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Meditations in Luke

Meditations in John

Ephesians: The Glories of His Grace

The Epistles of John

His Appointments

The Kingdoms of God and of Heaven

In preparation:

Meditations in Matthew

MEDITATIONS
IN
MARK

by
August Van Ryn

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PREFACE

It is with real joy that this volume is offered. Similar books, entitled *Meditations in John* and *Meditations in Luke*, have preceded this one. Each Gospel, as most of our readers doubtless know, sets forth the Person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in its own special manner, as divinely directed by the Supreme Author of all the Scriptures—the Holy Spirit of God.

John, as we saw in our view of that wonderful book, portrays the Lord Jesus as the Eternal Son of God, beginning in the opening verses with His eternal existence, stressing everywhere His deity, and marshaling its messages and miracles to show that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God (John 20:30-31).

Luke as clearly tells the story of matchless grace, how the Son of God stooped to become the Son of Man, in order that He might seek and save the lost. Luke reveals Christ as walking on earth a true Man, in fellowship with men, yet separate from sinners, holy, harmless, undefiled. Luke's account of Christ is truly a rich mine of spiritual wealth.

Our present commentator, Mark, unveils before our eyes the Lord Jesus as the true Servant of Jehovah, the One whom God calls "My servant . . . in whom My soul delighteth" (Isaiah 42:1). As a servant we see our Lord ever busy throughout this Gospel, ministering to the physical and spiritual needs of mankind. One might say that Acts 10:38 is a true epitome of Mark's presentation of our Lord:

“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him.”

May the Lord be pleased to bless these meditations on the Person and works of Christ, for His glory and our blessing.

AUGUST VAN RYN

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PART ONE

Introducing Mark

ITS AUTHOR

THE THEME OF THE GOSPEL

SOME SPECIAL FEATURES

WORDS FOUND FREQUENTLY IN
MARK'S GOSPEL

The Author

FROM the Gospel of Mark itself we receive no hint to guide us to the identity of its human author. However, I believe it is almost universally accepted that Mark is truly the writer thereof, and that this Mark is the Mark mentioned elsewhere in Scripture seems inevitable. John Mark, as we learn his full name was (Acts 12:12), was a Jew, with the Hebrew name John as his first name, and the Roman surname of Mark as that by which we know him in Scripture. His home apparently was in Jerusalem, for there his mother lived (Acts 12:12).

Mark's mother seems to have been a personal friend of Simon Peter, and she was hostess to the saints on the night Peter was miraculously delivered from prison. Mark was related to Barnabas who, after the contention between himself and Paul, took Mark and sailed for Cyprus (Acts 15:36-39). Paul did not want to take Mark with them because he had left the missionary party at Pamphylia and did not go with them to the work (Acts 15:38). We do not know what the cause of Mark's failure was on that occasion, but apparently in Paul's judgment it was serious enough to mark him as unfit for the important ministry committed to Paul and the others with him.

How it thrills our hearts then to find out that God uses one who failed in the work of the Lord to write of One who never failed. Truly it is but another evidence of the truth that God delights to use the foolish things to con-

found the wise, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are. It is refreshing and encouraging to read that, later on, Mark seems to have been fully restored not only to the Lord but also to the confidence and love of the saints and of God's servants. Years later, while confined in prison in Rome, Paul actually asks that Mark might be sent to him, "for he is profitable to me for the ministry" (2 Timothy 4:11).

It is likely that Mark had been brought to know the Lord through Peter's ministry, for in 1 Peter 5:13 he calls him "my son."

Mark himself had not been one of Christ's disciples during our Lord's earthly life. Humanly speaking, it is therefore most probable that it was from Simon Peter that Mark learned much of the life and labors of our Lord, concerning which he writes in his Gospel. Many of the details which Mark gives could have been known only to an eyewitness but they are written so vividly that one feels they were seen by the person or persons who related them to Mark. One thing is sure: Mark gives, by the Holy Spirit's guidance and dictation, a striking, throbbing picture of our blessed Lord. He presents Christ as ever working to save and bless, and he closes his narrative by saying Jesus is still working with His own now (Mark 16:20). He still serves us, still ministers to sinful man, even from the glory itself.

The Theme of the Gospel

THE THEME of the Gospel of Mark is the story of condescending grace, set forth in concise words in Philippians 2:5-8. Mark presents the story of "Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant [a slave], and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

How amazing that the mighty, eternal God should take the form of a slave, and come down here to serve His creatures, even to the length of the awful death of the cross! Mark presents our Saviour in the special character of the Servant of Jehovah. Mark 10:45 is the key verse of this Gospel: "For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." In relation to God (not to *us*) He became the bond-slave, ever doing His father's will. In this passage from Philippians 2 we see the four prominent characteristics with which our Lord is portrayed in the four Gospels:

Equal with God presents His Deity—the theme of John's Gospel.

In the likeness of men presents Him as Man—Luke's account of Him.

Taking the form of a slave, a Servant—Mark's Gospel.

Being in the form of God—the theme of Matthew's Gospel, presenting our Lord in His majesty and sovereignty.

Matthew gives Christ's genealogy as King, the Son of David, while Mark omits this entirely. Mark's title of Christ is found in our Lord's service itself, for which power and love are needed. Power is found in that Jesus is the Son of God—the title by which Mark introduces the Lord—and love is seen in that He became Man and assumed in lowly grace the form of a Servant.

Some Special Features

THE GOSPEL of Mark was most likely written in Rome, probably somewhere around A.D. 60, and is clearly intended for Gentiles, even as Matthew's Gospel was written with the Jews in view. There are no references whatever in Mark to Jewish law, and altogether only two quotations from the Old Testament, one of which is found in the introduction. Mark frequently explains Jewish forms and customs, as in chapter 7, concerning the ceremonial washing of pots and pans, etc., showing that those things were largely unknown to his readers.

Mark records almost three times as many miracles as parables, while in Matthew's Gospel parables are more prominent. This shows that action rather than teaching—works rather than words—is his theme. One would expect this, for Mark writes of Christ as the Servant who came to minister and to give His life. As has been said, there is a minimum of discourse here, and a maximum of deeds.

There is a freshness and vigor about Mark that grips the Christian reader, and makes him long to serve somewhat after the example of his blessed Lord. In its order, Mark's Gospel is the most chronological of the four. It is also the briefest, as well as the earliest in point of time of its writing.

A special feature of Mark is his recording of the Saviour's power over the visible and invisible worlds. Here we read of our Lord being with the wild beasts, which no doubt were

under His absolute control. Here also we read of His dominion over the elements and hushing them by His Word, as well as His subjugation of the still wilder passions of poor demon-controlled souls. With wonder we see Him as Master of inanimate creation, Master over the animal creation, Master of man and Master of the devil and his hordes. And all this as the servant who came to be obedient to His Father's will!

Our Lord's complete control over the demon world is an outstanding feature of Mark's account of Christ. While in Matthew we find only about five occasions or references to the casting out of demons (or evil spirits) we notice twelve in the much shorter Gospel by Mark. The Holy Spirit through Mark's account apparently impresses the great truth that supreme power depends on humble, self-abnegating service, for it is Christ as the humble Servant of whom we read such mighty works. May we learn this needed truth, exemplified for us by Him who has called us to the path of service, and who set us the example to follow!

Some differences between Mark's Gospel and the other three are worth noticing. Mark begins his record by omitting the birth and any details surrounding the coming of both John the Baptist and our Lord Himself. This is consistent with his theme of Christ as the Servant, for as a servant His genealogy is not important, neither does a servant rate a herald to introduce Him. Our Lord is introduced immediately, without formality, and with the shortest possible notice of His forerunner. Instantly He is seen busy in His mission of love and power.

In chapter 1, verse 8, Mark leaves out the words "with fire," which are found in Matthew 3:11. Mark only mentions the baptism with the Holy Ghost, saying nothing of the future baptism of fire—which is judgment—in the day

ahead. As the Servant He did not come to be a judge, but rather to save and bless, to give His life a ransom for many.

In chapter 1, verse 15, the Lord Jesus is said to preach "repent ye, and *believe the gospel*." This also is peculiar to Mark, which is not dispensational in its aspect, as Matthew is. There the message is confined to the offering of the kingdom. Here, where Mark writes for Gentiles, the much wider message of the gospel is proclaimed.

"And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Mark 1:35). Mark alone gives this tender personal touch, intimating the need of this busy, lonely servant for a quiet time with His God and Father. What an example for us to imitate!

This Gospel is crammed with ceaseless activity. When it is read through at a sitting, one is surprised to learn that, apart from the historic occasion in the garden of Gethsemane, this is the only instance in all the Lord's busy life as recorded by Mark in which we see Jesus praying. Mark leaves us the impression that the Lord simply could not find time to pray, and had to rise up long before daybreak—while others were asleep—to find time for communion with God, and for renewing His spiritual vigor and power. But when we turn to Luke's Gospel, we find at least seven distinct occasions where Jesus prayed. Mark would indicate that our Lord had to "take and make time" for prayer. The same, dear fellow believer, is true today in regard to ourselves, who need prayer so much more than did He. We cannot afford to be too busy to pray.

In chapter 6 Mark entirely omits the record of Simon Peter walking on the water, as given in Matthew 14. If Mark got much of his information from Peter, it can readily be understood why he does not mention this incident, which

might seem as if Peter were boasting, had he mentioned it.

Likewise, in chapter 14, verse 47, Mark does not tell us that it was Simon Peter who drew the sword and cut off Malchus' ear. The fact that these personal references to Peter are omitted strongly supports the view that Mark writes much as if his information came from Simon (of course under the guidance of the Holy Spirit).

In chapter 14, verses 51-52, we have the account of a certain young man fleeing and leaving his linen garment in the hands of his pursuers. Mark alone records this and, as he omits mentioning any name, it has been thought Mark himself may have been that young man. (Some believe it was Saul, afterwards the Apostle Paul, or even others.)

Also, as in chapter 13, verse 32, Mark is the only Gospel writer who makes the statement that no one knows the hour of the Lord's coming, "neither the Son, but the Father." This is in full accord with his theme of our blessed Lord as the Servant, in His voluntary humility and subjection to the Father. A servant is not supposed to know the *time* of things, but simply *what* He is to do—and that he is to do it—at his master's bidding.

There are other differences found in this book, some of which we shall come across, as we study Mark in detail.

*Words Found Frequently in Mark's Gospel:
Straightway—Immediately—Forthwith—Anon*

A WORD prominently used by Mark, and so suitable and expected where he writes of our Lord Jesus as God's Servant, is the Greek word *eutheos*, variously translated in our Bible by the words *straightway*, *immediately*, and *forthwith*, and once by the word *anon*.

With only the briefest of introductions, Mark presents our Lord as instantly plunging into His work, and ceaselessly laboring till the work is climaxed and finished upon the cross. We read in the first chapter as follows:

And straightway coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opened—verse 10

And immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness—verse 12

And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed Him—verse 18

And straightway He called them—verse 20

And straightway . . . He entered into the synagogue and taught—verse 21

And immediately His fame spread abroad throughout all the region—verse 28

And forthwith . . . they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew—verse 29

And anon they tell Him of her—verse 30

And immediately the fever left her, and she arose—verse 31

Immediately the leprosy departed from him—verse 42
And He . . . forthwith sent him away—verse 43

These eleven times the word *eutheos* is found in the opening chapter of this Gospel, and forty times altogether in the whole Gospel. How indicative of the incessant, earnest path of obedience of the true Servant of Jehovah; how indicative of His realization of the crying need of man all around! May we imitate His zeal and faithfulness!

Multitude

THE word *multitude* is found seventeen times in Mark. We read of great multitudes that followed Him, that thronged Him; of another great multitude with swords and staves that came to arrest Him; and of that same multitude clamoring for His crucifixion. In this Gospel Christ never seems to be alone. Going into a desert place the crowds outrun Him, and He patiently teaches them and meets their hunger. Expressions like the following are characteristic of Mark:

And all the city was gathered together at the door—1:33
All men seek for Thee—1:37
And they came to Him from every quarter—1:45
And straightway many were gathered together—2:2
And a great multitude from Galilee followed Him—3:7
And the multitude cometh together again, so that they
could not so much as eat bread—3:20
And there was gathered unto Him a great multitude—4:1
Much people followed Him and thronged Him—5:24
And Jesus, when He came out, saw much people—6:34
They knew Him, And ran through that whole region round
about, and began to carry about in beds those that were
sick, where they heard He was—6:54-55
In those days the multitude being very great—8:1

*Forbidden to Tell What Christ
Had Done for Them*

WHILE both Matthew and Luke also record occasions where the Lord told those He blessed not to make Him known, yet this is noted by Mark more than by any of the others. It again illustrates the true servant character of the Lord as set forth by Mark. Here are most of these occurrences:

[To the unclean spirit]: Hold thy peace, and come out of him—1:25

[He] suffered not the demons to speak, because they knew Him—1:34

[He] saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man—1:44

He straitly charged them that they should not make Him known—3:12

He charged them straitly that no man should know it—5:43

PART TWO

A Brief Review of the Whole Gospel

THE BUSY “SERVANT” MEETING MAN’S
NEED

BLIND UNBELIEF REJECTS THE BLESSER
AND HIS BLESSING

THE CHAPTER OF THE
UNPARDONABLE SIN

THE PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

THREE OUTSTANDING MIRACLES

HE MARVELED BECAUSE OF THEIR
UNBELIEF

HUMAN TRADITION NULLIFYING THE
WORD OF GOD

PETER’S CONFESSION OF CHRIST

CHRIST ON THE MOUNTAINTOP,
SATAN AT THE BOTTOM

A PICTORIAL GLIMPSE OF THE FLESH

THE KING COMES TO HIS TEMPLE

WE MARVEL AT HIS UNDERSTANDING
AND HIS ANSWERS

THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

THE NIGHT IN WHICH HE WAS
BETRAYED

THE PLACE CALLED CALVARY—
THERE THEY CRUCIFIED HIM

HALLELUJAH! CHRIST AROSE!

