is thine.

His lord answered, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not : thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury (interest R.v.). Take therefore the talent from him and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto everyone 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."

IV. Other Lessons from the Parable.

1. DISTINGUISH THIS PARABLE FROM THAT OF THE POUNDS IN LUKE 19. 12-27.

(a) The "Talents" was spoken on the Mount of Olives (Matt. 24. 3).

The "Pounds" at Jericho on the way to Jerusalem (Luke 19. 1).

(b) The "Talents" told of a "man travelling" (Matt. 25. 14).

The "Pounds" of "a nobleman going to receive a kingdom" (Luke 19. 12).

(c) The "Talents" were five, two and one severally to three servants (Matt. 25. 15).

The "Pounds" one to each of ten servants.

(d) The "Talents" were traded with (Matt. 25. 16).

The "Pounds," occupy till I come" (Luke 19. 13).

(e) The "Talents," no rebellion is spoken of.

In the "Pounds," the citizens hated him and sent after him. "We will not have this man to reign over us (Luke 19. 14).

(f) The gain was in the "Talents," five and two.

In the "Pounds," ten and five.

(g) The reward in the "Talents," ruler over many things.

In the "Pounds," over "ten" and "five cities."

(h) The slothful servant in the "Talents," hid his talent in the earth," in the "Pounds," he kept it laid up in a napkin.

(i) In the "Talents," no enemies are mentioned. In the "Pounds," they are "slain before my face." The Lord no doubt repeated His parables, adapting them to the altered occasion. In the "Talents," He speaks to all. In the "Pounds," He has Israel the guilty nation in view who would not have Him to reign over them. (See "The Parable of the Pounds," p. 251).

2. WHAT ARE THE TALENTS? They are not our natural gifts, since each received the talents "according to his several ability." The talent is the opportunity of life which, of course, differs in degree with each of us. We are bidden to do good "as we have opportunity" (Gal. 6. 10). With some, life is very restricted, with others, a large sphere and opportunity is given. But none must excuse himself. Each will be called to give an account of the deeds done in the body.

3. HOW MAY WE TRADE? By using the opportunities we have of doing good; of growing in grace and knowledge; of perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. In other words, by diligence in taking up our responsibilities and seizing our opportunities. Redeeming the time.

4. "AFTER A LONG TIME." Our Lord thus anticipates the long period that has elapsed since He went away and His promised return. There are those who say, "Where

is the promise of His coming ? ” (II Peter 3. 4), but the apostle reminds them that what is a long time to us is only as two days to the Lord (II Peter 3. 8). Let us still watch and be ready for His coming and not fall into the “modern” idea that spiritualizes away the promise. He will come again as He said (John 14. 3 ; Acts 1. 11 ; Heb. 10. 37 ; I Thess. 4. 16 ; Rev. 22. 7, 12 and 20).

5. THE DAY OF RECKONING. “ He cometh and reckoneth with them.” Many times in scripture we are forewarned, “ Everyone of us must give an account of himself to God.” The believers at the Judgment Seat of Christ (II Cor. 5. 10 ; Rom. 14. 10 ; I Cor. 3. 12-15). The unbeliever at the Judgment of the Great White Throne (Rev. 20. 11-15).

6. THE “ UNPROFITABLE ” SERVANT. He was unprofitable because he was wicked and slothful. Many thus wickedly waste their lives in unprofitable things. The pleasure seeker, the lover of pleasure, more than lover of God and the worldling who chooses the pleasures and treasures of Egypt rather than Christ. An unsaved man is an unprofitable man. He brings forth no fruit to God. He is wicked and therefore will not seek after God and slothful in that he will not awaken to his responsibility to his God.

7. THE JOY OF THE LORD or the OUTER DARKNESS. There is no in-between place. . Either we are “ saved ” or “ lost.” Dead or living. The man who knew so little of his Lord that he called Him “a hard Master” was eternally disgraced. Hell is the place of eternal shame for those who have dishonoured their Lord in this way. No one who knows and serves the Lord could ever say, “ I know Thee that Thou art a hard Master.” His service is perfect freedom. His yoke is easy and His burden light. Happy are His servants.

V. Application.

To the Sinner. Remember you are a responsible being and must one day give an account.

To the Servant of God. Occupy till He come. Win His, Well done.

STORY No. 54

The Parable of the Pounds

Read LUKE 19. 12-28.

I. Text. “ We will not have this man to reign over us ”
(v. 14).

II. The Main Lesson.

Three characters stand out in this Parable.

(a) The citizens who hated the Lord.

(b) The Faithful Servants.

(c) The wicked servant who hid his talent in a napkin.

They represent (a) the world at enmity against God. Those who refuse allegiance to Christ. (b) The faithful believer who occupies till his Lord returns and (c) the empty professor, who nominally a servant, does no work.

The fate of each is foretold by the Lord.

III. The Parable recounted.

“ A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. And he called his ten servants and delivered them ten pounds and said, unto them, Occupy till I come.

But the citizens hated him and sent a message after him saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

And it came to pass when he had returned, having received a kingdom, he commanded these servants to be called unto him to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well done thou good servant : because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

And the second came saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou over

five cities. And another came saying, Lord, behold here is thy pound which I have kept laid up in a napkin : for I feared thee because thou art an austere man : thou takest up that thou layedst not down and reapest that thou didst not sow.

And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury ?

And he said to them that stood by, Take from him the pound and give it to him that hath ten pounds. For I say unto you that unto every one which hath shall be given ; and from him that hath not even that he hath shall be taken away from him.

But those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me.

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. FOR THE DIFFERENCE between this Parable and that of the Talents, see page 247.

2. "A CERTAIN NOBLEMAN " that is one of noble birth. The Lord rightly applies this figure to Himself for who so noble. As to His Godhead, His goings forth have been of old from everlasting ; and as to His manhood, He was born of the Royal Tribe of Judah (The Lion of the Tribe of Judah) of the Kingly family of David and is the next heir to the Throne of David.

3. TO RECEIVE A KINGDOM. This too is true of Christ as we learn from Daniel 7. 13-14, where the Son of Man comes to the Ancient of Days and there is given unto Him a Kingdom—an everlasting dominion and a kingdom that shall not be destroyed. And also from the words of Gabriel to Mary the mother of Our Lord. He shall be Great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest ; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father, David ; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end (and see Rev. 11. 15).

4. "HIS ENEMIES." Who are these? The following Scriptures shew. Col. 1. 21. "You were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works." Rom. 8. 7. "The carnal mind (mind of the flesh) is enmity against God." James 4. 4. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God, whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Phil. 3. 18. "Enemies of the Cross of Christ."

The enemies then are those who reject Christ, who say of Him we will not have this man to reign over us.

5. "WE WILL NOT HAVE THIS MAN TO REIGN OVER US." The Christian is one who yields to Christ as His Lord, that He may reign over him. He sanctifies Christ as Lord in his heart continually. Every thought and power of his being he brings into the obedience of Christ. He calls Jesus Lord, not in word only but in fact and truth.

His language is

"O come and reign Lord Jesus,
Rule over everything,
And keep me always loyal
And true to thee my King."

6. "OCCUPY TILL I COME."

It is interesting to notice how often in the Parables the Lord speaks of His Coming again. We find it in

(a) *The Parable of the Good Samaritan.* "When I come again I will repay thee." (Luke 10. 35).

(b) *The Parable of the Ten Virgins.* "Behold the bridegroom cometh" (Matt. 25. 6).

(c) *The Wicked Husbandmen.* "When the Lord of the Vineyard cometh" (Matt. 21 40).

(d) *The Talents.* "After a long time the Lord of these servants cometh" (Matt. 25. 19).

(e) *The Pounds.* "When He was returned" (Luke 19.15).

7. "TO HIM THAT HATH SHALL BE GIVEN" ETC.

All our gifts from God (the Pounds) are to be cultivated and will thereby increase, but powers not used will atrophy and be lost.

God's law is that only those who use their gifts for His glory retain them. Even the light we have fades if we do not walk in it.

8. OTHER LESSONS CAN BE GATHERED from the Parable of the Talents (see page 247) where the teaching is very similar.

V. Application.

To the Christ Rejecter. Hear what the Lord said of those who would not have Him to reign over them.

To the Servant of God. Occupy till your Lord comes.

To the empty professor. Beware lest your pound is unused.

Diligence Required.

To keep the heart,	..	..	..	..	Prov. 4. 23
To keep from forgetting,	..	..	..	..	Deut. 4. 9
To do the commandment	..	..	..	..	Josh. 22. 5
To prosper in business,	..	..	..	..	Prov. 22. 29; 27, 23
To rule wisely,	..	..	..	..	Rom. 12. 8
To give well,	..	..	..	..	2 Cor. 8. 7
To inherit the promises,	..	..	..	..	Heb. 6. 11, 12
To add to your faith,..	..	..	..	..	2 Peter 1. 5
To make your calling and election sure,	..	..	..	..	2 Peter 1. 5

The Reward of Diligence.

It makes rich,	..	..	..	..	Prov. 10. 4
The diligent bear rule,	..	..	..	..	Prov. 12. 24
It makes for prosperity of soul,	..	..	..	..	Prov. 13. 4
The diligent in business stand before princes,	..	..	..	..	Prov. 22. 29
It begets plenty,	..	..	..	..	Prov. 21. 5

STORY No. 55

The Widow's Two Mites

Read MARK 12. 41-44; LUKE 21. 1-4.

I. **Text.** “ Of a truth I say unto you that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all ” (Luke 21. 3).

II. Main Lesson.

Giving is not to be judged merely by the amounts given but by the sacrifice it entails and the love that prompts it.

III. The Story Told. (Mark 12. 41-44).

v. 41. *Jesus watches the people give their offerings.* “ And Jesus sat over against the treasury and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury and many that were rich cast in much.”

v. 42. *A certain poor widow cast in two mites.* “ And there came a certain poor widow and she threw in two mites which make a farthing.”

v. 43. *The Lord tells His disciples that she cast in more than all, and the reason.* “ And He called unto Him His disciples and said into them, Verily I say unto you that this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she, of her want, did cast in all that she had even all her living.”

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. **THE LORD SITTING OVER AGAINST THE TREASURY.** It has been said that He ever sits there and marks what each of His Children gives. Our giving should always be done as under His eye.

To give the smallest possible coin so as not to appear not to be giving, is a mockery and unworthy of the One who has given so much for us.

“ Freely ye have received, freely give.”

“ The Lord loveth a cheerful giver.”

2. **MONEY INTO THE TREASURY.** We should all recognize a responsibility to support the services of the Sanctuary.

There are lighting, heating, cleaning and often rent, caretakers' and other outgoings to be paid for, and it is a poor soul who is willing to enjoy all that is provided and not give his fair proportion to it.

Each should carefully decide what his proper contribution should be and see that it is regularly given.

In olden days the Lord forbade His people to come before Him empty-handed. "They shall not appear before the Lord empty, every man shall give as he is able according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which He hath given thee" (Deut. 16. 16-17). If this were so under law, how much better should we give who are under grace.

3. **THE POOR WIDOW.** Her name is not recorded. Some one suggested that if her name had been given the gift would have been spoilt, for we are not to let our left hand know what our right hand does. To have made a heroine of her by publishing her name would have robbed the incident of much of its beauty and simplicity. The Romanists would have Canonized her and made her ridiculous.

4. **POVERTY NO EXCUSE FOR NOT GIVING.** The Lord rewards the liberal soul and the widow is His special care (Psa. 146. 9 ; Prov. 15. 25 ; Jer. 49. 11).