The Busy "Servant" Meeting Man's Need

MARK I

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

THE THEME and center of the book is Christ, the Son of God, the Servant of Jehovah, the Sacrifice for sin, the Saviour of men. He is *Jesus*, His name as Man here upon the earth, who lived to serve and who died to save man from his sins. He is the *Christ*, God's anointed, now raised from the dead and seated in the glory, there still to serve us (Acts 2:36). He is the Son of God, who came to bring us into relationship with His Father that we might be God's sons. Until chapter 8, verse 29, He is always called *Jesus* in this Gospel. At that point Simon Peter acknowledges Him as *the Christ*, in view of His coming death and His triumphant resurrection, for He was truly anointed—the Christ—to die for us, and rise again to live for us.

The title Son of God is used twice more besides in the opening verse (Mark 3:11 and 5:7), both times by evil spirits, which is truly significant. The only other occasion is where the centurion so acknowledges Him, after His death (Mark 15:39). But fourteen times Jesus calls Himself the Son of Man, a title which at once tells of His voluntary humiliation (for He only speaks of Himself thus in Scripture), and also speaks of His glorious exaltation, for the title has a universal scope, presenting Him as the One who

shall reign over the whole universe of God. Thus this title, Son of Man, is peculiarly suited to Mark, for the Lord is both the Servant and Sovereign of man. The first time this title is recorded is in the healing of the paralyzed man: "The Son of Man hath power upon earth to forgive sins" (Mark 2:10).

In verse 2, John the Baptist is announced as the messenger to herald the coming of *the* Messenger, as we learn in turning to the Old Testament passage of Malachi 3:1: "Behold, I [says Jehovah] will send My messenger [John], and he shall prepare the way before Me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant [the Lord Jesus Christ], whom ye delight in." As the Spirit in Mark 1:2 changes the pronouns "My" and "Me" to "Thy" and "Thee," we learn thereby that Jesus and Jehovah-God are one and the same.

In the third verse John is said to be the "voice" of one crying, to prepare the way for the Lord, even as great men were always preceded and announced by heralds. And Isaiah 40:3, from which Mark quotes, tells us that this lowly "servant of Jehovah" is none other than the eternal God: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our *God*."

John calls himself a "voice" (John 1:23). In a certain sense the voice precedes the spoken words, even as John came before the Lord began His public ministry. But in a real sense the Word precedes the voice, for words are thoughts put into frame, while thoughts exist before they are uttered. And those spoken thoughts, those words, remain long after the voice that uttered them has died away. Even so our Lord, as John says, was *before* John and, since the Word abides, so Christ as the Word eternally lives. He

is indeed the Eternal God; the Revealer of God the Father; the First and the Last; the Alpha and the Omega.

John preached the baptism of repentance *unto* the remission of sins (verse 4). That is, John preached to the people that they should repent and told them they should show their readiness to repent by being baptized. Baptism is never said in Scripture to have any saving virtue. The difference between John's baptism and Christian baptism is that John's implied a confession that those baptized wanted to be saved (it was *unto* repentance and remission of sins), while Christian baptism is a public confession of Christ by such as *are already* saved.

Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,

And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel (Mark 1:14-15).

Mark omits the details of the Lord's temptation, but adds the note that the Lord was with the wild beasts. Immediately the Lord plunges into His double ministry of preaching and teaching and of healing—a healing which was twofold, consisting of mental healing in the casting out of demons on the one hand, and physical healing on the other.

Like Matthew and Luke, Mark begins the public ministry of Christ at John's imprisonment. The Lord left Judea and made His home in Galilee. Between verses 13 and 14 of this chapter we must realize there lies a whole year of our Lord's ministry, chiefly in and around Jerusalem, the record of which is given only in the Gospel of John. The bitter opposition manifested by the Jewish leaders, as shown in John,

tells us why the Lord had moved to Galilee. Capernaum became the center of His operations from then on (Matthew 4:13). For refusing to recognize Him through the mighty works of mercy and of power which He did there, the Lord later on pronounced His anathema on that favored city (Matthew 11:23). We may be sure the Lord did not leave Judea because He was afraid, for He went into the very district controlled by Herod, who had just beheaded John. Men may silence the voice of man; they cannot hinder the Word of God from being sounded forth. Jesus' leaving Judea is a solemn warning that when men deliberately reject the gospel, the Spirit will leave them, and the Word will be preached where it is received.

The Lord preached the Kingdom of *God*. We shall note this later on. Only Matthew uses the term the Kingdom of *Heaven*. The Kingdom of God is a wider, more universal kingdom; also, it is used preeminently in a spiritual sense.

Next we see Jesus calling two couples to follow Him and become fishers of men—Simon and Andrew, James and John. Repentance and faith, as preached in the gospel, are to be followed by service.

There follow in quick succession the casting out of an evil spirit; the cure of Simon's mother-in-law; the healing of many that were diseased and possessed with demons; and finally the cleansing of the leper. Thus the whole chapter throbs with activity. No wonder we read that our Lord very early in the morning sought a quiet place to commune with God, to renew His strength by waiting upon God. If He felt the need of such spiritual invigoration, how much more must we oft practice the presence of God!

Jesus came forth from the divine presence to carry on His busy ministry of mercy and of might. Coming from contact with the upper world of glory He ministers in deep

compassion to this lower world of men, and commands the nether world of evil spirits. As we close the chapter we see crowds pressing after Him, but, alas, most of them were seeking only physical benefits; so few hearts there were that were weary, so few souls that felt the sickness of sin.

Blind Unbelief Rejects the Blesser and His Blessings

MARK 2

MARK 2 opens with the account of the healing of the paralytic, borne of four. (We shall look at all the miracles of Mark under other headings.) Then comes the conversion and call of Levi, who made a great feast in his own house, inviting the Lord to sit down with publicans and sinners. Then we hear the Lord tell the parables of the Bridegroom who is going to leave His own down here, followed by the parable of the new garment and the new bottles. This is followed by the incident where the disciples pluck and eat the corn on the Sabbath, while the next chapter opens with the healing of the man with the withered hand.

All through this chapter our blessed Lord is healing, blessing, rejoicing, ministering, telling of God's wondrous love and mercy, but, alas, this is lost on many of the witnesses. All they do is find fault, criticize, seek for cause to kill Him. And this particular portion ends with the sad comment of chapter 3, verse 6: "And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him." Such is the natural heart—deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

We might remark (to notice afresh how perfect is the Word of God) that Matthew adds two sentences to our Lord's reply to the Pharisees, as given in Mark 2:23-28. These two sentences are: "Or have ye not read in the law,

how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple" (Matthew 12:5-6). Since Mark writes his Gospel for Gentiles, these words would have no special interest for those who knew little or nothing of Jewish ceremonies; so Mark's record of the incident is as brief as possible, omitting these Jewish details.

The Chapter of the Unpardonable Sin

MARK 3

IN THIS CHAPTER we read five times of a *multitude* coming to Christ or following Him: "And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread" (verse 6). No doubt it was this very popularity that roused the deep resentment of the Jewish leaders, so that they sought to destroy Him (verse 6). The leaders opposed Him; demons sought to hinder His mission; His very friends became concerned and said, "He is beside Himself" (verse 21).

Ah, yes, so it is, alas! It is considered quite normal for anyone to go wild at a ball game or to scream oneself hoarse at a horse race. But when a believer is in earnest regarding the need of a human soul, and with all the energy of his whole being seeks to reach that soul for God, then people think he is mad. And this opposition did not come only from the Pharisees or from other enemies, but even from the Lord's *friends*. The same attitude no doubt is suggested in the close of the chapter where His mother and brethren seek Him. They too had become alarmed by the tremendous stir that was being made, and they probably felt the Lord should retire somewhere till the excitement died down.

But the crowning insult was offered by the scribes: "He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth He out devils" (verse 22). Beelzebub was the name of a heathen

god, and means the "fly god." The change of this name to Beelzebul has the support of almost every critical authority (McClintock & Strong's Biblical Encyclopedia) and is so given in Young's analytical Concordance. It is said (see above Encyclopedia) that the Jews changed the name from Beelzebub to Beelzebul in derision, changing the meaning from "fly god" to "dung god," and then they applied this epithet, as they do in our text, to Satan himself. And in this chapter our blessed Lord recognized that connection of Beelzebul with Satan, for in reply to His calumniators that He cast out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of the demons, Jesus says: "How can Satan cast out Satan?" (verse 23). Thus these wicked Jews declared that the Lord Jesus was possessed by and under the mastery of Satan, acting in league with one who was the source of all filthiness and wickedness—Beelzebul.

Our Lord answers them in parables:

1. A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand.
2. A house divided against itself cannot stand.
3. Satan rising up against himself cannot stand.

These three parables tell us that:

1. Satan has a kingdom. He is the prince of this world; the prince of the power of the air; the king of the bottomless pit (Revelation 9:11), who has myriads of evil spirits under his control.

2. Satan has a house—picturing the false professing church, even as Christ rules over the true Church, which is the house of the living God. Satan employs religious leaders to rule over his house, the false church.

3. Satan himself is a mighty ruler, the god of this world. He certainly will not cast himself out. Only one stronger than he can do it, and, praise God, He will. As Luke says:

"A stronger than he shall come upon him" (11:22). That Stronger One is Christ, who defeated Satan first in the temptation in the wilderness; who next destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil, by His death on Calvary and His triumphant resurrection (Hebrews 2:14); and who finally shall bruise Satan forever under His feet and shall consign him eternally to the lake of fire.

Jesus tells His detractors that for that awful blasphemy against the Holy Spirit there never can be forgiveness. Because this sin was the result of deliberate, willful, open-eyed unbelief and rejection of Christ, in spite of all the evidence to the contrary, there could be no salvation for such apostates. *That* is the unpardonable sin. The one who commits it is not merely in danger of eternal damnation, as the Authorized Version puts it, but is guilty of an eternal sin, which is the correct thought. Instead of eternal salvation there is nothing but eternal sin. How fearfully dark and black must the heart be to attribute to the infinitely gracious, holy Son of God the black malice of the devil, and the awful corruption and rottenness of sin!

In the midst of this chapter, so black with human depravity, we read of the Lord's ordaining the twelve that they might carry on, after His death, the work He had begun. The only truly "ordained" ministers are those the Lord Himself ordains. Mere human ordination is worthless. We'll consider this ordination elsewhere.

The Parables of the Kingdom of God

MARK 4

THIS CHAPTER answers, in its setting, to Matthew 13. Both these chapters deal with the parables of the Kingdom. While Matthew records seven of these in chapter 13, Mark gives only three. Matthew uses the term Kingdom of Heaven, while Mark, as does Luke, employs the term Kingdom of God.

In Mark, as well as in Matthew, there is a distinctly new departure at this stage. From here on the Lord consistently spoke to the people in parables: "But without a parable spake He not unto them" (Mark 4:34). The reasons for this parabolic teaching are clearly given:

They set forth the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, as Matthew states, while Mark puts this in the singular and says that they present the mystery of the Kingdom of God.

These mysteries, so-called by Matthew, set forth the history of the professing church during this age, for, as Matthew describes them, he shows that in the Kingdom of Heaven there are both true and false professing believers. For there are both wheat and tares, which are defined as children of the kingdom and children of the devil; there are good fish and bad fish (Matthew 13:38,48-49).

In Mark's Gospel he speaks of the mystery (in the singular), of the Kingdom of *God* (4:11). There is a distinction of importance between this term Kingdom of *God* and Kingdom of *Heaven*. Notice these three comments:

1. The Kingdom of Heaven was offered to Israel (Matthew 4:17). This term is never employed anywhere else than in Matthew, where it is found thirty-three times. It has Israel in view, and was offered to them as a literal kingdom here upon the earth, with Christ as their sovereign King. Israel, as God foreknew, rejected their King and crucified Him. There was nothing mysterious about this kingdom, for it had been promised and foretold many, many times in the Old Testament Scriptures. Israel looked forward to it with zealous longing; also, they did not realize that their crucifixion of the King would put off their hopes for centuries.

In the meanwhile, Israel having rejected their King, the gospel of the kingdom assumes a new form. It does not now offer a literal, material, political kingdom, but a spiritual one, founded upon the death and resurrection of Christ, propagated by the sowing of the seed of the gospel, and including within its membership all who profess to receive Christ as Saviour and acknowledge Him as Lord. Many do so only outwardly, insincerely, with a mere lip allegiance, and thus are seen in this kingdom though unsaved; yea, many actually are children of the devil rather than children of God. It is thus that Matthew presents the kingdom in its present state, and it is called there the Kingdom of Heaven. It is a spiritual kingdom, where many are truly saved and many others belong to that category of which our Saviour spoke when He said they honour "me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Mark 7:6). Such say: "Lord, Lord," but do not the things which He says.

Someday Christ shall come to take His Church home to glory, and then shall return afterward to destroy all political powers and reign supreme over restored and converted Israel; over a kingdom that shall then be composed of those

who truly know Him and own Him as their Messiah and Lord. For He shall gather out of His kingdom then all who offend and do iniquity and shall put them into a furnace of fire, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Daniel 2:44 speaks of that day, as did our Lord when standing before Caiaphas, as given in Mark 14:62, which in turn the Lord quoted from Daniel 7:13-14, and which refers to nothing less than our Lord's glorious reign over Israel and the world in the coming day.

The Kingdom of God, on the other hand, does not essentially refer to a literal kingdom, but rather to its spiritual aspect. As our Lord says in Luke 17:20, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." This emphatically is not true of the Kingdom of Heaven in the future day, for that shall indeed come with outward show, for our Lord shall then come in the clouds of heaven, the lightning shining from one end of heaven to the other, and all His saints coming with Him, every eye seeing Him.

The Kingdom of God is composed ever and only of those who are truly saved by God's grace, as John 3:5 so clearly shows: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Such a statement is never made concerning the Kingdom of Heaven. Of course, it is perfectly true that in Christ's future reign only truly saved souls will enter His Kingdom, and one might say that at that time the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God are alike; but this is not so now. At the present time the Kingdom of God includes only true believers in Jesus, while the Kingdom of Heaven takes in both saved and lost, both the real and the false.

2. There are a number of the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. The plural is used in Matthew because he presents the dispensational aspect, and thus shows a series of

parables covering the entire present dispensation in chronological order, the same as do the addresses to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3. But Mark uses the singular term of the *mystery* of the Kingdom of God, for he unfolds to us, not the chronological or dispensational aspect, but rather the moral and spiritual. His Gospel interests itself specially in the going forth of the gospel, through which souls are born into the Kingdom of *God*. Hence Mark, in recording only three parables of the kingdom, speaks of those that all have to do with the sowing of the gospel seed, namely: the sowing of the seed with its four results; the seed that produces good fruit—the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear; the parable of the sowing of the mustard seed.

3. In the parables of the Kingdom of Heaven we read of true and false existing side by side. We shall see that this is not so in the parables of the kingdom as given by Mark. It cannot be, for Mark writes concerning the Kingdom of God and John 3:3,5, as we saw before, confines that kingdom entirely to born-again souls. This is the chief distinction between these two views of the kingdom, as we consider the kingdom in its present phase in this dispensation, in its spiritual, parabolic form. These parables are called *mysteries* (or secrets, as that word means), because the truth revealed in them was not made known in the Old Testament. The Old Testament deals with Israel's past and her future. The present age, from Pentecost to the return of Christ, is a silent parenthesis in the Old Testament.

Now, to come back to our remarks at the commencement of this chapter, we stated that from here on in this Gospel the Lord spoke in parables:

1. Because these were mysteries hitherto veiled. The truths unfolded in them have to do with the Christian dis-

pensation, and were not revealed or taught in the Old Testament.

2. Because Israel had deliberately rejected Him. We have previously noticed that the opposition to the Lord had become more and more pronounced, so that they sought His death (Mark 3:6). Since they rejected Him, the Lord now turned away from them, with the Gentiles and their need of salvation in view. This is clearly suggested at the close of chapter 3, and the opening of chapter 4. We find exactly the same setting at the end of Matthew 12 and the beginning of Matthew 13. Jesus there left the house and sat by the seaside, even as here in Mark. As the "house" suggests the house of Israel, and the "sea" speaks of the Gentile nations in the symbolism of Scripture, the plain inference is that the Lord now turned His back on Israel and went forth with His teaching to the Gentiles. This is further emphasized by the incident that occurs at the end of chapter 3. The Lord there disowns all natural relationships and then acknowledges, as supreme and vital, those who are spiritually related to Him. Those relations after the flesh, seen in His mother and His brethren, typically suggest the Lord's national ties with Israel. What counts from henceforth, says our Lord, is not whether you belong to Israel or not, but whether you will listen to My words and be prepared to do the will of God. In Mark 3:35 occurs the first use of the word *whosoever* in this book, and one can't help but compare it with that great *whosoever* of John 3:16. Not who is My mother, or who belongs to My people Israel, but *whosoever believes in Me* shall never perish.

Here then is the second and most important reason why our Lord from then on spoke in parables. It was "That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should

be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them" (verse 12). I am sure none of us needs to be told that our Saviour did not speak in parables in order that men might not be able to understand Him and be blessed. No, what He meant by the above words is that He spoke parabolically so that they who did not care—they who deliberately rejected Him—might not be able to grasp His teaching. Those who really wanted to know and understand would search for the hidden meaning of the parables, and to such God's mind would be revealed. This is proven by the fact that the disciples asked the Lord to explain the parable He had told them, and He gladly did so (verses 14-20). Isn't it so still? If anyone wants to know the mind of God, wants to understand God's Word and obey it, to such God will reveal His mind. What was the use of continuing to speak in plain language to those who willfully refused the truth, and who even dared to ascribe satanic wickedness and motives to Christ and His ministry of love and mercy? As the wise man said long ago, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter" (Proverbs 25:2). We should all manifest that royal trait! The Lord spoke in parables, because there was no sense any further to cast pearls before swine.

The Parable of the Sower

Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow:

And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.

And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth:

But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.

And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.

And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.

And He said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

And when He was alone, they that were about Him with the twelve asked of Him the parable.

And He said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:

That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.

And He said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?

The sower soweth the word.

And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;

And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.

And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,

And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred (Mark 4:3-20).

NEITHER here nor in Matthew 13 is this first parable said to be of the kingdom, as is said of all the subsequent ones. Since this parable shows that some who hear the Word are mere professors and therefore unsaved, this is significant, for in Mark's use of the kingdom, being of *God*, there are no unsaved in it. A notable difference between Mark's and Matthew's account is that, when explaining this first parable in Matthew the Lord says (Matthew 13:19) that the Word sown is the Word of the kingdom, but that is completely left out in Mark. In Mark it is the gospel message that is being sown, and the kingdom as such is not the subject. There are many mere religious professors who are not professors of God's salvation, as this parable shows. In Matthew they are seen in the kingdom, but not in Mark, for Mark speaks of the true Kingdom of God, which contains only born-again souls.

We usually apply the first three types of result from the sowing of the gospel seed in this parable to those who are unsaved, mere professors, and who prove to be unreal, and the fourth result—the seed sown on good ground—to those who are truly saved through the preaching of God's Word and whose lives bring forth fruit. Yet sometimes I feel that we might well challenge our own hearts by applying all four

results to Christians. For isn't it true that real believers in Christ allow the devil to snatch away the Word so often? A solemn gospel meeting is hardly over but believers talk about everything under heaven except the things of God. The devil succeeds in snatching the Word out of their hearts too. How often true Christians allow the afflictions of life or persecution for Christ's sake to choke the Word, to cause them to turn back into sin or the ways of the world. How common it is to let the cares and burdens of life, or the lust after riches, the desire for material gain and comfort, well-nigh to extinguish all sign of divine life. Believers live so much for self, often so little for Christ, that it is hard to tell whether there is any fruit for God there at all. In my judgment, the fourfold explanation of this parable, given by our Lord, can with equal force be applied to saints as well as to sinners.

Let's look a little in detail at the story told by the Master Storyteller of all time.

1. There is the *Sower*—originally the Lord Himself, for Matthew 13:37 tells us that the Sower is the Son of Man. Hebrews 2:3 tells us that the gospel of God's great salvation began to be spoken by the Lord. Of course, today every believer is and should be the bearer of the gospel message. We should all be going forth weeping, bearing precious seed, so that someday we may come again with rejoicing, bringing the sheaves with us.

2. There is the *Seed*. The Lord Himself is called the "Seed" (Genesis 3:15, Galatians 3:16). The Lord called Himself the grain of wheat that was to fall into the ground and die, and thus bring forth much fruit. And then, the seed is also the Word of God, as we learn from 1 Peter 1:23: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God." All the Word of God

is about Him, so when that Word is preached, Christ as the Seed springs up and produces life and likeness to Himself, as it is sown in the human heart.

3. There is the *Soil*. There is nothing wrong with the Sower or the Seed; the failure in producing fruit in the human heart is therefore due to the condition of the soil. The soil is the human heart, often so unresponsive to the pleading of God's Holy Spirit. The Word is sown in the heart (verse 15). But the heart of man is hard, or indifferent, or rebellious. With the heart man believes, but, alas, with the heart man also rejects the wondrous appeal of love divine. In our parable our Lord speaks of four kinds of hearts: deceived hearts, demonstrative hearts, distracted hearts, discerning hearts.

Deceived hearts. Here the Word is heard, but finds no lodging because of unbelief, for the Scripture says that Satan blinds the minds of them that believe not (2 Corinthians 4:4). The soil is too close to the road; the heart has become hard like downtrodden soil, and the Word of God finds no entrance. Satan snatches it away, lest men should believe and be saved.

Demonstrative hearts. With many there is a shallow, ready acceptance, but only the emotions have been reached. When such apparent faith is tested in the crucible of persecution or trouble, its superficiality becomes painfully evident. Such are not willing to pay the price of being a Christian. They want all of the blessings that Christ brings, but none of the sacrifices or sufferings that accompany faithfulness to Christ in a world like this.

Distracted hearts. Those who fail to bear fruit because of the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches. It has been well said that often the rich allow the cares of life to hinder them, while the poor are led astray by the deceitful-

ness of riches. Craving the things of earth which they do not have, they neglect the grace of God and the riches of heaven which are offered to them so freely.

Discerning hearts. Those who honestly come to Christ and believe the gospel. Even with such there are degrees of fruit bearing, for some true Christians live more wholly for Christ than do others. May we ever realize that the happiest, holiest life is that which has the glory of Christ in view, that is surrendered to His will.

In this parable then, we have four kinds of soil presented: hard soil, little soil, cursed soil, fruitful soil. And four kinds of hearts: hard hearts, hollow hearts, half hearts, whole hearts.

Notice that in the first result here mentioned we see the activity of *Satan*; in the second, that of the *flesh*; and in the third, that of the *world*, seen in its cares and desire for riches.

Thus, in the very first of these parables, our Saviour shows that the preaching of the gospel was never to be an unqualified success. God is not saving the world through the preaching of the Word, but He is gathering out of this world a people for His Name. The world itself shall finally be purified, not by grace, but by judgment. Only when Christ returns, smites His enemies and puts them into the confines of eternal punishment, shall God's domain be rid of sin. Saints shall be blessed then, and sinners cast into the lake of fire.

The first parable is followed by a short parable (verses 21-22), not on the subject of the kingdom. "He said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad."

The Lord had been speaking in the initial parable of this chapter on things hidden under parabolic guise. Here He teaches that while *He* hid His words thus, that does not mean that *we* should hide the truth thus imparted to us. Things once hid are now to be manifested; they were kept secret (as the mysteries of the kingdom were during Old Testament days) that now, in this Christian dispensation, they might be sounded forth abroad. The precious truths enfolded and unfolded in these parables, when understood by us, are to be preached by us as we proclaim the full-orbed glories of the Christian faith. We shall look at this little parable again under another heading.

The Parable of the Fruitful Seed

And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground;

And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.

For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come (Mark 4:26-29).

THIS PARABLE is peculiar to Mark. A comparison with the one concerning the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13:24-30) will show that there is a certain correspondence between these two. In both accounts we read of the sower or sowers going to sleep after the good seed was sown. In Matthew they know not how the tares grew; in Mark the sower knows not how the good seed sprang up. In both we read of the harvest at the end, when the grain is ripe. These coincidences seem to indicate plainly that this parable in Mark

takes the place of the similar, yet so different, one of Matthew. This affirms the allegation made previously in this book that the Kingdom of God only takes in true believers, for while Matthew speaks of the enemy sowing false seed, this is completely left out in Mark. While Matthew speaks of tares—children of the devil—as well as of children of God, here in Mark there is no indication whatever but that the harvest is composed of true believers only. There is not the slightest hint here of false profession, as there is in Matthew. This fully confirms the truth that the Kingdom of God never contemplates anything except reality. This particular parable simply tells the story of the success of the preaching of the gospel in the salvation of precious souls. And in the development from blade to ear to fully ripened fruit, we have the spiritual growth of the true believer suggested. God who begins a good work in the true saint will complete that work till the day of Jesus Christ.

Now the third parable of the kingdom in this chapter:

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

And He said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?

It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth:

But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches, so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it (Mark 4:30-32).

The Lord paints here a prophetic picture of the history of the last centuries. The Kingdom of God in its spiritual

form began small and humbly by the sowing of the gospel seed, but it has grown indeed to a tremendous size, as the name and fame of Christ has spread over the whole world. Millions of precious souls have been brought to Him. In the first parable we viewed the sowing of the seed and saw its results largely in a false profession. In the second parable we saw the true spiritual fruit of gospel ministry in the salvation of precious souls.