Poverty makes the gift more precious in His sight. The Corinthians (II. Cor. 8. 1-4) are specially commended for their giving. "In a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality, for to their power, and I bear record, yea and beyond their power they were willing of themselves praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift."

Note the two words, "their joy" and "their deep poverty." So these poor saints gave.

5. **THE COST OF GIVING.** Self-denial and self-sacrifice in giving are commended of the Lord.

Some have said, "Reckon your giving not by what you part with, but what you have left."

How many know anything of giving that hurts, of giving what may mean privation. To give "out of the abundance" is not to be deprecated. It should be done, but in acceptability it cannot compare with what is given "out of the penury."

6. THE MANNER OF GIVING. We have several Scriptures that help us here.

- (a) It must be done *cheerfully*, for God loveth a cheerful giver (II. Cor. 9. 7).
- (b) It should be done *liberally* (Rom. 12. 8 R.V.). "The liberal soul shall be made fat" (Prov. 11. 25). "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (II. Cor. 9. 6).
- (c) It should be done *regularly* and *systematically* (I. Cor. 16. 1). "Upon the first day of the week let everyone lay by him in store as God has prospered him." Careless, intermittent giving, with no system is to be lamented.
- (d) It should be done after *settling before God the amount*. A purpose carried out in performance (II. Cor. 8. 11-15).

7. "MORE THAN THEY ALL." How is this true of the Poor Widow?

- (a) *More readiness to give*. She gave her all unostentatiously and willingly.
- (b) *More love in giving*. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and have not love, it profiteth me nothing" (I Cor. 13. 3). God saw her heart that moved her to give all.
- (c) *More self-denial in it*. "All her living" and out of "her penury," "her want." She went away empty but blessed.
- (d) *More nobility*—for this was a noble action to part with her all for the service of the sanctuary.

- (e) *More literally by her example.* Not even David or Solomon in their lavish gifts to build the Temple gave as much, and no millionaire can ever expect to equal her in the actual cash value she has brought into the Treasury of God by her example. This story has moved more to give than aught else in the world, save the great sacrifice on Calvary (II. Cor. 8. 9).

V. Application.

TO THOSE WHO NEVER GIVE. Be ashamed and repent.

TO THOSE WHO GIVE CARELESSLY AND SPASMODICALLY.
Amend your ways.

TO THOSE WHO GIVE LIBERALLY. Continue your good work. The Lord sits over against the Treasury.

Giving.

1. WHY? "Freely ye have received." "God loveth a cheerful giver."
2. WHAT? Of your substance.
3. WHEN? On the first day of the week. When one sees a brother in need.
4. HOW? Liberally, cheerfully, self-denyingly.
5. TO WHOM? Specially to the household of faith. To the poor and needy. To the Lord's work.
6. WITH WHAT RESULT? "He that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

Giving to the poor is lending to the Lord. "He shall in nowise lose his reward." "Give and it shall be given unto you." It brings glory to God. The saints' need is supplied.

STORY No. 56

The Barren Fig Tree In Parable and Incident

Read MATTHEW 21. 18-22 and LUKE 13. 6-9.

I. **Text.** “ Lord let it alone this year also, . . . If it bear fruit well ” (13. 8).

II. **The Main Lesson.** The Parable in Luke teaches the long-suffering and patience of God over the nation, with high privileges but no fruit.

The incident in Matthew speaks of the judgment about to fall on the nation. Both are Parables, the first spoken, the second enacted. The general truth may best be stated in the words of Our Lord. “ Every branch that beareth not fruit He taketh away ” (John 15. 2).

III. The Parable and the Incident Recorded.

THE PARABLE (Luke 13. 6-9). “ He spake also this parable : A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came and sought fruit thereon and found none. Then said he to the dresser of his vineyard, Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground ?

And he, answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also till I shall dig about it and dung it. And if it bear fruit well : and if not then after that thou shalt cut it down.”

THE INCIDENT (Matt. 21. 18-22). “ 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."

IV. Other Lessons from the Stories.

1. THE ELECT NATION of Israel is likened in Scripture to three trees, each of them noted for its valuable and beautiful fruit. The Fig, the Vine and the Olive.

For the nation was given its unique position in the world that it might be God's witness on the earth and the centre of His government and thus bring forth fruit to His glory. But the Vine brought forth wild grapes (Isaiah 5. 2-4). The Olive failed (Rom. 11. 17-20) and the Fig tree was barren (Matt. 21. 19) and the nation came under judgment and was scattered, and its city and temple destroyed. Not for ever, for God will yet restore it.

2. A FIG TREE IN A VINEYARD indicates special privilege. Fig trees grow in the open field or by the wayside, not as a rule in the specially protected and preserved soil of the vineyard.

Privilege always entails responsibility. To whom much is given much will be required.

3. NOTHING BUT LEAVES. Leaves mean profession, outward display. If there is no fruit the show of leaves is deceptive. Let those who profess and call themselves Christians remember that it is not leaves but fruit God looks for. Holy living and testimony and loving service to His name. "Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit" John 15. 1-14, should be carefully studied here.

4. "TREES OF THE LORD'S PLANTING." Not only is Israel the nation likened to fruitbearing trees, but every believer is a tree of the Lord's planting. There are also bad trees and we are told they can each be told by their

fruits. A good tree (a spiritual man) cannot be evil fruit, neither can a bad tree (an unregenerate man) bear good fruit. Every tree that beareth not good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire (Matt. 7. 16-20).

5. THE PATIENCE OF GOD. "These three years I came seeking fruit." This may have referred to the Lord's three years' earthly ministry among the nation—but can refer to all who are not bearing fruit to God. To how many has God come seeking fruit and finding none? "Despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-sufferance not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (Rom. 2. 4). The three years is "space to repent."

6. THE INTERCESSOR. "Lord let it alone this year also." It is the Lord Jesus who thus maketh intercession for the transgressors (Is. 53. 12 R.V.). Judgment might justly have fallen upon the cumberer of the ground were it not for Him who ever liveth to make intercession. The extended day of grace will be employed to strive with the sinner; to show further grace; to let him hear again the Gospel message, but if all is fruitless, then the sentence will go forth, "Cut it down."

Here is a searching and excellent message for the New Year.

7. THE BARREN FIG TREE CURSED was an object lesson for the nation so soon to fall under the "wrath to the uttermost" (I. Thess. 2. 16). Let it be a warning to us. It was also an illustration of the Power of Faith for the Lord used it as such.

8. MOUNTAINS CAST INTO THE SEA. We must not be literal here, for God does not wish us to move the mountains about. Faith must have its warrant for action. Until the Lord tells me to cast Mt. Blanc into the Lake of Geneva I must not attempt to do it, and if I did I should not succeed. If He did bid me do so it would be different. What He does bid me do is to pray, believing that those hindrances in my life (however mountainous) may be overcome and cast out of the way.

V. Application.

TO THE SINNER. Beware lest the One who has come seeking fruit and finding none say, "Cut it down."

TO THE PROFESSOR. Know that leaves only must not take the place of fruit.

TO THE BELIEVER. See that you abide in Christ and so bear much fruit.

12 Failures.

SPOKEN OF BY THE LORD.

The Barren Fig Tree,	As above
The Seed—by wayside, on the rock, among thorns,	Matt. 13. 4-7
The House built on Sand	Matt. 7. 26, 27
The Rich Fool,	Luke 12. 16 ; 16. 19
The Foolish Virgins,	Matt. 25. 2
The Unprofitable Servant,	Matt. 25. 26
The Son who said, "I go, sir," and went not,	Matt. 22. 30
The Unprepared Servant,	Matt. 24. 50
The Unforgiving Servant,	Matt. 18. 32
The Man without a Wedding Garment, ..	Matt. 22. 12
The Man who could Not Finish,	Luke 14. 30
The Disciples who Could Not cast out the Evil Spirit,	Matt. 17. 20

Weeping over Jerusalem

Read LUKE 19. 41-44. MATTHEW 21. 10-17 ; 23. 37-39.

I. **Text.** “ When He was come near, He beheld the city and wept over it saying, If thou hadst known the things which belong unto thy peace ” (Luke 19. 41-42).

II. **The Main Lesson.** The Lord had come up to Jerusalem to die at the hands of those He had come to save.

Jerusalem, the joy of the whole earth, the City of David, the Centre of Prophecy, was to come under judgment, and this moved the Lord to tears.

We see His love for His rebellious nation and His willingness to have them gathered under His wings had they been willing. But they would not.

III. **The Story Told** in three parts.

1. *The Approach to Jerusalem* (Luke 19. 41-44). “ And when He was come near He beheld the city and wept over it saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ! But now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee and thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee and compass thee round and keep thee in on every side and shall lay thee even with the ground and thy children within thee ; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another ; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”

2. *The Entry into the City* (Matthew 21. 10-17). “ 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 ; . . . and the blind and the lame came to Him in the Temple, and He healed them. And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did and the children crying in the Temple and saying, Hosannah to the Son of David ;

they were sore displeased and said unto Him, Hearest thou what these say ! And Jesus said unto them, Yea ; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise ! And He left them and went out of the City into Bethany, and He lodged there."

3. *The Final Words to the Nation* (Matthew 23. 37-39). Having denounced eight terrible woes upon the Pharisees and Scribes as blind guides and hypocrites (Matthew 23. 13-36) the Lord speaks His last words to them as follows : " 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."

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. JERUSALEM. The name means the Possession or Abode of Peace. It was chosen of God as the place where He would put His name (Deut. 12. 5 and 11) and where alone sacrifices could be offered.

On Mount Zion was the City of David. On Mount Moriah the Temple. For over 1,000 years it had been the centre of the nation, the metropolis of the kingdom. The one and only place of sacrificial worship. It had enjoyed privilege and honour above all the cities of the world. The Lord referred to it as " The City of the Great King." The Jews called it " The Joy of all the Earth."

2. IT'S SAD RECORD. The Lord referred to it as the city that killed the prophets and stoned those sent from God. Upon the guilty city was to come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth " from Abel to Zecharias whom ye slew between the Temple and the Altar (II. Chron. 24. 21). He said as He went up to the city, " It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem " (Luke 13. 33). So that the city that had enjoyed the highest privilege, incurred the deepest guilt.

3. OUR LORD'S ASCENT TO JERUSALEM FROM JERICHO. From Jericho to Jerusalem is a very steep and laborious way, a six to eight hours journey (25 miles). Jericho lies in the deep valley of the Jordan, while Jerusalem is two thousand feet above sea level on the hills of Judea. So that the Lord would have to ascend some 3,500 feet to get from the one to the other. As He approached Jerusalem He would go over the top of the Mount of Olives and then descend into the Valley of Jehoshaphat (with the Kedron running through it) and up again on the other side to the city. The Mount of Olives is 200 feet above the site of the Temple on Mount Moriah. It commands a fine panorama of the City and Temple.

4. OUR LORD WEPT THREE TIMES. Once by the grave of Lazarus (John 11. 35); Once as He beheld the City (Luke 19. 41), and once in the Garden of Gethsemane (Heb. 5. 7). The Lord was not above natural emotion and though He never acted from that alone, yet He was not ashamed to shed tears. He was guided always by the will of God, but He was moved with compassion and allowed His feelings to be seen as the evidence of the love of His heart. His weeping by the grave of Lazarus was a silent emotion. On the Mount of Olives His lamentation was aloud. Different words are used for "wept."