In this final parable of Mark 4 our attention is called to the result, not this time in individual conversions, but in the Kingdom of God as a whole, which is likened to a great tree with its many branches. We have here the corporate aspect. So great has Christendom become that the birds of the air, which speak of Satan and his emissaries, find lodgment there. But notice that the Kingdom of God is not spoken of here under the figure of individuals, but as of a tree, *one* tree. It refers to God's kingdom as a unit. Alas, many unbelievers seek refuge in its branches, but they are not part of the tree itself—they are not members of the Kingdom of God. The sad truth is that many false professors pretend to be believers, but they are not in the Kingdom of God, as here depicted. They are in the Kingdom of Heaven, as Matthew reveals. The thing to be noted carefully is that no parable where individuals as unbelievers are included is spoken of as representing the Kingdom of *God*. Those of the wheat and the tares, of the bad and good fish, of the wise and foolish virgins are conspicuous by their absence among the parables spoken of the Kingdom of God.

Our present parable tells the sad truth that the Kingdom of God—with true believers—often gives sanctuary to those who deny our Lord. How many true Christians, for instance, are connected with modernistic unbelief in churches, where they have no business to be.

“When they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples” (verse 34). Our Lord is still the same. He still delights to reveal His wonders of grace and truth to His own dear ones, when they get alone with Him.

This full chapter closes with the story of the stilling of the storm on the Sea of Galilee.

Three Outstanding Miracles

MARK 5

THESE MIRACLES will be considered in other chapters, so there is little to be said on this chapter in general, for the miracles take up the whole of it. We are still in the early part of the Lord's ministry, as He went about everywhere, doing good. At the close of chapter 4 the Lord Jesus stilled the wild wind and waves. Here he is met by something wilder still—a man possessed and driven by the devil. Then our blessed Lord heals a woman who has been sick for twelve years, and goes on to raise a twelve-year-old girl from the dead. Oh, how He thrills our hearts as we see Him as the Master of:

Demons, disease, and death,
Satan, sickness, sin—all flee at His command.
What a Saviour Jesus is!

He Marveled Because of Their Unbelief

MARK 6

JESUS RETURNS to Nazareth. This is His second visit there. Luke 4 mentions the first one. At that time the Lord went alone, for He had not as yet chosen His followers. Perhaps a year or so had elapsed since His first visit to His home town. On that occasion they resented His teaching and in wrath would have thrown Him from the brow of the hill whereon their city was built (Luke 4:29). Our Lord told them then, "No prophet is accepted in his own country" (Luke 4:24). Alas, a year's reflection had not caused them to repent and our Lord had again to say: "A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house" (Mark 6:4). Surely, truer words were never spoken, words that give a measure of cheer to many a servant of the Lord. If our holy Lord Himself was treated so disdainfully by His own people (and we know that His ministry, manner, and life were perfect), what can we poor imitations of Him expect? It is an odd, yet true fact that on the whole few appreciate one's ministry less than those who know us the best. Is it because there is a good measure of envy in that attitude?

The Lord did no miracle in Nazareth when He was there before; again, this time He could do no mighty work there (verse 5). What an amazing commentary! The *Almighty* God *could not* do anything mighty. How truly

fearful is the curse of unbelief that limits the mighty power of God! God will not show Himself when men don't want Him to.

He marveled because of their unbelief. This is one of the only two instances where we read that Jesus marveled. Once here at the unbelief of His own nation; once, in Matthew 8:10, at the faith of a Gentile.

They had to admit that His words, His wisdom, and His works were truly wonderful (verse 2). But, say they, "Who is He anyway? He is one of us." As if to say, what can you ever look for in the likes of us? Even so, when envying others man still degrades himself.

"Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" (verse 3) On Jesus' first visit (Luke 4:22) they had called Him the son of Joseph; now of Mary. Was this a veiled insult, intimating they had learned that Joseph was not His father and that therefore (in the reckoning of their evil minds) He was the illegitimate son of Mary? They hinted as much in John 8:41.

We know His mother, they said, and his brothers and sisters. By the way, this shows that Mary was not immaculate, as Rome falsely teaches, for Mary had other sons and daughters. Like so many since, these Nazareth folks failed to recognize the infinite grace and condescension of Him who saw fit to be born of a virgin, and to hide His eternal majesty under the guise of lowly humanity. Yet His works should have told them that here indeed God Himself walked amongst men.

He marveled and left them, *never to return there again*. So will the Saviour leave those who willfully close their eyes to who He is, and reject Him in their blind unbelief.

Now, from verses 7 to 13, we have the account of how the Lord sent out His disciples to go forth and preach.

Matthew adds—in the Lord's charge to them—that they were to go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and not to the Gentiles. Mark omits this, because his Gospel is a universal one, not Jewish or strictly dispensational, as is Matthew's.

Jesus sent them forth to go and serve, entirely on the principle of faith. They were to take nothing for their journey. Surely more than a hint is given here as to how the gospel of God's grace is to be preached today. There is altogether too much begging for money on every hand, ostensibly to carry on the Lord's work. He takes care of His servants as they go forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.

And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told Him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught (verse 30).

For the first and only time Mark calls the Lord's followers "apostles." The disciples, meaning "learners," had now become "apostles," meaning "sent ones." These disciples had been under training for perhaps a year in the best Bible college that ever functioned, with none other than the Son of God Himself their teacher. Now they were getting the initial experience of going out with the gospel without the visible presence of their Lord and Master, to prepare them for the future day when the Lord would leave them and return to the glory. Then He would send them out to teach all nations; they started by practicing on *one* nation. Before long He would send them to preach the gospel to every creature, comforting them with that happy assurance, "Lo, I am with you alway." Though unseen, His spiritual presence and power would sustain them in their arduous labors. How good for us, too, to know that He is with us always, as we tell the story of His redeeming love!

Now, in verse 30, these disciples have returned from their missionary tour and they report to Jesus, telling Him "all things they had both done and taught." God in His word has not seen fit to give us a detailed account of their adventures. Perhaps they were not worth printing; reports seldom can be relied on. How good to read that they reported to *Jesus*; not to boards, or committees, or to the Church. Well for us if we told the Lord more—and people less! You can't color your exploits or exaggerate your labors when you talk to Him.

They told Him *all things*. I take it that meant both the failures as well as the successes. And they told Him the *truth*. Nowadays, in reports, perhaps only the many conversions are rehearsed. Most preachers never seem to have learned subtraction when they went to school, but they are certainly good at addition, and simply shine in multiplication. They say little of the sad failures in personal life and devotion, or of the lack of fruit upon their labors. Let us tell *Him*; He can put His finger on the causes of failure and enable us to correct them; He can correct the faults; and He will rightly estimate our service and reward us accordingly.

The rest of the chapter takes up the murder of John the Baptist, the feeding of the five thousand, and the miracle of Jesus walking on the sea. These will be taken up under other headings.

Human Tradition Nullifying the Word of God

MARK 7

When they [the Pharisees] saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen hands, they found fault (verse 2).

JUDAISM was marked by much ceremonialism and formalism, divinely instituted, such as what clothing they were to wear, what food to eat, etc. And in the religious services the sacrifices, vestments, etc., were all regulated and ordained of God. As Hebrews 9:10 puts it, the service of God consisted of "meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation." But to those instituted of God, the Jews had gradually added many more, not divinely given. Mark explains this in verses 3-4, which are left out in the similar passage in Matthew 15, furnishing another incidental proof that Mark writes for Gentiles, to whom he must explain those Jewish customs which were well known to the Jewish readers of Matthew's record.

Formalism and ritualism had practically superseded the teachings of the Word of God, and external ceremony had almost annihilated spiritual reality, as Isaiah had prophesied: "This people . . . with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from Me" (Isaiah 29:30). They rejected the Word of God and nullified it by adding numberless traditions (Mark 7:9). Needless to say that exactly the

same situation prevails in our day, as men go on with an outward show of religion, while in heart they are far from God. Read the first chapter of Isaiah to find how God hates this.

Even those who walk in the light of God's Word often allow tradition to become so prevalent that they think what and how they do things is the only right way to do them, though, upon closer examination, there is nothing in the Word of God to warrant their particular practices. It is even so with many things in our own assemblies. Because we have always done a thing so and so, we have come to think that every other method or teaching is wrong. God deliver us from mere tradition!

Our Lord cites one example (verses 10-13) to show how the Pharisees made the Word of God of no effect by human tradition. "Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother . . . But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or mother; making the word of God of none effect through your tradition."

To get around God's law that children ought to consider and honor their parents, the Jewish elders had invented a hypocritical ruse. If parents needed the help of their children, these could just say "Corban," and thus excuse themselves from caring for their loved ones. The word "corban" means a gift, in the sense that it was a gift to God, for the Hebrew word used meant an "offering." Thus, by dedicating to God the money which should have been bestowed upon the parents, they could avoid their responsibility of providing for the need of their parents. The vileness lurking behind this subterfuge lay in the fact that during the

lifetime of such children they had the use of that money for themselves, and at their death it was dedicated to the priests; so both they and their religious leaders profited by the deliberate robbing of the parents; and all this under the guise of religious devotion.

Turning back to the cavil of the Pharisees as to why the Lord's disciples ate with unwashed hands, the Lord replies to this (verses 15-23). Let us note that the Pharisees' criticism does not imply that the disciples ate their food with dirty hands. No, they were referring to ceremonial washing. As is true so much with religion any time, these hypocrites made much of externalism. As our Lord told them in Matthew 23:25: They made clean the outside of the cup and platter, but within they were full of extortion and excess. In our Lord's reply He shows His hearers that it is not the outside, but the inside that counts. Not the physical food that goes in, but the moral filth that comes out is the defiling factor.

"There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him" (verse 15). Food is physical and can only affect the physical system. Ceremonies are outward and only touch the outward man. But the things that come out of man, those defile the man; those things are not physical, but moral and spiritual. Man's heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, and out of such an evil heart can come only evil things. Note that those vile things come alike out of the heart of *all* men—there is no exception. Evil thoughts, adulteries, fornication, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these, of course, do not come *out* of *every* man, but every one of these is inherent *in* every man. Man's heart naturally is a cesspool of iniquity and needs to be purified by faith (Acts 15:9). True holiness works from

the inside out, not from the outside in. God looks on the heart; man looks on the outward appearance. May God keep you and me from being hypocrites! Once the heart has been cleansed from its sin and from an evil conscience through the worth of Christ's precious blood, let us see to it that it is kept pure in His sight. Then, and then only, will our outward conduct be right and pleasing to Him, when it is the expression of a true heart.

The rest of this chapter tells the story of two miracles, which we shall consider elsewhere.

Peter's Confession of Christ

MARK 8

THIS CHAPTER opens with the miracle of the feeding of the four thousand, followed by the Lord's warning against the leaven of the Pharisees. Then the healing of the blind man (verses 1-26). At verse 27 we reach a new departure, a new note in the Lord's words. For the first time in this Gospel Jesus makes mention of His suffering, His death, and His resurrection (verse 31): "And He began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again."

We read that the Lord *began* to teach them concerning His rejection, crucifixion, and resurrection, for after this first occasion He speaks of it at least six times more, as recorded by Mark.

At Caesarea Philippi the Lord asks His disciples, "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter replies, "Thou art the Christ." Matthew 16:16 contains a more complete confession, for Matthew adds, "the Son of the living God." Mark leaves out the commendation of Peter by the Lord, but includes the stern rebuke that followed shortly. Many take this as an added proof that Mark got much of his information through Peter, who modestly omitted that which might have seemed to compliment himself.

The Lord tells His disciples not to make known to any-

one that He is the Son of God. From henceforth faith must recognize Him thus and confess and follow Him, as Peter had done.

The Lord then speaks of His forthcoming shameful death. But nature can't take this, and the ever-ready Peter dares to rebuke the Lord and to tell Him to have pity on Himself (see marginal note in Matthew 16:22). Peter well represents the Jewish nation here, which could not see the sufferings of the Christ, though ready enough to receive Him had He come to reign over them in power and glory. But the sufferings of Christ must precede the glory that is to follow (1 Peter 1:11).

Jesus now turns and rebukes Peter sharply, while looking on His disciples, as it were to call their undivided attention to that which He is about to say to Peter. What amazing words are these, addressed to Simon Peter: "Get thee behind Me, Satan." The Lord knew that Peter for the moment was but the mouthpiece of the devil. How searching the thought that a believer can be the voice of God the Father in one moment (Matthew 16:17) and the voice of Satan in the next! Let us remember, dear fellow believer, that the same thing is possible with you and me. May we walk humbly and lowly before God, taking heed lest, thinking we stand, we should fall.

Twice that peremptory command of our Lord is heard in the Bible, "Get thee behind Me, Satan." Once when the devil personally urged our blessed Lord to accept from him the *glories* of this world; again here, where through Simon Peter he sought to turn the Lord away from the *shame* of the cross. Even so the devil tempts the believer to shun the reproach and the suffering which faithfulness to Christ will bring, and contrariwise to seek and crave the glories this world offers.