5. "LEFT DESOLATE." The day of their visitation was past, nothing remained but for the Lord to allow Himself to be taken by wicked hands and slain. They had not known what belonged to their peace. The Lord's last warnings in parable and pleading had been ignored and now His last word was spoken. "Your house is left unto you desolate." He never spoke publicly to them again. His remaining ministry was to His disciples in the Upper Room.

6. HOW OFTEN WOULD I . . . BUT YE WOULD NOT. This is a word that may have a present application to those, alas, so many, with whom the Lord has striven, who have often heard the Gospel of His Grace. He would, they would not. To them also He must say, "Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life."

7. THE THINGS THAT BELONG UNTO YOUR PEACE. They are first to know *Peace with God*, which has its ground in the Blood of Christ, who made peace by the blood of His cross and is enjoyed by faith—being justified by faith we have Peace with God (Rom. 5. 1).

Then it is *the Peace of God* which comes as we abide in Christ, casting all our care on Him and in everything by prayer, making our request to Him (Phil. 4. 6-7). In this double sense we can say of Christ, "He is our Peace."

8. HIDDEN FROM YOUR EYES. "If our Gospel be hid it is hid to them that are lost in whom the God of this world hath blinded the eyes of them which believe not, lest the Light of the Gospel of the Glory of Christ who is the image of God should shine unto them" (II. Cor. 4. 3-4).

So it was with the guilty city, so it is with all who reject the Saviour.

9. PITY AND PROMISE. But the case was not hopeless. While the Lord wept He yet spake of a time to come, when the guilty nation brought to repentance, would look upon Him whom they pierced, and turn to the Lord and welcome Him saying, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (II. Cor. 3. 16).

V. Application.

Let us know the day of our visitation and the things that belong unto our Peace, that we may be gathered by Him.

ACROSTIC.

Our P EACE through the Blood.
 E ASE from our Burden.
 A CCEPTANCE in the Beloved.
 C OMFORT from the Book.
 E NTRANCE into Bliss.

STORY No. 58

The Lord's Supper

Read MATT. 26. 26-29 ; MARK 14. 22-25 ; LUKE 22. 19-20 ;
I COR. 11. 23-34.

I. Text. " This do in Remembrance of Me " (I Cor. 11. 24).

II. The Main Lesson. The Lord instituted the Supper as a Feast of Remembrance and an occasion of Fellowship in Worship. The child of God should never be absent from the Lord's Table on the first day of the week, but should come after first examining himself that he may eat and drink worthily. In eating the Lord's Supper he shows the Lord's death till He come.

III. The Story Told from the Four Accounts.

Matt. 26. 26. *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed (it) and brake it.* Luke 22. 19, " Gave thanks and brake it." I Cor. 11. 24, " When He had given thanks He brake it " *and gave it to them and said, Take, eat ; this is My body.* (Luke 22. 19, " This is my body which is given for you, this do in remembrance of Me." I Cor. 11. 24, " Take, eat, this is My body, which is broken for you : this do in remembrance of Me ").

v. 27. *And He took the cup and gave thanks and gave it to them* (Luke 22. 20, " Likewise also the cup." I Cor. 11. 25, " After the same manner also He took the cup when He had supped), *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* (Luke 22. 20, " This cup is the New Covenant in My blood which is shed for you." I Cor. 11. 25, " This cup is the New Testament in My blood, this do ye as often as ye drink it in remembrance of Me ").

v. 29. *But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.*

IV. Some Other Lessons from the Story.

1. A PLACE AT THE LORD'S TABLE, A SOLEMN RESPONSIBILITY. In I Cor. 10. 16-22 we are told that eating and drinking are actions denoting fellowship (communion) in the blood and body of Christ. No one but those redeemed by the precious blood of Christ can therefore partake of the cup worthily and none who is not a member of the body of Christ (see v. 17) can rightly eat of the bread which we break, for eating and drinking denote fellowship. And if any sit at the Lord's table in fellowship with Him they must not sit at the "table of demons" (v. 21) as well, for "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons: ye cannot be partaker of the Lord's table and of the table of demons." Let those then who sit at the Lord's table beware what other fellowship they have.

2. WHAT DO WE DO AT THE LORD'S TABLE ?

(a) *We worship and give thanks*, for it is essentially a eucharistic feast (eucharist means thanksgiving).

(b) *We eat and drink*, that is by faith we appropriate the blessings that have come to us by the death of Christ. We feed on Him who is the Bread from Heaven.

(c) *We remember our Lord*, that is we recall all He is, has done and has said to us. Memory brings before our faith His Divine Person so that "we see Jesus" (Heb. 2. 9) and all the scenes of His passion and death for us and for our sins, and all the words He spake which are spirit and life (John 6. 63).

(d) *We "shew His death"* (I Cor. 11. 26), that is we proclaim to all to whom it may concern the ground upon which we stand, our relationship to God, the access we have by the blood of Jesus unto the Holiest.

(e) *We "discern the body"* (I Cor. 11. 29), that is, under the symbol we perceive the reality.

" Only bread and only wine
But to faith the solemn sign
Of the unseen and Divine."

Moreover we recognize that we are one with all the saints. "One bread (loaf), one body" (I Cor. 10. 17), the loaf being a figure of the mystic body of which Christ is the Head and into which we have all been baptized (I Cor. 12. 13).

(f) *We anticipate His coming again.* For this is only "till He come" (I Cor. 11. 26).

3. WHAT IS EATING "UNWORTHILY?"

(a) In the first place it means that *no unsaved sinner may sit at the Lord's table.* He is "Yet in his sins" and "at enmity," and cannot truly take the symbols of fellowship seeing he has no part nor lot in the matter.

(b) *No believer with unconfessed and unjudged sin on the conscience* should appear before His Lord to eat His supper. Let him first cleanse himself before he eat. The law of the peace offering was as follows, "The soul that eateth of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings, that pertain unto the Lord, having his uncleanness upon him, then that soul shall be cut off from His people" (Lev. 7. 20). Let the believer, therefore, say with the psalmist, "I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass Thine altar, O Lord" (Ps. 26. 6).

(c) *Any believer out of fellowship with another* must not eat, for that is to condemn himself (29) by taking the symbols of fellowship when none exists. If any have a quarrel with another or will not speak to him, let him first go and be reconciled to his brother and then come (Matt. 5. 24).

(d) *Any one who has departed from the faith,* who has accepted "modern" ideas that deny the Deity or Atoning Sacrifice of Christ, His bodily resurrection or the authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures, should keep away from the Table.

4. No SUPERSTITIOUS FEARS should keep us away from the Lord's table. We are not there because of any merit or fitness or goodness of our own. We are objects of grace, coming on the ground of the blood at the invitation

of Our Lord to meet Him and remember again His dying love, we may do so “boldly” (Heb. 10. 19 and 22), and with the “full assurance of faith” and need have no fear, for “Perfect love, casteth out all fear.”

V. Application.

Let us reserve the Lord's day morning for the Lord's Table that we may remember Him as He desired.

No service should be allowed to interfere with this appointment.

The Seven Passovers

RECORDED IN THE BIBLE.

- | | | |
|---|-------|------------------|
| 1. <i>The First at its Institution,</i> | .. .. | Exod. 12. 11 |
| 2. <i>In the Wilderness,</i> | .. .. | Num. 9. 5 |
| 3. <i>The First in the Promised Land,</i> | .. .. | Josh. 5. 10 |
| 4. <i>In the Reign of Hezekiah,..</i> | .. .. | 2 Chron. 30. 15 |
| 5. <i>In the Reign of Josiah,</i> | .. .. | 2 Chron. 35. 1-9 |
| 6. <i>After the Return from Captivity,..</i> | .. .. | Ezra 6. 19 |
| 7. <i>The Last when the Lord was Present,</i> | .. .. | Matt. 25. 19 |

The Lord.

THE LORD'S	PEOPLE ON
„	DAY sit at
„	TABLE and eat
„	SUPPER. Shew the
„	DEATH in the symbols of
„	BODY AND BLOOD till
„	COMING AGAIN.

Washing the Feet

Read JOHN 13. 1-17.

I. **Text.** “ I have given you an Example ” (v. 15).

II. **The Main Lesson.** The Lord set us the example of lowly service to one another. He did the humblest office of washing the feet that He might show that true love will be willing to do anything for its objects, and we should by love serve one another. He taught another solemn lesson. “ If I wash thee not thou hast no part with Me,” and further that one who has been bathed is clean every whit, and needeth but to wash the feet from the dust of the day’s journey.

III. **The Story Told.**

vv. 3-5. *Jesus rises from supper and girding Himself with a towel washes the disciples’ feet.* “ Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things unto His hands, and that He was come from God and went to God, He riseth from supper and laid aside His garments ; and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded.”

vv. 6-8. *Peter expostulates and says He shall never wash his feet.* “ Then cometh He to Simon Peter : and Peter saith unto Him, Lord dost Thou wash my feet ? Jesus answered, What I do thou knowest not now ; but thou shall know hereafter. Peter saith unto Him, Thou shalt never wash my feet.”

v. 9. *The Lord tells him if He does not wash him, he has no part with Him.* Jesus answered “ If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me.”

vv. 9-10. *The Lord explains that who is once washed is clean every whit.* “ Peter saith, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him,

He that is washed (bathed R.V.) needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit."

v. 12-17. *The Lord explains the example He has set them.*
 "So after He had washed their feet and had taken His garments and was set down again, He said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call Me, Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than His Lord, neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

IV. More Lessons from the Story.

1. **THE INTRODUCTION** to this incident, v. 3, is remarkable. "The Lord knew that God had given all things unto His hands." This knowledge makes His condescending grace all the more wonderful and beautiful. That so great a One, come from God and going to God, should wash their feet is a magnificent example of true humility in loving service.

2. **JESUS GIRDED.** His enemies girded Him in a purple robe and mocked Him. He girded Himself with a towel to serve them. God girded Him with a golden girdle (Rev. 1. 13) as Our Great High Priest still serving His people but in dignity and power.

3. **WASHING THE FEET.** It has been suggested that since the disciples were occupied with the question who should be accounted the greatest (Luke 22. 24), none of them volunteered to do this menial service. So that it was neglected altogether until the Blessed Lord undertook it Himself. To love, nothing is "*infra dig.*"

4. **WHAT DOES FEET WASHING SIGNIFY?** It means the loving, lowly service of one believer towards another. Especially in helping to cleanse his walk from any defilement. We must not suffer sin upon a brother. (Lev. 19. 17) "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour and

not suffer sin upon him," but this requires great grace and lowliness, lest in seeking to help we hurt. Let us remember our Lord's words in Matthew 7. 3-4 and the apostle's in Gal. 6. 1, as to the mote in the brother's eye and the spirit of meekness needed in restoring the fallen, "considering" thyself lest thou also be tempted." But "faithful are the wounds of a friend," and Prov. 17. 10 tells us, "a reproof entereth more into a wise man than a hundred stripes into a fool."

5. "IF I WASH THEE NOT." This reminder to Peter is a solemn word to us all, to have no part with Christ is a sad condition to be in. Yet it is the lot of all who are still "in their sins," uncleansed and guilty. The first need of every sinner is to be cleansed from the guilt and defilement of sin through the precious blood of Christ. Until so purged he remains unsaved and far off, without Christ and without hope in the world. To many such the Lord will say, "I never knew you."

6. "BATHED." Our Lord's words, He that is "bathed" (R.V. v. 10) mean, He that having been forgiven is washed with the washing of regeneration; that is, has become a new creation in Christ. Such an one is "Clean every whit," or as Hebrews 10. 10 and 14 puts it, "Sanctified" and "perfected for ever." He has a perfect righteousness in which can stand in God's holy sight. He does not need that wonderful bathing to be repeated, but as he walks life's "way," his feet (his conscience) may become defiled and he needs to wash his feet as in 1 John 1. 9.