The Lord orders Satan to get to heel. He is the only One who can trust Satan behind His back: He is complete Master!

How gracious our dear Lord is! After rebuking Peter for his foolish ignorance, in urging his Lord to avoid the shame of the cross, Jesus, in the very next chapter, takes him and the others apart and shows them the glory and majesty that are His, to be displayed when He shall reign. What a tremendous encouragement that must have been to those disturbed, befuddled followers of our Saviour! Later on Peter triumphantly tells God's tried saints all about this preview which he saw on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Christ on the Mountaintop, Satan at the Bottom

MARK 9

THE TWO EVENTS with which this chapter opens graphically illustrate God's purposes of grace. In the one we see the Son of God in all His glory; in the other we see Him come down to this world of sin, as it lies under the domination of the devil. Our blessed Lord left the throne of light and laid aside the insignia of His eternal majesty, to come down to this world of sin and death that He might destroy the works of the devil, and set men free from the power of sin and Satan.

In verse 31, He again shows His disciples the tremendous cost to Him of this mission. But they understood not, though in all truth His words were plain enough. They could only think, being Jews, of the glory that was to be theirs under Messiah's righteous reign. Hence, in spite of our Lord's words, though He spoke of His coming rejection, death, and risen life, they argued among themselves who should be the greatest. I suppose they were thinking of the day when their Lord should sit on the throne.

Gently and kindly our blessed Lord taught them that true greatness consists of humility and lowly service. He uses a little child (notice how it always says a "little" child) as an example and tells them that to receive such a child in His Name is equivalent to receiving the Lord Himself. What God values is humble service. So many want to do

“great” things. The way to do great things is to begin doing little things. Jesus was the greatest of all, yet He became Servant of all. And for that reason God highly exalted Him, and gave Him a Name above every name. May we seek to imitate Him!

The other things in this chapter will be considered under other headings.

A Pictorial Glimpse of the "Flesh"

MARK 10

FROM HERE ON our Lord is seen as definitely and finally on His way to Calvary; here is the start of His last and concluding journey, ending upon the cross.

Notice in this chapter the various and variegated activities of the "flesh" in man:

In the case of *marriage and divorce*—the flesh in its *lust* (verses 2-12).

The flesh in its *pride* (verses 13-16). In order to enter the Kingdom of God, one must become as a little child.

The flesh in its *greed* (verses 10-17). The story of the young man who left Christ to cling to his money.

The flesh in its *desire for reward* (verses 28-31). "We have left all," says Simon Peter. "What are we going to get?"

The flesh in its *seeking after glory* (verses 35-40). "We want the highest place in glory," said James and John.

The flesh in its *criticism* of others (verses 41-45). The other ten found fault with James and John.

In bright contrast there is He, who never sought anything for Himself but who came, not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many (verse 45). Oh, to be more like Jesus!

We will look at most of these subjects under other head-

ings, but want to study a little the truths found in verses 32-45.

Verse 32 answers to Luke 9:51. Jesus is setting His face as a flint, steadfastly going on to Jerusalem and the tragic end awaiting Him there. A little distance behind follow His disciples, amazed; then the crowd, afraid. Thus our Lord is already "alone." His disciples even now follow Him at a distance. Ere long they were all to leave Him alone; yet He was not alone, for the Father was with Him—until He reached the cross with its fearful woe, when God also forsook Him.

The Lord tells them once more what awaits Him, saying: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles. And they shall mock Him and shall scourge Him and shall spit upon Him and shall kill Him, and the third day He shall rise again."

Surely these words are crystal clear, yet, strange to say, the disciples did not grasp their import. I believe that in the Gospel by Luke we read how our Lord spoke in plain terms of His death and resurrection on eleven occasions, yet they did not understand Him. Such is the effect preconceived notions have on people. So today, in spite of the plainest language of Scripture, people will hold certain views and believe certain doctrines, refusing to believe the truth.

Luke 18:34 says: "And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." In Mark 8:31, after Jesus spoke of His death, Peter rebuked Him. On the second occasion (9:34) the disciples argued among them which of them should be the greatest. Now here, on the third occasion,

once more the Lord's declaration of His sorrows and sufferings is followed by the demand of James and John for a place of honor and prominence. On each of these occasions the Lord's announcement of His shame is followed by the disciples' craving for glory, or avoidance of suffering. Alas, man is a poor mortal!

"Master, we would that Thou shouldest do for us *whatsoever we shall desire*" (Mark 10:35). Of course the Lord makes no such wild promise. How good that He does not grant us whatever we ask; what fearful fools we should make of ourselves, if He did! How different this request from the utterance of Him who prayed, "Not what I will, but what Thou wilt." I wonder if these two would have wanted to be on His right and left hand on the cross? I am afraid not. They wanted to be spectators in the day of His glory, but not participators in the hour of His suffering. They *said* they could drink of His cup and be baptized with His baptism, but they did not know what they were talking about.

The cup the Lord speaks of was His suffering at the hands of *God* for our sins. A cup intimates internal suffering, while the baptism speaks of His physical sufferings at the hands of *man*, for baptism is an external thing. James and John said they could drink His cup and experience His baptism, and the Lord agrees to their claim. But, in their case, the cup could not be the cup of God's judgment which our Saviour drank on Calvary—Jesus alone could be the substitute for sinners—but rather the cup of suffering which a believer may taste for Christ's sake, as he bears His reproach. A place of honor by My side, said the Lord, is not a gift to be given, but a place to be earned. Rewards are the fruit of faithfulness to Christ; if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him.

The rest of the disciples found fault with these two, I am afraid more because they wanted the same for themselves than because they realized the wrong. Christians are sadly afflicted often by the virus of envy. Our wonderful Lord utilizes the incident to remind all of them that greatness is found in littleness; that rule is the fruit of service; that glory crowns self-abnegation. "Whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all" (Mark 10:44). Was ever greater example given of this tremendous truth than in the holy life of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself? Hear what the Chiefest of all says, who in wondrous grace became servant of all. Hear Him who practiced so consistently what He preached: "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). This is the key text of the Gospel by Mark.

Let us learn from this chapter one outstanding truth: we must shun like the plague the desire to "be somebody"; pride and self-seeking are the most abhorrent traits a Christian can be marred and scarred by. "Learn of Me," says our Lord, "for I am meek and lowly in *heart*: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:29).

The "King" Comes to His Temple

MARK II

WE NOW REACH the last week Christ spent on earth, previous to Calvary. The chapter, in the incidents it records, is distinctly dispensational in its teachings, beginning with the healing of the blind man at the close of chapter 10. That blind man is typical of Israel as a nation, blinded because of their unbelief and rejection of their Messiah, as Romans 11:25-27 and 2 Corinthians 3:14 show. But, praise God, the day shall come when Israel, as did Bartimaeus, shall call upon their Messiah as the Son of David and shall have their eyes opened to look upon Him whom they pierced. They shall then cast away their garment (Mark 10:50), their garment of self-righteousness, and come to Jesus. Then, as here in Mark 10, Israel shall be blessed and saved in the city of the curse, pictured here in Jericho which, as this world is, was under the judgment of God. There Israel, scattered for nineteen centuries in spiritual blindness because of their crucifixion of Christ, shall have those blind eyes opened.

Our chapter opens with our Lord's entry into Jerusalem, according to the prophecy of Zechariah (9:9). It was truly a humble gesture on the part of the King of kings. But Mark writes of Him as Jehovah's "servant." So He comes into His own city, stripped of the insignia of royalty, divested of His dignities. The scattering of the clothes of the popu-

lace, the broken branches of trees, the shouting of the crowd, all betoken the lowly place He takes. He rode into Jerusalem in the dignity of a great meekness. This "Palm Sunday" triumph was but an oh, so meek and insignificant sample of the glorious revelation of Christ to His people of Israel in the future day of His power. Then all shall hail Him as their King, and He shall come then to His temple to smite His enemies and deliver His redeemed ones (Malachi 3:1). Zechariah 9:9 prophesies the entrance of Christ into Jerusalem as recorded here, and which took place just a few days before our Saviour's shameful death. The very next verse speaks of His future universal reign when He shall come. More than nineteen hundred years have already elapsed between the events recorded in those two verses that follow each other (Zechariah 9:9-10).

This time the Lord looked around and observed the state of things (Mark 11:11). Then He returned the next day and drove those who used religion for the purpose of greed and selfishness out of the Temple. John 2 records how our Lord did it at the beginning of His ministry more than three years before. The passage in Mark describes how He did it at the end. There He told them not to make His Father's house a house of merchandise. Here the rebuke is much stronger and He calls those wicked men a bunch of robbers, who use the temple of God for their den.

We might note in passing that while Matthew speaks of an ass *and* its colt, Mark only mentions the colt. Matthew, in writing to Jews, quotes from Zechariah and, in agreement with that prophet, calls attention to both animals as the prophet did. Mark writes for Gentiles, so that detail is of no particular importance to them. The ass and the colt typically speak of Israel of old and Israel of the future, the new nation. The Lord will come and then have the new

converted nation under His control. Israel shall then submit herself to Him, as typified in the young colt.

The latter part of verse 3 refers the "he" to our Lord—not to the owner of the colt. The idea is that the Lord, having made use of the animal, would immediately thereafter return it to its master. It emphasizes the fact that our Lord came into the world through a borrowed womb, went out of it in a borrowed tomb, and rode on a borrowed ass. The disciples were told to say that the Lord "had need" of the colt.

Only once in all Scripture do we read that the Lord ever needed anything, and in that case it was an ass. This ought to keep us humble. The Lord does not "need" us, though in His grace He loves to use us in His service.

At eventide Jesus left Jerusalem and went out to Bethany (verse 11). There is no record that our Lord ever spent one night even in that city called the "holy city," but in reality so unholy, the headquarters of the bitter enemies and opposers of the Son of God. Religion still hates Christ, and its leaders are ever opposed to Him.

The next morning the Lord spoke words that withered the fig tree. This, as we all know, is the only time the Lord Jesus ever cursed anything or anyone. However, actually it does not say that Jesus cursed it, but Peter employed that word (verse 21). When we understand the dispensational meaning here conveyed, we shall see why the fig tree was blasted. The fig tree is a well-known Scriptural simile for the nation of Israel. Israel is so spoken of frequently in the Old Testament, and the fig tree in the vineyard (Luke 13:6) also has a clear allusion to Israel.

The Lord came seeking fruit on this fig tree, as He had come seeking fruit from His earthly people Israel. The tree had leaves, and, according to the nature of the fig tree,

should have had fruit also, for leaves and fruit come at about the same time in the case of fig trees. Leaves without fruit suggest a profession without performance, profession without reality. It was so with Israel when Jesus came to them and so, in withering the fig tree, our Lord was showing that Israel was to be set aside, since they bore no fruit for God. How true this has been in the case of the Jewish people need not be said. But there is hope, for when we turn to Mark 13:28 we learn that the fig tree shall yet blossom—Israel shall yet be blessed and bear fruit for God's glory. Hundreds of Old Testament prophecies have as their happy theme the future spiritual blessing of Israel, with Christ their King reigning over them.

The Lord then utilized the lesson of the withering of the fig tree to press home the need of believing prayer. He shows that such prayer, if it is to be successful, must be accompanied by a forgiving spirit (verses 21-26).

Beginning at verse 27 and continuing on through chapter 12, we see our wonderful Lord sitting in judgment. Four questions are propounded to Him in this section and Jesus astounds His opponents by His answers, silencing them. He ends by raising a question of His own (12:35). We shall consider these questions in their order.

In verses 27-33 the chief priests, scribes, and elders ask the Lord by what authority He did His miracles and who gave Him such authority. Whenever man is short on spiritual power, he is long on authority. In fact, it is the very lack of spiritual life that has brought about official authority. Now, in the political or social world appointed authority, of course, is needed, but not so in the spiritual realm. God's Word in this day of grace knows nothing of appointed or ordained authority. All of it is simply man's substitution for the lack of spiritual force and freshness.

One is reminded of what a visitor to St. Peter's replied to the remark of a bishop who showed him around.

"You see," said the bishop, "we can't say with Simon Peter, 'Silver and gold have I none.'"

"No," was the answer, "neither can you say with him, 'In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.'"

Ordination for the ministry, official positions in the Church are unknown in Scripture. What counts is what counted in the case of our Lord, namely, whether *one* is sent of God or not. Divine authority of itself nullifies the meaning or value of human authority. God is the One who ordains, calls, qualifies, and sends His servants out into His service. Their responsibility is to Him and to none else. Holiness of life and devotion of love to Christ will make such ministry effective.

The Lord refused to answer their question about His authority, because it is useless to reply to men who refuse to acknowledge the obvious truth and who close their eyes to Christ. Instead of honestly giving the answer the Lord's question demanded as to whether John's baptism was from heaven or of men:

They reasoned whether it was expedient to tell the truth
(verse 31).

They feared the people (verse 32).

They lied when they said "we cannot tell" (verse 33).

*We Marvel at His Understanding
and His Answers*

MARK 12

THE PARABLE of the vineyard opens the chapter and will be looked at under the heading of "Parables."

Then follow the four questions, to three of which the Lord has a perfect answer; and His question, to which the Pharisees and Herodians have no answer.