V. Application.

TO THE UNSAVED. Still unwashed, thou hast no part in Christ.

TO THE BELIEVER. Follow your Lord's example of willing lowly service and keep clean.

On the Way to Calvary

Read MATT. 27. 31-34 ; MARK 15. 20-23 ; LUKE 23. 26-33 ;
JOHN 19. 16-17.

I. Text. " They took Jesus and led Him away and He bearing His cross, went forth to a place called the place of a skull " (John 19. 17).

II. The Main Lesson. The story gives us the historical fulfilment of the prophecy, " He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb so He openeth not His mouth. . . . He was cut off out of the land of the living : for the transgression of My people was He stricken (" to whom the stroke was due." R.v.m.) (Isaiah 53. 7-8).

III. The Story Told from the Four Accounts.

Matt. 27. 31. " And after that they had mocked Him, they took the robe (Mark 15. 26, " the purple ") off from Him and put His own raiment on Him and led Him away to crucify Him."

Mark 15. 21. " And they compel one Simon, a Cyrenian who passed by coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear His cross (Luke 23. 26, "And on him they laid the cross that he might bear it after Jesus ").

Luke 23. 27-32. " And there followed Him a great company of people and of women which also bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For, behold the days are coming in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bare and the paps that never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us and to the hills cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry ? And there were two other malefactors led with Him to be put to death."

Matt. 27. 33-34. " And when they were come unto a place called (John 19. 17, " which is called in the Hebrew ") Golgotha, that is to say the place of a skull, they gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when He had tasted thereof He would not drink."

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. GOLGOTHA, THE PLACE OF A SKULL. The word " Calvary " does not appear in the Greek testament, it is taken from the Vulgate and is the Latin for the place of a Skull. The only place where the word appears in our A.V. is in Luke 23, 33, in the Greek it is " Kranion " = a skull.

2. WHERE IS GOLGOTHA? There is no authority for calling the place " a mountain." It is said, " to be seen afar off " (Luke 23. 49; Mark 15. 40), and it was " nigh to the city," and outside the gates of the city (Heb. 13. 12). The historic site known as " The Holy Sepulchre," chosen by St. Helena, where she is supposed to have found the cross, etc., and built the church of that name, is within the walls of the city and could certainly not be seen from afar. It is obviously false. The probable site is that known as " Gordon's Calvary," a prominence outside the North Gate that fulfils all the requirements.

3. CHRIST IS NEVER SAID TO HAVE FALLEN UNDER THE CROSS. The apostasy has sought to surround the scene with pathetic and sentimental details to evoke emotion and call forth pity, but this is not necessary. Love does not desire exaggerated pathos to be added to this dignified account. Especially we must refuse.

(a) *Anything that indicates fear or any lack of courage on the part of our Lord. Like many another noble man He met death with a fearless courage.*

(b) *Anything in the nature of an appeal for pity. Our Lord never made any such appeal. He never referred to or, as far as we know, thought of Himself, but always of others, until the sacrificial darkness of the last three hours. The Romish " Stages of the Cross," offend greatly in this, making Christ a pitiable weak figure falling three times*

under the cross and adding the sentimental fiction of St. Veronica and the holy handkerchief. This appeal to fleshly emotionalism we reject.

4. SIMON BEARING THE CROSS. It is possible that Christ was physically weakened by the scourging and therefore was relieved of the cross after He had carried it some distance. Simon the Cyrenian is described as the father of Alexander and Rufus. We find an Alexander, a disciple, referred to in Acts 19. 33, and a Rufus, Rom. 16. 13 is saluted. It is interesting to think that these may be the sons of Simon, and that he had told them how he bore the cross after Jesus and had thus won them to Christ.

5. AN INTERESTING INCIDENT in the life of Charles Simeon of Cambridge. Once walking across the quadrangle of his college he was greatly cast down because of the persecution he suffered, looking up to the Lord he asked Him to give him a word of comfort from His word. Opening the New Testament at random he lighted on the words, "They compelled one Simon, to bear His cross."

6. THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM were bidden weep for themselves and their children, for the Lord knew the awful siege and destruction that was to fall on their city. So terrible was it that 1,100,000 died in the siege and many others were sold into slavery and their temple and city was burned and the site actually ploughed over so that no stone remained upon another as the Lord foretold (Matt. 24. 2.)

7. IN THE GREEN TREE—IN THE DRY. The Lord Jesus is the Green Tree—the Innocent One—the root out of the dry ground. The only living thing in the dead nation. If the Romans dealt so cruelly with Him, the Innocent One, what will their treatment be of the Dry Tree, the guilty ones.

V. Application.

Let us adore the grace of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, who though He was rich, for our sakes became poor. Let us be willing to bear the Cross after Him.

STORY No. 61

They Watched Him There

THE LOOKERS-ON AT THE CROSS.

Read MATT. 27. 39-56 ; MARK 15. 29-41 ; LUKE 23. 35-49 ;
JOHN 19. 25-42.

I. Text. " And sitting down they watched Him there "
(Matt. 27. 36).

II. The Main Lesson. Those who looked on at the crucifixion illustrate the attitude of men toward the crucified Saviour.

Some are indifferent. Some mock. Some sympathize, while others see in His death their eternal salvation.

How do we behold that scene ?

III. The Incidents Around the Cross.

1. THE SOLDIERS CAST LOTS FOR HIS COAT.

John 19. 23. " Then the soldiers when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to every soldier a part ; and also His coat. Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore, Let us not rend it, but cast lots whose it shall be : that the scripture might be fulfilled which said, They parted my raiment among them and for my vesture they cast lots.

"These things therefore the soldiers did."

2. THE PASSERS-BY.

Matt. 27. 39-41 " 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."

3. THE RULERS.

Luke 23. 35. " And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided Him saying, He saved others let Him save Himself if He be Christ, the chosen of God."

4. THE SOLDIERS.

Luke 23. 36. " And the soldiers also mocked Him

coming to Him and offering Him vinegar and saying, If Thou be the King of the Jews save Thyself."

5. THE CHIEF PRIESTS, SCRIBES AND ELDERS.

Matthew 27. 41. " Likewise 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 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."

6. THE THREE MARYS.

John 19. 25-27. " Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, His mother and His mother's sister Mary, the wife of Cleophas and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He said unto His mother, Woman behold thy Son ! Then said He to the disciple, Behold thy mother ! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."

7. SOME WHO STOOD BY.

Matthew 27. 47. " Some of them that stood there when they heard that (" Eli! Eli! etc.") 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."

8. THE CENTURION.

Mark 15. 39. " And when the centurion which stood over against Him saw that He so cried out and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this Man was the Son of God."

(Luke 23. 47. " He glorified God saying, Certainly this was a righteous man.")

9. MANY OTHER WOMEN.

Matt. 27. 55. " 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 Zebedees' children (Mark 15. 40. " and Salome "); Luke 23. 48

“ Smote upon their breasts and returned ;” 49. “ And all His acquaintance.”

10. JOHN THE BELOVED DISCIPLE.

John 19. 34. “ And one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith there came out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true : and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken. And again another Scripture saith, They shall look on Him whom they pierced.”

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. “ HIM THERE.” C. H. Spurgeon has a wonderful sermon from the words, “ *They watched HIM THERE.*”

Who ? and where ?

Who ? The Prince of Life. The Lord of Glory. The Messiah, the Christ, the Sinless Substitute, the Saviour of Sinners, God Manifest in the Flesh. It was He there. They watched Him there.

Where ? On a Roman gibbet, a cross of shame, hanged between two thieves, mocked and despised and rejected of men. O wonder of Grace !

2. HOW DOES THE SIGHT AFFECT US ?

The *Soldiers* gambled for His clothes.

The *Passers-by* wagged their heads in mockery.

The *Rulers* called on Him to save Himself.

The *Soldiers* offered Him vinegar and bade Him save Himself.

The *Chief Priests*, forgetting the dignity of their office, joined in the ribaldry. They said a true thing in mockery. “ He saved others, Himself He cannot save.” They recalled His claim to be “ The King of Israel ” and “ The Son of God.” They witnessed that “ He trusted in God.”

The *Three Marys* and many other women and acquaintances saw His sorrow from afar and smote on their breasts.

The *Centurion* acknowledged Him as a righteous man and the Son of God.

John the Beloved Disciple saw and recorded the blood and water that issued from His wounded side.

How does the sight affect us ?

3. WHAT DID IT MEAN ? It speaks to us of

(a) *The Sovereignty of God.* " Who made Him to be Sin for us " (II. Cor. 5. 21). Who Himself provided the Lamb for the sacrifice.

(b) *The Grace of God.* Who so loved that He gave His Only Begotten Son. His One Son, His Well Beloved.

(c) *The Righteousness of God* in dealing in judgment on Sin, with Him the Sinless Substitute, that He might be just and the justifier of him that believes. " A just God and a Saviour."

(d) *A Manifestation of Perfect Obedience.* God had never seen an obedient man on earth before—all sinned, but Jesus became obedient unto death even the death of the cross.

(e) *A Perfect and Finished Sacrifice.* " It is finished " meant that there remains no more to be done. Sin is put away. Salvation is complete. Peace is made. Reconciliation effected.

(f) *A Wonderful Substitution.* So that the believer can say " I died," not personally, but in my substitute. " I have been crucified with Christ." Our old man (all we are in our sinful selves) was crucified with Him.

(g) *A Perfect Example* of suffering wrongfully. Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps.

(h) *A Terrible Condemnation.* The Cross divides the world.

It is the salvation of the believer.

It is the condemnation of the Christ rejecter, who by his rejection " crucifies to himself the Son of God afresh " (Heb. 6. 6) and is counted " Guilty of the body and blood of the Lord " (I. Cor. 11. 27).

V. Application.

Behold Him there ! and let the sight lead you to receive Him your Saviour, Redeemer and Lord.

STORY No. 62.

The Two Crucified Robbers

Read LUKE 23. 32-43.

I. **Text.** “ Verily I say unto thee, to-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.” v. 43.

II. **The Main Lesson.** That Salvation is purely of Grace apart from Merit or Works is clearly shown by the Story of the Penitent Thief.

The contrast between the two crucified robbers helps us to understand the nature of the faith that saves and the unbelief that misses salvation.

The Wonder of the Lord’s entrance into Paradise with a thief, the first fruits of an innumerable host of saved sinners, cannot but strike us as an evidence of the value of His atoning death.

III. The Story Told.

v. 32. *Two malefactors are led out to crucifixion.* “ And there were also two other malefactors led with Him to be put to death.”

v. 39. *One of them rails on Christ.* “ And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him saying, If Thou be Christ save Thyself and us.”

vv. 40-41. *The other rebukes him.* “ But the other answering rebuked him saying, Dost not thou fear God seeing thou art in the same condemnation, and we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds but this Man hath done nothing amiss.”

v. 42. *He appeals to Christ to remember Him when He comes into His Kingdom.* “ And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom.”

v. 43. *Jesus promises he shall be that day with Him in Paradise.* “ And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.”

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. **THE THREE CROSSES.** It has been pointed out of those who hung upon the three crosses The One had *no sin in Him* but *sin on Him*. The Penitent Thief had *sin in him* but *no sin on him*. The Impenitent Thief had both *sin in him* and *sin on him*.

For of the Lord Jesus we read, "In Him is no sin" but sin was laid upon Him for our sakes. "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree (Is. 53. 6).

The Penitent Thief had sin in him, as have all of us, but no sin upon him, since by faith he had the remission of sins and could rejoice that the Just had borne his sin, the unjust; and there is no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8. 1).

The Impenitent Sinner had sin in him and, alas, sin with all its guilt and condemnation still resting upon him—for he that believeth not is "condemned already."

2. **THE FAITH OF THE PENITENT THIEF** was shewn as follows:—

(a) *He confessed his guilt and the justice of his condemnation.* It is those who see their sinfulness and confess their guilt who find mercy (1 John 1. 9).

(b) *He rebuked the other thief in the fear of God* with words that might be read as if he believed Jesus to be God, "Dost thou not fear God seeing thou art in the same condemnation." Perhaps this is too much to imply, but it certainly was a confession of his own fear of God.

(c) *He recognised that Christ had done nothing amiss.* Had he known it, this was the Passover Lamb, the Lamb of God without spot (outward defect) or blemish (inner wrong).

(d) *He confessed Jesus as LORD.* This was by the Grace of the Spirit for "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost" (1. Cor. 12. 3). and "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord . . . thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10. 9. R.v.).

(e) *He recognised that He was a King with a Kingdom.* Most likely the superscription over His head had impressed

him : “ This is Jesus the King of the Jews.” Such a Man as he saw Jesus to be would not have claimed this falsely. The claim must be true.

(f) *He believed that His death was not the end but He was to enter into His Kingdom.* Surely he was a believer taught by the Spirit of God to make so wonderful a confession.

(g) *He asked to be remembered.* “ Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Our Blessed Lord refuses none. He was remembered and graced with Salvation.

3. THE MOCKERY OF THE IMPENITENT THIEF.

(a) *He derided the Claim* (39), the words are more exactly “ Art not Thou the Christ ? ” “ Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” This man was an unbeliever—still in his sins.

(b) *He had no fear of God* (40) and the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. He had not begun to be wise unto Salvation.

(c) *He made an impossible suggestion.* “ Save Thyself and us ” (39). The Lord could not do this. If He saved Himself we must be lost. Only by death can He secure salvation for sinners.

(d) *He died unaffected by the appeal made to him by the other thief.* Most sinners who go down to destruction do so in spite of many prayers and many appeals. These leave them “ without excuse.”

NOTE:—Matthew and Mark read as if both malefactors reviled the Lord. This is explained thus, “ The plural is often put for the singular where the predicate relates strictly to one subject, while yet the writer expresses the idea generally ” (e.g., Matt. 26. 8 and John 12. 4).

4. THE CROSS DIVIDES THE WORLD. The two thieves (robbers—that is highwaymen) represent the two classes into which the preaching of the Cross divides the world. Some believe, some believe not. Some accept, some reject Christ.

Those who believe and accept find in the Cross their eternal salvation, those who disbelieve and reject find in

the same Cross their Eternal Condemnation. They are counted guilty of that death since their sins contributed to it.

“ They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh ” (Heb. 6. 6).

“ They have trodden underfoot the Son of God and counted the Blood an unholy thing ” (Heb. 10. 29).

They are “ guilty of the body and blood of the Lord ” (1 Cor. 11. 27).

5. PARADISE. The word means “ A garden.” It occurs only three times in the Bible : here and in II. Cor. 12. 4. where it is identified with “ the third Heaven ” (v. 2) and in Rev. 2. 7. where we read that in the midst of it is the Tree of Life.

What joy unspeakable for that poor graced sinner to go from a gibbet to the Garden of God, the third Heaven, and eat of the Tree of Life.

6. THE STORY ABSOLUTELY REFUTES THE FALSE DOCTRINE OF PURGATORY. The pick-pocket purgatory of the pseudo-priest.

The sinner can only be purged by the precious Blood of Christ and that Blood cleanses from *all* sin—he is thereby “ clean every whit.” There remaineth no more to be done.

7. ONLY ONE CASE RECORDED. Of such a last hour repentance, this case alone is recorded. Death-bed repentance is seldom more than the terror stricken sinner attempting to escape the judgment awaiting him. But there is this one case that none may despair and only this one case that none may presume.

V. Application.

On which side of the Cross? A believer or an unbeliever?

The Forty Days

Read MATT. 28. 1-20; MARK 16. 1-20; LUKE 24. 1-53;
JOHN 20 and 21; and I CORINTHIANS 15. 4-8.

I. **Text.** " He shewed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs being seen of them forty days " (Acts 1. 3).

II. **The Main Lesson.** The Truth of our Holy Faith rests upon the fact of the Resurrection of Christ from the dead (I Cor. 15. 17).

This fact is attested by many infallible proofs.

The appearances recorded are gathered together here that we may be able to present them effectively.

III. **The Order of Christ's Appearances after His Resurrection.**

1. **FIRST TO MARY MAGDALENE** (Mark 16. 9; and John 20. 11-18).

"Jesus said unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She supposing him to be the gardener saith unto Him, Sir, if thou hast borne Him hence tell me where thou hast laid Him and I will take Him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself and saith unto Him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master" (John 20. 15-16).

2. **TO THE WOMEN RETURNING FROM THE SEPULCHRE** (Matt. 28. 8-10).

"As they went to tell the disciples, behold Jesus met them saying, All hail, and they came and held Him by the feet and worshipped Him."

3. **TO PETER** (Luke 24. 34; and I. Cor. 15. 5).

"The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared to Simon"

"He was seen of Cephas."

4. **THE TWO DISCIPLES ON THE WAY TO EMMAUS** (Mark 16. 12-13; and Luke 24. 13-35.)

"Jesus Himself drew near and went with them."

“ He took bread and blessed and brake and gave to them, And their eyes were opened and they knew Him ; and He vanished out of their sight.”

5. TO THE APOSTLES (except Thomas) at evening on the Lord's Day (Mark 16. 14-18 ; Luke 24. 36-49 ; John 20. 19-23 ; and I Cor. 15. 5).

“ The same day at even being the first day of the week came Jesus and stood in the midst and saith unto them Peace be unto you, and when He had so said He shewed them His hands and His side” (John 20. 19), “and His feet” (Luke 24. 40).

6. TO THE APOSTLES WITH THOMAS on the Lord's day (John 20. 24-29).

“ Then said He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands ; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side and be not faithless but believing. And Thomas answered and said, My Lord and My God.”

7. TO THE DISCIPLES BY THE LAKE OF TIBERIAS (Matt. 28. 16, and John 21. 1-24).

“ He said, Cast the net on the right side of the ship and ye shall find ” (v. 6).

“ Come and dine ” (v. 12).

“ Simon, Son of Jonas, lovest thou Me ? ” (v. 15).

8. TO THE ELEVEN IN GALILEE (Matt. 28. 16-20).

“ Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them (26. 32) and when they saw Him they worshipped Him.”

“ All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations.”

9. TO FIVE HUNDRED AT ONCE (I Cor. 15. 6).

“ After that He was seen of above 500 brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present.”

10. TO JAMES (I Cor. 15. 7).

“ After that He was seen of James.”

11. TO THE ELEVEN (I Cor. 15. 7 ; and Acts 1. 3-8).
 " Then of all the Apostles."

" Being assembled together with them He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem but wait for the promise of the Father."

12. AT THE ASCENSION (Mark 16. 19-20 ; Luke 24. 50-53 ; and Acts 1. 9-12).

" And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them, and it came to pass while He blessed them He was parted from them and carried up into Heaven."

IV. Some Other Lessons from the Story.

1. WHAT ARE THE INFALLIBLE PROOFS OF THE LORD'S RESURRECTION ?

(a) *The Empty Tomb.* The great stone before the grave which had been sealed with the Governor's seal, and a guard of Roman soldiers put to watch the door, is found rolled away and no body within.

The story the soldiers were bribed to tell was ridiculous since it was death for a Roman soldier to desert his post.

The story was never put forward to refute the Apostles (see Acts 4. 5-13).

The body was never produced as evidence against their testimony that God had raised Him from the dead.

(b) *The Lord did all possible to convince them of the reality of His having risen.* He bade them touch and handle Him to convince themselves He was not a spirit.

He spoke to and breathed upon them.

He ate and drank before them.

He shewed them the wounds in His hands, feet and side.

(c) *The long conversations* recorded shew that His was no shadowy visionary appearance as of a spectre—but so real that Mary mistook Him for the Gardener, and the two on the way to Emmaus thought Him a stranger.

The talk on the way to Emmaus is so beautiful and powerful that it agrees with His other talks recorded before His death. The same appeal to the Scriptures, the same

authority and love that none could imitate. He and none other could cause their hearts to burn within them thus.

The talk with Peter (John 21. 15-22) is so lovely in its matchless tenderness that again the Master's voice is recognized beyond a doubt.

The interview with Thomas (John 20. 24-29) bears every evidence of truth. So gracious a rebuke, so wise a call for faith convinces us that it is the Master Himself who speaks.

The Last Commission (Matt. 28. 16-20) with His promise "Lo, I am with you alway" has been proved by millions of His servants to be true. They have gone at His command and have realized His presence and His grace and power working with them.

Such are the many infallible proofs of His resurrection.

2. THE BLESSINGS RESULTING FROM HIS RESURRECTION.

(a) *We have a Living, Loving, Ever-Present Saviour and Friend.* We do not worship a dead historical personage but a Living Lord.

We do not (as do other religions) preserve the relics of a dead man or treasure the sayings of One who has long since gone. But rejoice in Him who assures us of His presence with us.

(b) *We have a great High Priest.* An Advocate with the Father, Who is the Propitiation for our sins—our Mercy Seat who ever lives to represent us before the Throne and is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him.

(c) *We have the Assurance of Resurrection* to life in Him. Because He lives we shall live also. He is the First-fruits of them that sleep. The hour is coming when all that are in their graves will hear His voice and come forth.

(d) *We Look for His Return*, for He said, "I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there ye may be also."

V. Application.

Let us rejoice in our Risen, Ever-Present Lord. Let us occupy till He come.

STORY No. 64

Peter's Restoration

Read JOHN 21. 4-19.

I. Text. "Simon, Son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?"

II. The Main Lesson. We have here the Grace of Christ in restoration seen in matchless tenderness.

Peter who had denied the Lord with oaths and curses is met with no reproaches but forgiven and recommissioned.

III. The Story Told. (John 21. 4-19).

v. 4, 5. *The Lord stands on the shore and asks if they have any food.*

"When the morning was now come Jesus stood on the shore but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus said unto them, Children have ye any meat? They answered Him, No."

v. 6. *He bids them cast their nets on the right side and they catch a multitude of fishes.*

"And He said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship and ye shall find. They cast, therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes."

v. 7. *John tells Peter it is the Lord. Peter gets to shore.*

"Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now Simon Peter girt his fisher's coat about him and did cast himself into the sea."

v. 8-14. *The Lord bids them, "Come and Dine."*

"The other disciples came in a little ship dragging the net with fishes.

They saw a fire of coals, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

Jesus said unto them, Come and dine, and none dare ask Him, Who art Thou? knowing that it was the Lord."

v. 15. *After dining, Jesus asks Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?"*

"So when they had dined, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?"

He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.

He saith unto him, Feed my lambs."

v. 16. *The Lord asks a second time and receives the same answer.*

"He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me ?