"Is it lawful," say they, "to give tribute to Caesar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give? But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye Me? bring Me a penny, that I may see it. And they brought it. And He saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto Him, Caesar's. And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at Him."

This was a subtle question, intended to put the Lord in a difficult position, either with the mob or with the Roman government. How little they knew whom they were really tempting! As the Lord did so often, He answered the questioners rather than the question and turned their wickedness back upon themselves. For in His striking reply, the Lord Jesus intimated that the reason they were subject to Rome was that they had *not* been subject to God. Had they rendered God His due, they would not now be under the

domination of that foreign power. Applying this incident and its truth to ourselves today, let us look at it with some care. Notice a number of thoughts:

Jesus said, "Bring Me a penny." This suggests He did not carry any money. He had come into the world, not for anything for Himself, but to minister God's riches to us. Not for personal and material gain, but for the spiritual blessing of man. As such He is the Example of all the servants of God.

"Whose is this image and superscription?" "Caesar's," said they. "Well then," says the Lord, "render Caesar his portion." They said, "Shall we *give*?" Jesus replies, "Render." *Render* means to give back, in return. Thus the Lord tells them that they *owed* Caesar tribute, for he had first given things to them. The taxes we pay are in return for services the government renders to us. Thus it is only right that we should pay for value received.

Then the Lord Jesus adds a searching and wholly unexpected comment in His answer to their query. "Render to God the things that are God's." Ah, they had forgotten God; they had left Him out and that's why they were under the heel of Rome. That penny evidently belonged to Caesar, for it had his image and superscription on it. Even so, man evidently belongs to God, for God's image is stamped on him. He was made in the image and likeness of God. They were to render tribute to Caesar because he had done certain things for them and was doing so, even as we today pay taxes to the government because it furnishes us with protection, public utilities, roads, etc. They were to pay a certain amount of their income, but not all of it, because Caesar furnished them only certain things, not everything.

But we must ever remember that God does do everything

for us and gives everything to us. Therefore we must render everything we have and are to Him in return. Every good and perfect gift comes down from above; every material mercy and spiritual blessing. And, away above and beyond all that, He has given us His own precious Son to die for us, that we might be saved and be blessed with every spiritual blessing. Render therefore to God that which is His by right.

Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands our soul, our life, our all!

Let us never be like the man with the one talent who dared to speak of the Lord as one who reaped where He had not sown. Let us never forget that all we have and all we are we owe to Him. May His love, shed abroad in our hearts, stir us to yield our bodies to Him, a living sacrifice, which is but our reasonable service.

The Pharisees are silenced for the moment. Now come the Sadducees, who were the modernists of that day (verses 18-27). This is the only time these appear in Mark. They seek to cast ridicule on the truth of the Resurrection—which as modernistic infidels they did not believe in—by bringing the absurd, imaginary tale of a woman, who, having been married to seven husbands, finally dies without leaving any offspring. "In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife" (verse 23).

The Lord replies that their palpable ignorance is due to a double error—they don't know who God is; they don't know His Word (verse 24). If they had only known who God really is, that He is a God of power, and had only known what His Word teaches, they would not have been the unbelievers they were. The same is true today. Man's

ignorance of spiritual things is due to His failure to recognize God's greatness, and to believe His Word.

God is a God of power, and how and where is this power more manifest than in His ability to raise the dead? Death, as far as man is concerned, is an untamed terror. Death is a champion ever victorious, except in one case: that of our blessed Lord. He is the only One able to raise the dead. Thus His power is revealed, as Romans 1:4 says, "[He is] declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection from the dead." He was crucified through weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. Time and again the power of God is associated with resurrection in the Scriptures.

And, as touching the fact that they rise, the Lord confounds His critics with an argument I am sure none of us would ever have thought of using. God said, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Hence, says the Lord, those men were not only alive when God spoke those words, but furthermore it proves, says Jesus, that they shall rise from the dead some day. Thus we have here the truth that in God's purposes the body is indissolubly connected with the soul. If the soul lives after death, then the body shall be raised to be its tenement forever. This at one blow settles the eternal existence of the sinner as well as the eternal bliss of the saint.

Very briefly commenting on the Sadducees' imaginary problem as to whose wife this woman would be in the resurrection, our Saviour reveals the further truth that those natural relationships all cease to exist up there. No doubt we shall know our loved ones there, but all the ties of earth shall be lost in the brighter, more glorious bliss of being one in Christ, united to Him as His Bride.

As a refreshing change a scribe comes to ask the Lord, and

apparently sincerely, as to which commandment is the greatest of all. He probably had one of the Ten Commandments in view, but it is noticeable that the Lord does not quote any of those in His reply. His first quotation is from Deuteronomy 6:4-5; the second is a summation of the second portion of the Decalogue, even as His first quotation is a summary of the first division of the Decalogue. The Lord does not mention any direct commandment and this suggests that it is the spirit of the law that counts with God and not the mere letter. It is with the heart and soul—not merely with the body—that God can be served. Only divine grace having won the heart can enable one to live for His glory.

The Lord had silenced all His foes, at the same time teaching them and us some very helpful, practical lessons. Now He Himself propounds a question which they are unable to face. "How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to My Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool" [quoted from Psalm 110:1]. "David therefore himself calleth Him Lord; and whence is He then his son?" (Mark 12:35-37).

How inconsistent sinful man is! They condemned our blessed Lord on the charge that "being a man, He made Himself God" (John 10:33 and 19:7). Of course, the charge was false. But the anomalous thing is that they themselves did that very thing with which they charged our Lord. For they said that Christ was the son of David (a mere man therefore) and yet the Scriptures said, as the Lord reminded them from Psalm 110:1, that David called Christ his *Lord*. Thus they were actually making a man—the natural son of David—God. Everyone that says the Lord Jesus is only a man is guilty of the crime of making a man God, for Jesus *is* God.

Praise His holy Name, Jesus did the very reverse. He, being God, made Himself Man. He is God, manifest in flesh!

Verses 38-40 take up the Lord's denunciation of the scribes, which in Matthew's Gospel fills about one whole chapter (Matthew 23). How suited is this brevity here to Mark's theme, for presenting Christ as a servant, as Mark does, it is out of place for a servant to rebuke others. He does not take the place here of Judge, as there in Matthew.

Note that our Lord speaks of degrees of punishment in the day of judgment, for verse 40 says that some shall receive greater damnation than others.

We shall look at the widow with her two mites in another place.

The Olivet Discourse

MARK 13

THIS is the longest lecture delivered by our Lord, as found in Mark. At that, it is much shorter than the one in Matthew's Gospel. His account is divided into three sections: Concerning the future of the nation of Israel (Matthew 24); concerning Christendom, covering this present day of grace (Matthew 25:1-30); and about the blessing of the Gentile nations who will be reached during the great tribulation period and who will share with Israel in the blessings of Christ's millennial reign (Matthew 25:31-46). Mark treats only the first of these three—the future of Israel. Mark and Matthew both omit the destruction of Jerusalem in the past, A.D. 70, when Israel was scattered throughout the whole world. Luke records this in chapter 21, verses 20-24. Matthew, however, mentions this same destruction very briefly in another connection, in the parable of the marriage of the Son (Matthew 22:7). He leaves it out in the Olivet discourse.

Matthew 24 and Mark 13 are very much alike. The Lord there looks beyond the present day of grace and speaks of Israel's future, which is told forth by many of the Old Testament prophets. When Israel crucified her Lord she ceased to be a nation, and in God's purposes of wisdom and love the gospel then went out to the Gentiles. Today the Church is being built, composed of true believers in Jesus from

among both Jews and Gentiles. When this Church (which was born on the day of Pentecost by the baptism of the Holy Spirit) is complete, Israel shall once more be taken up. Romans 11 describes this, as do so many of the Old Testament writings.

In Daniel 9:24-27 Israel's future is pictured chronologically and shows that after the crucifixion of Christ (when Messiah was cut off), one week (seven years) is still to be fulfilled to round out their history. During those seven years occur the events portrayed in the Book of Revelation, and foretold by Daniel. During the first part of those final years there shall be wars, earthquakes, pestilences, etc., as given in verses 5-13 of our chapter. Those calamities are the beginnings of sorrow (verse 8), and that word means "travail-pains." They are the signs given before the great tribulation period itself commences, and are the indications of the approach of Israel's spiritual rebirth, their restoration to God.

Then follows, as we read in verses 14-23 of our chapter, the setting up of the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, which results in a time of fearful trouble that shall come on all the earth. This tribulation is called "the time of Jacob's trouble" in Jeremiah 30:7. Daniel also was told that it would come upon *his* people, referring to the Jews, of course (Daniel 12:1). Daniel foretold, as does our Lord here, that "in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be" (Mark 13:19). This proves without a shadow of a doubt that this tribulation is still future, for no such *world-wide* time of persecution and suffering has ever yet happened on this earth. This abomination is an idol which shall be set up in the temple in Jerusalem (Daniel 9:27), for the word "abomination" is applied in the Old Testament always to idols or idolatry. This idola-

try shall take place when men shall worship the Antichrist and the image set up then (2 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 13:14-15).

At the end of that tribulation the Lord Himself shall suddenly appear from Heaven, with power and great glory (Mark 13:24-26). This was foretold long ago in Daniel 7:13-14. Christ shall come to destroy all His enemies; He shall send His angels and shall gather His elect people Israel from the four corners of the earth (verse 27), and shall reign over the redeemed earth.

I suppose it is hardly necessary to say that all this takes place after the Church of God has been removed from the earth. The Lord shall come to take His heavenly Bride Home to Himself first. Revelation 3:10 alone ought to be sufficient to prove this, though there are many passages of Scripture which clearly teach the same blessed truth. God tells His Church: "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation" [tribulation] "which shall come upon all the world" (Revelation 3:10). We are not only kept out of the tribulation but out of the very hour of it, as stated here. Again we are told that Jesus is our Deliverer from the wrath to come, and that wrath mentioned here can only refer to the wrath of God poured out during the tribulation judgments. The Lord will come, says this verse (1 Thessalonians 1:10), to deliver us from that wrath, and take us Home to glory. The tribulation is never mentioned in any of the Christian Epistles, which alone ought to convince a candid reader that it has nothing to do with the Church. It is always found in direct connection with the people of Israel.

In verses 28-31 Jesus tells His disciples (Jewish disciples, remember) that the budding of the fig tree would be a sign that these things were nigh, even at the doors. And tells

them that "this generation" shall not pass, till all these things shall be done. Since the fig tree is only now beginning to bloom (for it speaks of Israel, as we mentioned in chapter 11), and since this is happening more than nineteen hundred years since the Lord Jesus made this prophecy, the expression "this generation" can therefore only refer to the nation as such to whom Jesus spoke, without regard to the time element. In our Lord's discourse in this chapter He left the present day of grace out entirely and passed from their then-present to the future still ahead of us. The word "generation" is used in Scripture with the meaning of this "race." In other words, Jesus told His disciples that Israel as a race would not cease to exist till God's purposes concerning them were fulfilled. How wonderfully this promise has been fulfilled the present existence of that same people as a special race on earth surely shows. It reminds one of those majestic words uttered by Jeremiah (31:35-36): "Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The Lord of Hosts is His name: If those ordinances depart from before Me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me for ever."

"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32). The signs have been given, but not the exact time of our Lord's return. This serves the purpose of keeping the believer ever on the alert, whether the Christian of this age, or the Jew of the age to come.

Many have stumbled over this statement that "no man knows, *neither the Son*, but the Father that day and hour." Mark alone includes the words in italics, which are left out by Matthew. It is not for us to speak dogmatically where

the deep mystery of the Godhead is involved, but we may humbly suggest two explanations right here:

Mark alone inserts this clause, "neither the Son," because Mark writes about our holy Lord under the figure of a servant; and as such He does not see fit to know, for, as He Himself said elsewhere, "The servant knoweth not what his lord doeth" (John 15:15).

Each Person of the eternal Trinity has His own sphere of operation. The Father is the source of counsels and purposes. This is plainly taught in Acts 1:7 where, in answer to the disciples' query about the time of the restoration of Israel's kingdom, the Lord replies, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power" (the word is "authority"). Again, in reply to James and John (see Matthew 20:23), Jesus said that a special place in His administration would be given to those for whom it was prepared of His Father. These, and other Scriptures furnish a very simple clue to our Lord's words in this text. The proof is there that certain divine prerogatives are assumed by each of the Persons of the Trinity: some are the Father's, some the Son's, and some the Holy Spirit's. They do not in any wise indicate inferiority on the part of either of these, but simply imply God's all-wise ways and purposes. As Son, the Lord saw fit not to know that which was the Father's business.

Certainly *we* don't know the dates; they are in God's counsels. Therefore, "Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is" (verse 33).

The Night in Which He Was Betrayed

MARK 14

THERE ARE two suppers in this chapter. At one Jesus was the Guest; at the other He was the Host. How sweet and precious to our Saviour must have been that feast which His loved ones prepared for Him; how fragrant the perfume Mary poured out on Him, not only from a broken jar, but from a broken heart. That hour of fellowship in that fearfully dark hour must have cast a warm light on the weary road He was about to tread. John tells us it took place six days before the Passover.