He saith unto Him. Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto Him, Feed My sheep."

v. 17. *He asks a third time—Peter is grieved and replies as before.*

"He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me ? Peter was grieved because He said the third time, Lovest thou Me ? And he said unto Him, Lord, Thou knowest all things ; Thou knowest that I love Thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed My sheep."

vv. 18-19. *Jesus foretells Peter's martyrdom.*

"Verily, Verily, I say unto thee, when thou was young thou girdest thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldst ; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldst not. Thus spake He, signifying by what death He should glorify God.

And when He had spoken this, He said unto him, Follow Me."

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. OUR LORD'S TREATMENT OF PETER. There was no reproach although Peter had denied the Lord with oaths and curses, because the Lord knew "the flesh is weak." He knew also that with Peter "the spirit was willing."

The Lord is very gracious to failure where the heart is right. It is those who wilfully turn out of the way who are condemned, not those who stumble in it.

Moreover, Peter's faith had not failed because the Lord had specially prayed for Him.

Now the Lord draws from him that his love had not

failed either and "if any man love God the same is known of Him." (1 Cor. 8. 3).

Peter learnt his own weakness and the faithfulness of the love of Christ.

"So the righteous falleth . . . but riseth up again," unlike Judas who fell to eternal ruin.

2. OUR LORD'S QUESTION—Lovest thou Me?

It is important to notice what is hidden in our English translation that two words are used for love.

The Lord asks twice, Lovest (AGAPAS) thou Me? Peter answers always Thou knowest that I love (PHILEIS) Thee (15, 16 and 17).

The third time the Lord alters the word and uses lovest (PHILEIS) thou Me? This is what grieved Peter, that the Lord should use the lesser word, for though Peter would not use the greater word of himself, he was sorry the Lord should not continue to do so.

AGAPAS means a love of devotion such as Peter had boasted of that he would lay down his life for Jesus. He would boast of such love no longer.

PHILEIS means a love or respect not so intense and devoted. Peter would claim no more for himself than this, for he was conscious that his devotion, so loudly protested, had failed.

The question was asked three times since the denial had been thrice.

3. THE LORD FED THE WEARY FISHERMEN

who had toiled all night and caught nothing before He spoke to Peter. It was so in the case of Elijah when he fled from Jezebel (1 Kings 19. 6).

He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust.

4. LOVEST THOU ME? Is the question for us all.

It is the love of our hearts the Lord desires—not a forced obedience or an unwilling service, but the devotion of our inmost being. For the only obedience that pleases Him

is the obedience of faith and love. The only service He wants is that of the forgiven sinner who yields himself as bondsman to Him for very love of His Name.

Only in those who love, does the Lord see of the travail of His soul and is satisfied.

5. "FEED MY LAMBS"—"FEED MY SHEEP."

Only those who love the Lord are fitted to care for His flock. Again the Lord uses two words. The first time He says, "Feed My lambs," and the last time, "Feed My sheep," but the second time He uses the word "tend as a Shepherd" that Peter repeats in his Epistle (1 Peter 5. 2) when he is exhorting the elders to take the oversight of the Assembly of God.

6. PETER'S MARTYRDOM FORESHADOWED. Without going into detail the Lord anticipates the death by which Peter would glorify God.

The legend is that he was crucified head downward and died like his Lord upon a cross.

He had protested that he would follow his Lord to death and though he had shrunk from the ordeal at first, later his desire was granted him.

7. "FOLLOW ME." The Lord ends where He had begun with Peter. He had found him fishing and bade him follow "Follow Me" (Matt. 4. 18-19).

He had taught him his sinful state through a miraculous draught of fishes (Luke 5. 8). and now under the same circumstances he restores him and recommissions him in His service.

Let us hear the Divine Voice, "Follow Me."

V. Application.

To those who have fallen or backslidden remember your Lord loves you still. Return to Him, He will not upbraid you.

To all—Let the question "Lovest thou Me?" find its answer in our hearts. "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

That Good Man Barnabas

Read ACTS 4. 36, 37 ; 9. 26, 27 ; 11. 21-26 ; 12. 25 ; 13. 3 ; 43-52 ; 14. 8-20 ; 15. 1-39 ; Gal. 2. 13.

I. **Text.** “ He was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith ” (Acts 11. 24).

II. **The Main Lesson.** Barnabas, Paul’s companion on his first missionary journey, is called a good man. He is an illustration of what the Grace of God does for those who believe in the Lord Jesus.

His story is full of useful lessons, some of which appear below.

Whose faith follow.

III. The Story of Barnabas.

1. *His first introduction* is in Acts 4. 36-37. “ Josep surnamed Barnabas (the son of consolation) a Levite of Cyprus having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the Apostles’ feet.”

2. *Barnabas introduces Saul the new convert.* (9. 26-27). “ When Saul was come to Jerusalem he assayed to join himself to the disciples but they were all afraid of him but Barnabas took him to the apostles and declared how he had seen the Lord in the way.”

3. *Barnabas is sent to Antioch to confirm the Grecian converts. He seeks out Saul and brings him too.* (11. 21-26). “ The hand of the Lord was with them and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.

When tidings came to the Church in Jerusalem they sent Barnabas that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when He came, and had seen the Grace of God, was glad and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord, for he was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith.

Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus to seek Saul and when he had found him he brought him to Antioch.

4. *The Holy Ghost bids the Church at Antioch separate Barnabas and Saul for the work.* (13. 1-4). "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them, and when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them they sent them away."

The First Missionary Journey is recorded in Acts 13. 4-14, 26.

5. *Barnabas and Paul disagree as to John Mark.* (15. 36-39). "Some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city and see how they do.

And Barnabas determined to take with them John Mark.

But Paul thought not good to take him who departed from Pamphylia and went not with them to the work.

And the contention was so sharp between them that they departed asunder one from the other and so Barnabas took Mark and sailed unto Cyprus."

6. *Barnabas is carried away by the false teaching of the Judaisers.* (Galatians 2. 13). "Other Jews dissembled likewise with Peter; insomuch that Barnabas was also carried away with their dissimulation."

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. A GOOD MAN. What does this mean? There are two persons of whom this description is used, Barnabas (11. 24) and Joseph of Arimathea (Luke 23. 50).

(a) *Not good as being able to stand on his merits before God.* There is none good (Luke 18. 19) but God. "There is none that doeth good no not one" (Rom. 3. 12). "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7. 18).

(b) *But good in the sense of being moral and kind-hearted* as in Romans 5. 7, and Matt. 5. 45, and 22. 10. For among

ordinary men there is this difference : some are good and some are bad, speaking after the manner of men.

(c) *A good man is one who has been justified by faith in Christ.* He is accounted of God as righteous and may fairly be spoken of as good or godly.

(d) *Goodness is the fruit of the Spirit* (Gal. 5. 22) and therefore should be seen in all the Children of God.

Such should have a Good Conscience, witness a Good Confession, fight a Good Fight, be rich in Good Works and lay up a Good Foundation against the time to come.

Therefore a Christian should be a Good Man.

2. BARNABAS' FULL CONSECRATION. He is seen first devoting all his means to the Lord's service—selling his land and laying the money at the Apostles' feet. Then he was full of the Holy Ghost. and this we too are bidden to be (Eph: 5. 18). "Be filled with the Spirit" and then he was "full of faith."

It was this fully surrendered man that the Lord chose as Paul's co-worker on his first missionary journey.

3. HIS WISE TEACHING. Perhaps there were never wiser words spoken to new converts than those Barnabas gave to the Grecians. "He exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave to the Lord."

For this is the beginning and end of the Christian's life—to cleave to the Lord.

The Lord intended this when He said, "Abide in Me and I in you."

4. HIS KINDNESS TO PAUL. When the Christians at Jerusalem were afraid to receive Saul of Tarsus, the former persecutor, it was Barnabas who introduced and vouched for him.

And when the Grecian converts and others at Antioch needed further teaching, Barnabas went to Tarsus to fetch Paul. He knew a better teacher than himself and wisely sought him out.

5. THE SAD DISAGREEMENT between these two excellent servants of God reminds us that the flesh is still in the holiest of God's children.

Barnabas was perhaps too anxious that his nephew (Col. 4. 10) should share in the work. Personal relationships should not weigh with us in the Lord's work. Even the Lord would not allow His mother to interfere in his work (John 2. 4 ; and Matt. 12. 46-50).

Contention all down the years has been a dividing force among Christians. Paul afterwards wrote to Timothy that the Man of God should not strive and bade the Corinthians suffer wrong rather than do so (I. Cor. 6. 7).

6. THE LAST WE READ OF BARNABAS IS THAT HE DISSEMBLED WITH PETER over the matter of eating with the Gentile converts.

This reminds us again that even the best are liable to be led astray by false teaching.

This Son of Consolation, this good man slipped, but no doubt with Peter soon recovered.

Let us beware of false teachers, weighing all in the balances of the Sanctuary, proving all things, trying the Spirits whether they be of God.

“ If they speak not according to this word ” (Isaiah 8. 20) is the true test.

V. Application.

Covet to be good men.

Cleave with purpose of heart to the Lord.

Beware of false teachers.

Tabitha (or Dorcas) Full of Good Deeds

Read ACTS 9. 36-42.

I. **Text.** “ This woman was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did ” (v. 36).

II. **The Main Lesson.** Dorcas has been the pattern of good works all down the ages.

She made coats and garments, presumably for the needy saints among them.

She was full of good works, that is devoted herself wholeheartedly to doing good and she gave alms.

Christians should be full of good works—for faith works by love.

III. **The Story Told.** Acts 9. 36-42.

v. 36-37. *A woman named Tabitha and also called Dorcas of Joppa dies.*

“ Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha which by interpretation is called Dorcas (that is “ a gazelle ”). This woman was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did. And she was sick and died whom they laid in an upper chamber.”

v. 38. *They send for Peter at Lydda.* “ Forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa and the disciples had heard that Peter was there they sent two men desiring him that he would not delay to come to them.”

v. 39. *Peter comes—they show the things Dorcas had made.* “ Then Peter arose and went with them and they brought him unto the upper chamber : and all the widows stood by weeping and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made when she was with them.”

v. 40. *Peter restores her to life.* “ But Peter put them all forth and kneeled down and prayed : and turning him to the body said, Tabitha arise. And she opened her eyes : and when she saw Peter she sat up.

v. 41. *Peter presents her to them alive.* “ And he gave her his hand and lifted her up and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.”

v. 42. *Many believe as the result.* “ And it was known throughout all Joppa and many believed in the Lord.”

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. FULL OF GOOD WORKS. The place of works in the Christian life is as follows :

(a) *All works done before faith* are “ dead works,” because whatsoever is not of faith is sin and without faith it is impossible to please God. Such works are like the toys hung on a Christmas tree, they do not grow there but are for show hung on a dead tree.

(b) *Justification* is “ not of works ” (Eph. 2. 9 ; and Titus 3. 5) for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

“ Till to Jesus' work you cling,
With a steadfast faith,
Doing is a deadly thing,
Doing ends in death.”

For one to be occupied with his own works is to hinder him from coming to Christ in whom alone is salvation.

(c) *We are God's workmanship* (Eph. 2. 10). He creates us anew so that as living branches of the True Vine we may bring forth the fruit unto God.

(d) “ *Unto Good Works.*” God plants trees to bear fruit. Good works are the outcome of faith which works by love.

Faith that does not work is a dead lifeless thing—all true faith shews itself in good works.

(e) *The believer then must be* “ careful to maintain good works ” (Titus 3. 14), “ zealous of good works ” (2. 14), “ a pattern of good works ” (2. 7), “ ready to every good work ” (3. 1).

2. COATS AND GARMENTS. Many who cannot give money can nevertheless work with their hands and thus supply the needs of others. This has become a regular

thing in most churches and should be earnestly and vigorously maintained.

Be not forgetful of this excellent way of serving the Lord.

3. PETER RAISES THE DEAD. Only once was this Apostle permitted to do this, as Paul also was once able to do so.

There has been no case of the dead being raised since.

The "raising of the dead" the Lord commanded is of those dead in trespasses and sins. The hour is come when these dead hear and live (John 5. 25), but not the day when all in their graves will do so (John 5. 28).

The "miracle workers" of to-day can do nothing here. Let us beware lest we are deceived by them in their other claims.

4. GIVING ALMS. "Remember the Poor" is an express command and should not be neglected. Paul was exhorted to do this and adds "the same which I also was forward to do" (Gal. 2. 10).

It is not easy to do good. It costs time and exercise of heart. Much that is called charity does harm and much is patronage, that is not the loving and sympathetic thing it should be.

Like all other good works it needs to be learnt. Some are experts at it.

There are rich promises to those who consider the poor (Psalm 41. 1-3): "Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive and he shall be blessed on the earth and Thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness."

V. Application.

Let our faith show itself in good works and almsgiving.

STORY No. 67

The Lame Man at Lystra

Read ACTS 14. 8-18.

I. Text. "Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked." (v. 10).

II. The Main Lesson. This case of healing caused a great stir in Lystra.

The superstition of idolaters is illustrated and the fickleness of the crowd that began by worshipping the apostles as gods and then stoned them as they thought to death.

The teaching of Paul and Barnabas on God's relation to the heathen is most instructive and should be studied. He has not left Himself without witness among them and does them good.

III. The Story Told. (Acts 14. 8-18.)

vv. 8-10. *At Lystra a lame man is healed.* "There sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked. The same heard Paul speak, who steadfastly beholding him and perceiving that he had faith to be healed said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked."

vv. 11-12. *The people say the gods are come down. They call Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercury.*

"And when the people saw what Paul had done they lifted up their voices saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.

And they called Barnabas, Jupiter, and Paul, Mercurias, because he was the chief speaker."

v. 13. *The priests of Jupiter prepare to do sacrifice to them.* "Then the priest of Jupiter . . . brought oxen and garlands unto the gates and would have done sacrifice with the people."

v. 14. *Paul and Barnabas run among them and prevent*

them. “ Which when the Apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of they rent their clothes and ran in among the people crying out and saying—”

vv. 15-17. *Their speech.* “ Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you and preach that ye should turn from these vanities unto the Living God which made heaven and earth and the sea and all therein.

Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”

v. 18. *They succeed in restraining them.* “ With these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.”

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. **THE LAME ARE HEALED.** The Lord Jesus often healed the lame (Matt. 11. 5 ; 15. 30 ; 21. 14). It was the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple (Acts 3. 2) that awakened interest in Jerusalem where Peter and John preached. So now at Lystra a lame man is healed.

This miracle illustrates the work of the Gospel. It is that the lame may walk; that those who could not walk in God's ways should walk in newness of life. Perhaps that is why this miracle so often occurs.

2. **FAITH TO BE HEALED.** This does not imply some virtue in the man—Faith is not a meritorious thing and earns nothing—but Paul saw an appeal that had a simple faith in it, in this man, and responded to it. Just as the Lord never refused such an appeal, for faith ever honours and pleases God.

It does not teach that if only one has faith enough he may be healed of any illness or infirmity, for this is not true.

Faith is confidence in Christ, and more confidence is often shown in bearing with patience some bodily trouble such as Paul's “ thorn in the flesh ” and Timothy's “ often

infirmity," than restlessly demanding its removal and trying to believe it will go if one only believes hard enough.

Many have been stumbled by such teaching. Rest in the Lord and be content with His dispensation.

3. THE PITIABLE FOLLY OF SUPERSTITION. Man is so constituted that he cannot do without God. Where the knowledge of the True God is forgotten he turns to other objects of veneration (see Romans 1. 19-23) as in the case before us. Superstition takes the place of faith and reason. One of the saddest features of the present day is that as the result of the neglect of the Bible and the hearing of the Gospel, men and women are turning to the most absurd superstitions and are ready to follow any mountebank who is clever enough to take their fancy.

Nothing seems too silly to gain adherents and every foolish cult prospers in our land. Mascots are now taking the place in England of the household gods of the heathen.

4. PRIESTS AND SACRIFICES. Blind reverence for those who call themselves priests and pretend to offer sacrifices is still yielded by many to-day, notwithstanding the plain teaching of Scripture that no longer is there an earthly order of priests (Heb. 7. 11) and that "*there is no more offering for sin,*" since Jesus offered Himself—"one sacrifice for sins for ever" (Heb. 10. 12) thus sanctifying His people and perfecting them for ever (Heb. 10. 10 and 14) But the Word of God being neglected the superstitious turn to these vain, even blasphemous, substitutes.

5. THE APOSTLES DISCLAIM ANY SUPERIORITY (15). They are "men of like passions" with us. Sinners saved by grace are entitled to the title "Saint" in common with all those sanctified by the Blood of Jesus.

To remove some saints to a distance, by rendering them undue worship is to spoil their testimony and example.

6. GOD SUFFERED ALL NATIONS TO WALK IN THEIR OWN WAYS. Man can never complain that he was not allowed liberty. God has allowed him "to walk in his own ways" and he has shown himself the foolish, cruel, and sinful

creature he is ; a fallen and guilty sinner as, witness the sorrows, tears and bloodshed now upon earth.

Let our own hearts witness to the shame and guilt and sorrow that we have brought upon ourselves in that we have all gone astray like lost sheep turning every man to his own way (Isaiah 53. 6).

7. GOD HAS NOT LEFT HIMSELF WITHOUT WITNESS. Even the darkest heathen has three great witnesses for God.

(a) Conscience (see Rom. 2. 14-15).

(b) Nature (Ps. 19. 1, and Rom. 1. 20) and

(c) Providence (v. 17). " Rain and fruitful seasons filling their hearts with food and gladness " told them of a Gracious God who cared for and supplied their need. (See also Matt. 6. 26-30).

But we who live in this day of Grace are entirely without excuse if we know not God for we have these further witnesses.

(d) He has spoken in His Son (Heb. 1. 1-2 and John 3. 16).

(e) The Oracles of God—the Holy Scriptures (II Tim 3. 16)

(f) The Holy Spirit (Acts 5. 32).

" If we refuse to hear Him who has thus spoken from Heaven how shall we escape (See Heb. 2. 1-3 and 12. 25).

V. Application.

Beware of priests, sacrifices and superstitious reverence to creatures and created things. Hear the witness of God. Turn to Christ, hear the Word and receive the Spirit of God.

Diana of the Ephesians

Read ACTS 19. 23-41.

I. Text. “ Our craft is in danger ” (v. 27).

II. The Main Lesson. The traffic in superstition and idolatry has proved very profitable to the priests and other traders in them.

Their pretended zeal for religion is exposed by their complaint that “ our craft is in danger.”

They had their wealth by this unholy business (25) and it was necessary for them to keep up the fraud, though these traffickers are the last to believe in it.

Faith in Christ and the submission of the heart to His word will deliver us from these vanities and bring us into freedom from priestcraft and superstition.

III. The Story Told. Acts 19. 23-41.

v. 23. *The preaching of the Gospel at Ephesus causes a stir.* “ There arose no small stir about that way.”

vv. 24-27. *Demetrius who made shrines for Diana calls his fellow craftsmen together and addresses them.* “ Demetrius a silversmith which made silver shrines for Diana . . . called together the workmen and said :

Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.

Paul hath turned away much people saying, That they be no Gods which are made with hands.

Our craft is in danger and the Temple of the Great Diana despised—her magnificence destroyed whom all Asia and the world worshipped.”

vv. 28-29. *The crowd cry out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.* “ When they heard they were full of wrath and cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians. The whole city was filled with confusion and they rushed with one accord into the theatre.

v. 30-31. *Paul would go in to address them, but is restrained.* “When Paul would have entered in unto the people the disciples suffered him not, and certain of the chiefs of Asia sent to him desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theatre.”

v. 32-34. *The uproar continued for two hours.* “Some cried one thing and some another. Alexander would have made his defence but when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.”

v. 35. *The Town Clerk quietens and dismisses the mob.* “When the Town Clerk had appeased the people he said, Ye men of Ephesus what man is there that knoweth not that this city was a worshipper of the Great Goddess Diana and of the image that fell down from Jupiter? . Ye ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly. If Demetrius has a matter against any man the law is open, let them implead one another. We are in danger to be called in question for this day’s uproar. When he had thus spoken he dismissed the assembly.”

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. “MEN OF CORRUPT MINDS . . . SUPPOSING THAT GAIN IS GODLINESS.” (I. Tim. 6. 5).

All down the ages corrupt men have made religion a means of gain. From Eli’s sons (I. Sam. 2. 12-17) to the Pharisees of our Lord’s day (Mark 12. 40) and to Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8. 9-11 and 20) and the men with the demented girl at Philippi (Acts 16. 16). So in our story these wretched traffickers in silver shrines for Diana by it have their livelihood. Even the Temple of God itself had in such hands become a “den of thieves.”

How long would Romanism and the Papacy last if no money were allowed to pass? and men forbidden to flaunt themselves in gorgeous robes with swelling titles and to oppress with usurped authority? Every true believer in Christ should come out and be separate from this confusion.

2. **THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL.** It turned the world upside down (Acts 17. 6). The Temple of Diana began to be forsaken and ultimately was swept away as rubbish.

The Gospel emptied the Pantheon at Rome of all its idols and broke that iron-power. It brought to naught the wisdom of Greece and confounded its philosophers.

It has renewed the hearts and transformed the lives of thousands of millions, for it is the power of God unto Salvation to everyone that believeth.

3. **PAUL'S COURAGE.** It was only by earnest entreaty, almost by force, that the Apostle was prevented from going into the theatre to face that howling mob. He would have used the occasion to preach Christ. He "counted not his life dear unto himself."

It is such men "who love not their lives unto the death," that God uses and who have overcome the Devil whose masterpiece is idolatry.

4. **THE STUPIDITY OF IDOLATRY.** To believe that a wooden doll would fall from Heaven is to ascribe the most puerile thoughts to the Blessed God. This image of Diana, like the "Holy Bambino" at Rome, a lifeless block of wood, is given the glory that is due to God alone. Well might the Apostle say, "Why do ye these things?"

Why indeed?

5. **THE SENSELESS CROWD.** How easily the mob is raised, and how senseless it is. "The more part knew not wherefore they were come together" (32). Yet they cried themselves hoarse.

When Cromwell was acclaimed by a great crowd on his return from his resounding victories, he satirically remarked, "They would shout even louder if I were going to execution."

The crowd that cried one day, "Hosannah in the Highest," as Christ entered Jerusalem, cried, "Away with Him, crucify Him," a few days later.

6. **THE WISE TOWN CLERK.** One sensible man quelled the excitement. His advice is good, "We ought to do

nothing rashly." The appeal to the emotions of the mob was an unworthy trick on the part of Demetrius. Every agitator and false teacher does it still. Let us beware of those who draw and excite the crowd.

A wise man feareth . . . but the fool rageth (Prov. 14. 16).

"The words of the wise are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools." (Ecc. 9. 17).

V. Application.

Beware of agitators and mob raisers.

Beware of idolatry and all religion that is making gain of godliness.

Illustrations of Superstition.