Mark continues with the account of the last Passover and the institution of the Lord's supper. His account is brief and to the point. In regard to the betrayer, Jesus utters those terrible words: "Good were it for that man if he had never been born." I wonder—does this suggest that for all other men it is better that they have been born, even though they are lost forever? I don't know, but it sounds that way.

There follows Peter's avowal of loyalty, his sleep, his fight, his denial, and finally his repentance. We will look at these in another place.

Verses 32-42. With bated breath and solemnized hearts we draw near (perhaps rather, we stand afar off) as our Lord in anticipation of the cross realizes its fearful horror. How fathomless that statement: "He . . . began to be sore amazed and to be very heavy. . . . My soul is exceeding

sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch." Three times He went away and prayed, saying the same words (no idle repetition this!) "Oh, if it were possible, that the hour might pass from Him." But it was not possible. He must bear our sins, if we are to be forgiven. He must be made sin, that we may be the righteousness of God in Him. He must die, if we are to live. He must know the agony of eternal doom, if we are to enjoy the peace that passeth all understanding.

The disciples could not keep awake; their hearts were heavy with an unnamed and foreboding fear. Yet how needful it is to watch and pray. Jesus prayed and when the test came the next day, He was supreme in His absolute surrender to the Father's will. When the test came for the disciples, they failed miserably. We need to pray today, for, while the spirit may be willing enough, the flesh is weak. Only God by His almighty power can enable us to stand, to be faithful in the hour of temptation.

Judas treacherously betrays his Lord with a kiss. Judas used a kiss; Simon Peter a sword. To the bystanders no doubt Judas made the best impression; Simon Peter the worst. Yet Peter loved the Lord; Judas loved himself. Peter was a true believer; Judas a base betrayer. How little man can tell by the outward appearance who truly are the Lord's and who are not. But the Lord is not deceived; He looketh upon the heart.

They lead the Lord Jesus into the palace of the high priest, to His mock trial (verses 53-65). False witnesses are produced, but lies will out and their witness proves a failure. They are unable to condemn our blessed Saviour by the testimony of His very enemies. He is finally condemned to death on His *own* testimony. Caiaphas challenges the Lord Jesus whether He is the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, and

without hesitation the Lord says that He is indeed, and adds: "Ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Then they pronounce upon Him the sentence of death.

When our Lord could have secured His release by refuting the false testimony of those lying witnesses, He held His peace (verse 61). When He could have prevented His condemnation by holding His peace, then He spoke. He was not seeking to escape the cross; He had come for the very purpose of laying down His life in sacrifice. He *is* the Son of Man who came to seek and to save the lost; and He *is* the Son of Man who shall come again in a day not far away to smite His enemies and to reign supreme. That glory which is to come must needs be preceded by the shame of the cross. How dark and fearful, though, the wickedness of those who called blasphemy the very grace that brought God's Eternal Son in lowly condescension to earth that as Man He might die for the sins of sinful man!

The high priest rent his clothes (verse 63). What a dramatic scene is here! Here are two high priests facing each other, the one after the order of Aaron, the other after the new order of Melchizedek. One a sinful wretch; the other the sinless Son of God. Leviticus 21:10 forbids the Jewish high priest ever to rend his garments. To do so would automatically disqualify him for holding that office. How striking then the incident recorded here! For Caiaphas was indeed going out of office; in fact the whole Levitical order was about to be set aside. Jesus, God's High Priest, was taking his place. Caiaphas was through when he rent his clothes, though probably he did not realize it. The Lord is now the High Priest, living for us in the glory. His garments were *not* rent when He hung on the cross, for He

is the High Priest forever. He ever liveth to make intercession for us.

“Some began to spit on Him, and to cover His face, and to buffet Him, and to say unto Him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike Him with the palms of their hands” (verse 65). Sin truly abounded, but praise His holy Name, grace does much more abound. Man’s vileness and hatred has been met by the amazing love of God that makes the foulest clean. Lord Jesus, blessed Lord, we bow with humble adoration at Thy feet now, and forevermore. Amen!

*The Place Called Calvary—
There They Crucified Him*

MARK 15

NOT MUCH can be *said* about this chapter. But it should be *read* often, that the devout reader might receive ever deeper impressions and experience ever greater appreciation of the suffering Saviour; of Him who died for our offenses and was raised again for our justification.

Pilate seeks in vain for some means to release the Lord. As a typical politician he tries every devious method, instead of facing the issue squarely. He does not consider what he *ought* to do, but only what he thinks is to his advantage to do. He is a miserable man, afraid of his superior in Rome and afraid of his subjects, but apparently not afraid to commit the crime of the centuries. And so he delivers our Lord to be crucified. What a dramatic moment in the day to come when Pilate in his turn shall stand before the Lord!

The soldiers brutally abused our holy Lord. They platted a crown of thorns, after dressing Him in a purple robe. Matthew calls it a scarlet robe. Purple is a blend of red and blue, the sacrificial red blended with the heavenly blue. They clothed Him thus in mockery. We recognize here His matchless grace that brought Him to the cross to offer Himself a sacrifice for our sins, and the blue tells us that by this sacrifice He has opened the heavens for us, whither He

Himself has gone. The soldiers might have clothed Him thus in mockery; we own Him as our King, and gladly acknowledge that more than all others He has a right to wear the purple. They might crown Him with thorns; we crown Him with many crowns, and hail Him as the Worthy One.

Simon the Cyrenian bore Jesus' cross (verse 21), an honor, I am sure, he shall praise God for through eternity. May we not shun to bear His cross, to suffer reproach with Christ!

Then comes the Cross itself, with its fathomless woe. Here we view with wonder:

His accusation—the King of the Jews (verse 26).

His vituperation—they rail on Him (verses 27-28).

His association—with transgressors (verse 28).

His isolation—forsaken of God (verse 34).

His expiration—He gave up the ghost (verse 37).

His expiation—for the way into Heaven is open now (verse 38).

His vindication—for truly this Man is the Son of God (verse 39).

Matthew and Mark alone record Jesus' cry of Godforsakenness—Matthew in Hebrew, Mark in Aramaic. Both these Gospels present the precious death of our Lord as that of the sacrifice for sin. Matthew as foreshadowed in the trespass offering; Mark as seen in the sin offering. And it is in that light our Lord was forsaken on Calvary, because He took our place, the sinner's place. Sin shuts out from God, and the Lord tasted that in all its horror when He hung upon the cross. Thus everything is in beautiful consistency with God's truth.

On Calvary we've adoring stood
And gazed on that wondrous Cross;

Where the holy, spotless Lamb of God
Was slain in His love for us.
How our hearts have stirred at that solemn cry
As the sun was enwrap in night;
"Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani,"
Most blessed, most awful sight.

But now the shame is over. No filthy human hands ever again touched Him. They had intended to bury Him with the wicked, but God saw to it that He was with the rich in His death.

There came Joseph of Arimathea, went boldly to Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. Pilate gave orders to let him have it. It is interesting to note that the two words translated "body" here are different. Pilate gave Joseph the "corpse or carcass." That's all our Lord's body was to Pilate, but to Joseph it was a "body," the very word used in Scripture for a "living" body. How precious true this is, for that body never saw corruption. And to us, as to Joseph, even though Jesus died, He is a living reality now, while the world considers Him, to all practical purposes, dead. Joseph craved it and handled it tenderly, as one would the body of a loved one who is living.

Very tenderly he (and Nicodemus, as John adds in his Gospel) laid the precious body in his own new tomb, never used before, and wrapped it in fine linen cloths, together with a fortune in spices (John 19:39). He who died numbered with transgressors, is now buried numbered with millionaires. Loving hands laid away Him whom wicked hands slew.

They laid away that precious body, but only for a short while. Ere long, He would rise from among the dead.

Hallelujah! Christ Arose!

MARK 16

THE FIRST eight verses of this chapter close with a picture of the disciples trembling, amazed and afraid. While Jesus promised them, after His resurrection, to meet them in Galilee (verse 7), this chapter does not record the fulfillment of that promise. I feel sure this omission has a dispensational meaning. It illustrates how Israel, as a nation, is still waiting, as it were, for that unfulfilled promise of Christ to return and reveal Himself to them.

But He did reveal Himself to some that first day He arose. To Mary Magdalene, to the two on the way to Emmaus, to the disciples at night in the upper room. Thus, while in the opening of this chapter some are told they shall see the Lord at some future time, to these others He reveals Himself immediately. This teaches the truth that Christ reveals Himself to us *now*, in this present church dispensation; and that Israel waits for His revelation to them in the future day of her conversion.

The second part of this chapter thus begins again with mention of His resurrection, as do the opening verses; only now the Lord Himself appears, while in the opening verses an angel announced the news (Matthew 28:5). This substantiates that these two refer to Israel and to the Church, for angels are always mentioned in connection with

Israel, while the Lord Himself is ever seen in connection with the Church.

He appears first to Mary Magdalene, which is surely significant, for out of her He had cast seven demons, and Mark prominently presents our Lord's authority over the demon world. Mary tells others the Lord is risen, but they believe her not.

The two on the way to Emmaus return and tell the ten who were gathered together in Jerusalem, neither believed they them. How slow people are to believe God's truth; how ready often to believe the devil's lies!

Jesus upbraided them for their unbelief and spiritual dullness (verse 14). It seemed to them that the news was too good to be true. And it truly *is* wonderful! All our blessings rest on the Resurrection of Christ, for, were Christ not risen, we would still be in our sins, and faith would be utterly in vain (1 Corinthians 15).

Mark's Gospel ends in a manner unlike all the others. There has been a good deal of controversy as to whether the closing words belong here or not. I believe the internal evidence—the perfect consistency with the theme of Mark's Gospel, which is Christ as the lowly Servant of God—strongly indicates they fill their proper place right here. This Gospel opens immediately with the Son of God working; it closes in exactly the same manner, telling us that, though He is now at the right hand of God, Jesus is still working with His own (verse 20). All the Gospels open and close with a similar note, each in agreement with the Gospel's special theme. Mark's theme is Christ as the Worker, and the conclusion here is in line with that thought.

Mark also, together with Luke, mentions the ascension of the Lord Jesus, which Matthew and John omit. How fitting this is! In the Lord's *minor* characters (if we may so speak

of "Servant" and of "Man") He is set forth as having ascended to Heaven; in His *prominent* portrayals, as King and as Son of God, He is, as it were, presented as if remaining on the earth. For, you see, we do need His power and His authority down here, while as Man He serves us still up there.

Yes, He ascends up *where* He was before, but not *as* He was before. He ascends now in a human body; something entirely new and revolutionary. He lives for us in the glory—the Man Christ Jesus, who is touched with the feelings of our infirmities, and is thus able to enter into our experiences and succor us in every hour of need. We live in the amazing age when there is a Man living *for* us in Heaven, and God dwells *in* us here upon the earth. Christ as Man looking after our interests up there; the Holy Ghost dwelling within us to enable us to look after His interests down here.

Jesus sends the apostles forth to preach the gospel to every creature. The commission here is more simple than the one in Matthew, consistent with Mark's line of truth. It confines itself to the preaching of the gospel of the grace of God. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." This does not mean of course, as some would have it, that he that is *not* baptized shall be lost. There are hundreds of passages of Scripture that teach that salvation is the result of faith in Christ alone, apart from human works altogether. The Lord is here simply stating the normal Christian order—that faith in Christ should be followed by baptism.

Certain signs are now said to follow them that believe. Some of these were performed by the apostles and others in the early days of Christianity. The purpose of these signs is definitely stated: they were given to confirm the Word

which they were sent to preach. Those early believers were preaching a new, challenging message about a Saviour who died and had risen again. So, in order to prove that they were truly sent of God, they were given the authority to perform such miracles. Now that we have the complete written Word of God; now that the gospel has been preached and proven in the conversion of millions of souls, it is folly to claim that signs are still needed. And this is the reason why those miracles are no longer seen today, though some fraudulently claim they do them or have seen them done. Very occasionally, mostly in heathen lands where the gospel is yet unknown or little known, some of those miracles may occur, but those who claim to do them in our country fail to produce convincing evidence.

May we realize our responsibility to carry the gospel, which the apostles preached everywhere, telling by word of mouth the wondrous truths penned by this lowly servant Mark concerning God's Servant, Jesus Christ our Lord!

PART THREE

Miracles in Pairs

TWO STARTLING EXPERIENCES ON
THE SEA

TWO MIRACLES RECORDED ONLY BY
MARK

TWO INTERWOVEN MIRACLES IN
MARK 5

TWO PROMINENT EXAMPLES OF JESUS
CASTING OUT DEMONS

Two Startling Experiences on the Sea

And the same day, when the even was come, He saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him even as He was in the ship. . . .

And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake Him, and say unto Him, Master, carest Thou not that we perish?

And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

And He said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him? (Mark 4:35-41)

MATTHEW AND LUKE also record this event, with little variation. How many a believer has found comfort here during his voyage across life's sea! There are a number of precious suggestions here to strengthen our faith, and to fill the soul with peace and assurance.