Laban's gods stolen by Rachel,	..	Gen. 31. 19, 30, 34
The Golden Calf,	.. .. .	Exod. 32. 3-6
Gideon's Ephod,	.. .. .	Judges 8. 27
Micah's Molten Image,	.. .. .	Judges 17. 3
Jeroboam's Two Calves at Dan and Bethel,	1 Kings 12. 28, 29	
Baal Worshippers,	.. 2 Kings 10. 21 ; 1 Kings 18. 25-29	
The Brazen Serpent,	.. .. .	2 Kings 18. 4
Idolaters Generally,	.. .. .	Isa. 44. 9-20
Cakes to the Queen of Heaven,	.. .. .	Jer. 44. 19
The Sun Worshippers,	.. .. .	Ezek. 8. 16
Nebuchadnezzar's Golden Image,	.. .. .	Dan. 3. 1
The Beast and the Dragon,	.. .. .	Rev. 13. 4

The Man who fell out of the Window

Read ACTS 20. 6-12.

I. Text. “ Eutychus being fallen into a deep sleep . . . fell down from the third loft and was taken up dead ” (v. 9).

II. The Main Lesson. The last recorded case in the world’s history of one dead being restored to life. The possibility and danger of sleeping under the most profitable ministry. The “ breaking of bread ” on “ the first day of the week,” taught us by the example of these early believers.

III. The Story Told. (Acts 20. 6-12).

v. 6. *Paul and his companions arrive at Troas from Philippi and spend a week there.* “ We sailed away from Philippi and came unto them to Troas in five days, where we abode seven days.”

v. 7. *They meet to break bread on the first day of the week and Paul preaches.* Upon the “ first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached, ready to depart on the morrow and continued his speech until midnight.”

vv. 8-9. *Eutychus sleeps and falls from the third storey and dies.* “ There were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together, and there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep : and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep and fell down from the third loft and was taken up dead.”

v. 10. *Paul restores him to life.* “ And Paul went down and fell on him and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves ; for his life is in him.”

v. 11. *They continue their meeting till daybreak.* “ When he therefore was come up again and had broken bread

and eaten and talked a long while even till break of day, so he departed."

v. 12. *The young man lives and all are comforted.* " They brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted."

IV. Some Other Lessons from the Story.

1. THE BREAKING OF BREAD ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK. While we have no express command that this should be done, yet having this example we do well to follow it. The Lord bade us " Remember Him " in the supper and this we do in the manner here set before us. Those who habitually do so will witness to the comfort and enrichment of soul that has come to them through it. The first sign of back-sliding often is the neglecting and forsaking of the assembling of themselves together as is the manner of some (Heb. 10. 25).

2. LONG PREACHING. The length of the preaching will be regulated by the hunger and thirst after righteousness of the hearers. Where the preaching is a mere customary formality the hearers complain if it exceeds quarter of an hour or twenty minutes in length. But where the word of God is esteemed more than one's necessary food, such a meagre portion would be lamented. Wherever God has revived his saints, their desire to hear the word of God is increased. In the recent awakening in Poland, five hour meetings ended in requests for more and an unwillingness to leave.

3. OUR BELOVED BROTHER PAUL often preached things " hard to be understood " (II Peter 3. 15-16). It is no wonder that a tired slave at the end of a hard day's work should be overcome of drowsiness. He could probably neither read nor write and was unable to follow the reasonings of the apostle, we must not judge him too harshly.

4. OVERCOME OF SLEEP. Sleeping in the meeting during the preaching may arise from several reasons.

(a) *Honest weariness* after a hard day's work, which is pardonable.

(b) *Laziness* and a love of drowsy ease which is to be reprov'd and should not be yielded to.

(c) *Bad air* through "Many lights" and want of ventilation which should be remedied by those responsible.

(d) *A lack of interest in spiritual things*, which is a cause of shame.

(e) *An ignorance* that is unable to follow as in the case of children or dull hearers.

(f) *A want of life and power* in the preacher whose dull delivery often by its monotony induces sleep.

(g) *Too long sermons* that exhaust the power of the hearers whose ability to concentrate and to give attention is limited. Let all things be done to edification and decently and in order.

5. THE DANGER OF SLEEPING may be pointed out from this story, not only physically but spiritually. Many scriptures bid not to sleep as do others, but to watch and pray lest we enter into temptation. It is high time to awake out of sleep. It was while men slept that the enemy came and sowed tares.

6. LIFE FROM THE DEAD. This last raising of the dead reminds us that the "miraculous" has ceased. Not because the Lord's power is less but because such displays are now unnecessary. What is to be gained by a miracle? It does not convince (Luke 16. 31). It is not required to attest the truth since there are millions of living witnesses to Christ. The quiet believer is satisfied to trust His Lord without signs and wonders, and prefers to preach the gospel without the excitement of miracles, since he knows that it and it alone is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.

V. Application.

Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, but meet to break bread on the first day of the week. Let us not sleep as do others.

STORY No. 70.

The Heavenly Jerusalem

Read REV. 21. 9-27.

I. **Text.** “Come hither, I will shew thee the Bride, the Lamb’s wife. He . . . shewed me that great city the holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God” (vv. 9-10).

II. **The Main Lesson.** The church of God has all through the Scriptures been likened to a city which is to form the metropolis of the new heaven and the new earth. The figure is carried through to the end and in the closing chapters of the Bible we see the great city, the holy Jerusalem called the Bride, the Lamb’s Wife, coming down from heaven adorned as a bride for her husband, and having the glory of God. From it we learn something of the wonderful destiny of the church when manifested in glory and associated with Christ in eternal blessedness.

III. **The Description of the Holy City (Rev. 21. 9-27).**

v. 9. *One of the seven angels bids John come and see the Lamb’s wife.* “There came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the last seven plagues and talked with me, saying, Come hither and I will shew thee the Bride, the Lamb’s wife.”

v. 10. *He is shewn the Holy Jerusalem from a high mountain coming down from God.* “And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God.”

vv. 11-21. *The city described.* “Having the glory of God, and her light was as a jasper stone, clear as crystal.”

The Wall and Gates. A wall great and high with 12 gates, twelve angels thereat and names of the twelve tribes thereon—three gates east, three north, three south and three west.

The Foundations. Twelve with names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb thereon.

Measurements. It was four square, as broad as long, 12,000 furlongs. The wall, 144 cubics—man's (that is angels) measure.

The Building of the wall was jasper, the city, pure gold like glass.

Foundations garnished with jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius, chrysolyte, beryl, topaz, chrysoprasus, jacinth and amethyst.

Twelve gates were twelve pearls, the street pure gold like glass.

v. 22. *There was no Temple in it.* "I saw no temple therein for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it."

v. 23. *No need of sun or moon.* "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it and the Lamb is the light thereof."

v. 24. *It is the metropolis for the saved nations.* "The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it."

vv. 25-26. *The gates never shut for there is no night.* "The gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. They shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it."

v. 27. *Nothing that defiles enters it.* "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

IV. Other Scriptures that speak of the Church under the Figure of a Holy City.

Gal. 4. 26. "Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all, for it is written, Rejoice thou barren that bearest not, break forth and cry thou that

travaileth not, for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband."

Eph. 2. 19. " Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth into an holy temple in the Lord in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit."

1 Peter 2. 5. " Ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house an holy priesthood."

Hebrews 12. 22. " But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Rev. 21. 2. " And I, John, saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband " (see also Rev. 3. 12).

V. Other Lessons from the Vision.

1. THE TRUE CHARACTER OF THE CHURCH. The church of Christ, which is His body, is not a visible organization on earth, but an unseen organism, of which Christ is the Head and every redeemed sinner a living member. A mystic, unseen body. Augustine's famous book called " The City of God," unfortunately represented the City of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, as an earthly institution, and the false idea found its consummation and development in the Roman heierarchy which claims to be " The Church," as if the body of Christ were an organization on earth. The church which is His body is described in the scriptures set out above (Section IV). It has its manifestation on earth in the assemblies of the saints

(1 Cor. 14. 33), none of which, nor any amalgamation of which has any right to call itself "the Church" (see "The Lord amid the Golden Candlesticks," in "70 Familiar Stories," pp. 266-269).

2. THE BRIDE OF THE LAMB. The church, the Heavenly Jerusalem, the great city, is said to be "the Lamb's wife" (21. 9), or "The Bride adorned for her husband." The same thought was expressed by

John the Baptist, who spoke of himself as the friend of the Bridegroom who rejoiced to hear the Bridegroom's voice and by

The Lord in the parable of the ten virgins who went out to meet the Bridegroom.

The Apostle Paul in Ephesians 5. 25, "Husbands love your wives as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle." "This is a great mystery (husband and wife being one) but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." And in II Cor. 11. 2, "I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" and Rom. 7. 4, "That ye should be married to another even to Him who is raised from the dead that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

3. THE TWO FIGURES COMBINED. The city and the bride are identified, I will shew thee the Bride the Lamb's wife, and He shewed me that great city the Heavenly Jerusalem. No doubt the two figures combine the two thoughts of the consummation of the love of Christ to His saints and their fellowship with Him as Ruler and Lord of the renewed Heaven and Earth as promised in Rev. 3. 21. "To him that overcometh I will grant to sit with Me in My throne even as I overcame and am set down with My Father in His throne."

4. THE GLORY OF THE CHURCH. The imagery of this chapter sets forth the glory of the completed church when after being caught up to meet the Lord in the air it is

manifested in glory. This manifestation is referred to in the following scriptures.

II Thess. 1. 10. "When He shall come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believe in that day."

Eph. 3. 10. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."

That display of the bride in fine linen, clean and white (R.V. bright and pure), the righteousness of saints, is seen in Rev. 19. 7, 8.

5. PARTICULARS OF THE GLORY. There is plenty of scope for faith to delight in, in what is said of the Great and Holy City. A few outstanding points are:—

(a) *It is not its own light*, but the glory of God and the Lamb are displayed in it.

(b) *The Twelve Tribes* (gates) and *the Twelve Apostles* (foundations) each have their place in it, suggesting that the Old Testament saints are built in with those of the New Testament (see Heb. 11. 10 and 16 and 40).

(c) *The Measurements* have been thought to give a pyramidal form to the city, as high as it is broad.

(d) *The Jewels* speak of the varied excellences of Christ as manifested in His saints.

(e) *No Temple* suggests that worship will no longer be an outward thing, but perfect communion with the Father and the Son (I John 1. 3).

(f) *The Kings and Nations of the Saved* coming in suggest that it is the centre, the metropolis of the Lord's reign over the new heavens and the new earth.

(g) *Only those written in the Lamb's Book of life* are found there. The assemblies on earth contain much mixture, but that city has no citizens, except those of heavenly birth.

6. THE COMPLETED AND PERFECTED CHURCH will be for ever to the praise of the glory of the wisdom and grace of God.

“ O the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out ! For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things : to Whom be glory for ever. Amen ” (Rom. 11. 33-36).

VI. Application.

Let us keep our garments white, that they may shine to His glory in that great display.

The Over There.

IF Thou hast made this world so fair,
 So full of beauty, light and love,
 What must it be, “ The Over There,”
 The Home beyond, the Realm above ?

It cannot be this passing scene
 Can match in beauty that blest land ;
 Far better must it be, I ween,
 The Holy Place that Thou hast planned.

Rivers and trees, and songs of birds,
 And flowers of light with scented breath ;
 Lovely beyond the power of words,
 Without the taint of sin and death.

Streams issue from the Throne of God
 Of Living Waters. Fresh and green
 Within that Paradise of God
 The lovely Tree of Life is seen. GEO. S.

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