Jesus rebuked the storm and in doing so employed the same expression as when He silenced the demon in the synagogue in Capernaum. "Be muzzled," He said. The same evil power was behind both the demon-possessed man and

this tempest on the lake—the power of Satan. The devil loves to harass and upset the child of God by means of the tribulations and afflictions he can bring upon him, but we learn from our Saviour's perfect calm, as He sleeps while the billows roar and roll, that nothing and nobody can touch the one that is in God's care, except by His permission. No storm can swallow Him, and we are safe in Him. Neither can any storm, no matter how violent, upset God's program, though all hell were let loose. He may be sleeping in the ship, but still all things are under His almighty control.

There *arose* a great storm (verse 37); then He *arose* (verse 39); and there was a great calm.

Another storm, a far greater one, raged on Calvary, but there too Satan was defeated. And there also He arose (triumphantly from the dead) and to the troubled heart now comes the message of "Peace, be still." He made peace through the blood of His cross.

They took Him, as He was (verse 36). They took Him along as the guest, as it were. *They* took charge. They took Him along as a passenger, but the storm arose to teach them that they needed Him as the Captain of their salvation. Life's storms are meant to cast us upon Him, that we might trust in His love and power. How beautifully both God's love and power shine forth in this incident! Jesus sleeps. The wind roars, the waves beat, the crew struggles bailing out the ship, but He lies there completely undisturbed. Yet just a cry for help from their lips wakens Him.

It reminds one of a mother, who will sleep through lightning and thunder, through the scream of the siren as the fire engine crashes past her home. She hears none of it, but the faintest whisper of her baby instantly rouses her. Why? Because she loves it, of course, and has it upon her

heart all the time. Even so, not the raging of the tempest but the cry of anxiety of His disciples wakes our Lord. He is the same today; His ear is open to our prayers. (By the way, this is the only occasion that I can remember when we find His disciples praying. It takes terror to drive some folks to their knees.) His love awoke Him; His power stilled the waves.

Only once in Scripture, right here, do we read of our Saviour as asleep.

"Carest Thou not that we perish?" said they. But how could they perish, with Jesus on board? Our ship across life's sea may flounder, but it will never founder, with Him on board.

He arose and rebuked *them*? Oh no! He chides them eventually, not for disturbing Him but for being disturbed themselves. Not His care but their care was the issue. They cared when they did not need to; He cares when we do need His care.

"Why are ye so fearful?" The stilling of the storm in the souls of men is a far greater problem than this miracle was. This incident is a parable, but they were too dull to realize it. The message conveyed is that He is God, in all the plenitude of His power; that He is Man, in all points become as we are, touched with the feelings of our infirmities, full of compassion and love.

Verse 41. They feared exceedingly, they feared with a great fear. Not because of the storm now, but because of the calm. There is no ground for fear, either during the storms of life or in their calms, when we know Him and He is near. In the world we shall have tribulation, but in Him we shall have peace (John 16:33).

And when He had sent them away, He departed into a mountain to pray.

And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and He alone on the land.

And He saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night He cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them.

But when they saw Him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out:

For they all saw Him, and were troubled. And immediately He talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.

And He went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered.

For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.

And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore (Mark 6:46-53).

This miracle is also given in the Gospels by Matthew and John. Matthew alone records Simon Peter's feat as he walked on the water and his failure as he sank. There is a distinct dispensational picture here. Jesus going up into the mountain to pray suggests the ascension of our Lord and His present session at God's right hand, where He is interceding for His own, even to this very day.

In the meantime, His disciples are crossing the sea with the wind contrary unto them, even as we cross life's sea, in the teeth of trials and satanic opposition.

But the Lord from above sees us—as He saw His disciples from the mountaintop (verse 48)—and someday He will come again to meet us. Then we shall reach the other shore, as His disciples did that stormy night.

It is interesting to note that the Lord had to constrain His followers to go across without Him (verse 45). I suppose those men remembered their previous experience, which we considered a while ago, when Jesus went with them, and they remembered how they had needed Him then. But our Lord would teach them—and us too—the further lesson that before too long He would leave them and go back to the glory, and then they would have to face life without His visible presence. For these last nineteen hundred years He is praying for us up there, watching over us, speaking good cheer to us; and someday He shall return, first to take us Home, and then to reveal Himself to His earthly people.

Waves may toss and roar, but He is superior to all. They are, as it were, solid pavement under His feet. He is Master of all the circumstances; all things serve His might.

When they reached the other shore crowds came to meet them from everywhere, and went away blessed. Even so, when the Lord Jesus returns by-and-by, Israel shall safely reach the end of their stormy tribulation, with her sorrows gone forever, and the Gentile nations shall share in her bliss and glory.

Two Miracles Recorded Only by Mark

And they bring unto Him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech Him to put His hand upon him.

And He took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and He spit, and touched his tongue,

And looking up to heaven, He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.

And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

And He charged them that they should tell no man: but the more He charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it;

And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak (Mark 7:32-37).

And He cometh to Bethsaida, and they bring a blind man unto Him, and besought Him to touch him.

And He took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when He had spit on his eyes, and put His hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought.

And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.

After that He put His hands again upon his eyes, and

made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.

And He sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town (Mark 8:22-26).

MARK ALONE tells us about these two events. There must be some special reason for this, particularly as certain features are alike in both accounts:

Both these men were brought to Jesus.

The one was deaf, the other blind.

In both cases they besought the Lord to *touch* them.

Both times the Lord took them aside from the crowd.

Both afterward were told not to publish what He had done.

In both healings He produced miraculous effects by employing natural means.

Both times Jesus spit.

Neither of the miracles was instantaneous.

Some of these coincidences must be understood and seen in the light of the dispensational meaning lying below the surface. In the previous chapters Israel had more and more evidenced her rejection of Christ. So the Lord had turned aside into the Gentile territory of Tyre and Sidon, and had showed mercy to the woman who besought His help for her only daughter. Though only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, those sheep were wandering further away, refusing the Shepherd's tender care; hence mercy had now gone forth to the outcast Gentile.

In these two miracles Israel's hopeless condition is further pictured by this deaf man of chapter 7, which follows upon the mercy shown to the Syrophenician. Israel is deaf to God's pleading voice, and hence not able to speak clearly;

she had failed as a true witness for Jehovah. The Lord sighs over her sad condition, as He does in Mark 8:12, where Israel's unbelief is clearly the topic. The healing of the deaf man sets forth the future spiritual restoration of the nation of Israel.

The cure of the blind man in chapter 8 presents a similar dispensational view. For Israel, as so many Scriptures teach, was and is not only deaf to God's voice, but blind to her need of Christ and to the glory of His grace. Blindness has happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in (Romans 11:25).

Jesus led him out of the town, away from Bethsaida, which town in Matthew 11:21 was lashed by our Lord for its unbelief. If there is to be blessing for Israel, it must be away from the old sphere of unbelief; Israel will need to be born again. Her future recovery will not be instantaneous, but the nation shall gradually be saved and be brought back to God.

In both cases the Lord Jesus spit. Remember how they spit upon Him? It was a sign of contempt, of intended scorn and shame. In spitting here the Lord was reminding Israel—in type—that His humiliation, His shameful rejection, His crucifixion are the very means by which she shall hear His voice and see His face, in the day of her salvation.

There are of course many suggestive thoughts unveiled here for our moral and spiritual blessing:

In both instances they brought these men to Jesus. The deaf cannot hear and the blind cannot see; both must of necessity be brought to Christ. We must tell them of Him and bring them to Him. He alone can open their deaf ears, and open their blind eyes, turning them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God.

Both times the Lord took them aside. The personal and

private touch is the most successful way of bringing souls into the light and joy of salvation. And that personal touch truly was exerted here. One can visualize this blind man led out of the town, led by the hand—his hand in the hand of the Son of God. What a thrill must have gone through the soul of this afflicted man! How infinitely gentle, how comfortably assuring the touch of His holy hand must have been! Even with us, in our poor imitative way, there is something very thrilling about the touch of a human hand.

The Lord puts His fingers into the ears of the man who already cannot hear, making his deafness even worse; puts His hands on the eyes of the other who is already blind, increasing his blindness. He is teaching them and us that all other noises must be shut out, all light whatsoever excluded, if the light of God is to shine into the darkened soul, if the voice of God is to penetrate into the dull and senseless soul.

The Lord deals with the ears first; then with the tongue. Man's tongue is silent toward God because his ears are closed to His Word. As we hear His voice of love and life, our tongues shall readily be loosed to speak and sing His praise.

Jesus looked up when healing the deaf man, while the blind man looked up in the other case. Jesus looked up to intimate, as it were, that power must come from above; the blind man looks up to show that when blessing does come, the soul is drawn heavenward to own God's mercy and to give thanks to His Name.

The blind man's cure was gradual. First he sees nothing; then he sees men as trees walking; and finally he sees every man clearly. The Lord Jesus, according to the Gospel record, never healed two people in exactly the same way.

God is a God of infinite variety. What a joy it will be in glory to hear from those millions of redeemed ones how each one was brought to know the Lord Jesus; each tale displaying some other feature of His wisdom, love, and power. We can look forward to an everlasting testimony meeting.

Many a soul is saved in the gradual manner here illustrated. First there is a partial conversion, as it were. The soul gets a small measure of light, has a glimpse of the Saviour, but sees men around altogether too big for their size. In a soul turning to God, there is often a fear of man that hinders full deliverance. How good to see every man clearly after a while; to see that, after all, men are only men; that there is only One who really counts. To make this gradual conversion really ideal we must add to the picture the words found in the next chapter (Mark 9:8): "They saw no man any more, save Jesus only." First the sinner sees nothing; then he sees men as trees; then he sees men as they are; and finally he does not see man any more at all—only Jesus! Yes, we see Jesus, once crowned with thorns, now crowned with glory and honor.

In both cases the Lord charges them not to publish the miracle because He did not want multitudes to follow Him for the sake of the miracles merely, which many did, nor for the sake of mere curiosity. Now we need to regard no such restraint, but should blaze abroad far and wide what He has done for our soul. Alas, there is no danger of multitudes rushing to be saved from sin. Man is much more concerned with his physical than his spiritual ills.

Two Interwoven Miracles in Mark 5

And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw Him, he fell at His feet,

And besought Him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray Thee, come and lay Thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.

And Jesus went with him; and much people followed Him, and thronged Him.

And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years,

And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered but rather grew worse.

When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched His garment.

For she said, If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole.

And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.

And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that virtue had gone out of Him, turned Him about in the press, and said, Who touched My clothes?

And His disciples said unto Him, Thou seest the

multitude thronging Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched me?

And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing.

But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth.

And He said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

While He yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?

As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe!

And He suffered no man to follow Him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.

And He cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly.

And when He was come in, He saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.

And they laughed Him to scorn. But when He had put them all out, He taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with Him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying.

And He took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.

And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.

And He charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat (Mark 5:22-43).

AGAIN we have dispensational truth taught, set forth in these two intertwining miracles. The daughter of Jairus again pictures Israel, a nation that had sunk into a condition of spiritual death. The Lord had come to heal and bless them, but on the way was stopped by this woman with the issue of blood. She *does* have faith and she pictures those who, during this present day of grace, lay hold on Christ by faith. This retards, as it were, Christ's coming to Israel to bless them, as the Lord will do when He comes in power and glory. When He finally does reach there, and restores the maid to life, we have a picture of how the Lord someday will restore spiritually dead Israel to life, as so many of the Old Testament prophecies bear witness.

There are beautiful contrasting lessons seen in these two miraculous events. There is the human and the divine side in connection with the spiritual blessing of the soul. In the case of Jairus' daughter we see the soul as dead in sins and hence unable to do anything for itself. There the Lord is the active one. But in the case of the woman with the issue of blood, who is not dead but slowly dying, we have as clearly the human side of salvation. She *is* able to do something; she can come to Christ and does so, touching Him for instant and complete blessing. The one miracle presents God's sovereignty in salvation; the other man's responsibility.

Jesus touched the damsel; the woman with the issue of blood touched Him.

The girl had lived twelve years and then died; the

woman had been dying twelve years, and now lived.

In the damsel we see passivity; in the woman the activity of faith.

Jairus was a ruler of the synagogue, leader among the Jews. One wonders whether he was one of those who had been opposing and harassing the Lord before this? At any rate, when a situation like this arises, many another man has been brought humbly to Jesus' feet, as Jairus was. He is in earnest, for he besought the Lord greatly, and the Lord, in tender compassion, accedes to his request.

Their progress is arrested by a vast mob of people, most of them doubtless curiosity seekers. How often has the "crowd" hindered anxious souls from coming to Christ!

However, in that vast mob, there is at least one precious soul anxious to be blessed. She has a great need. Not only have physicians not relieved her, but they have actually made her case worse; she has "suffered of them." They have collected their fees in spite of their failure. Millions of folks go to physicians of no value for a cure for their sin-sick souls; all to no avail. They pay well, for religious quacks know how to charge, but they only grow worse, for man is unable to cure a sin-weary soul.

Then she heard of Jesus. Yes, many, oh so many, never seem to hear of Jesus till they have tried everything else under heaven. She came to Jesus; and she did not come in vain. What matter if she had spent all she had? He does not charge. His matchless gift of life eternal is offered without money and without price.

She came from behind and touched His garment. And lo, instantly her disease was checked; she felt it; she knew she was healed. Please note that feeling followed faith; it did not precede it. You can't feel you are saved until you are saved.

No doubt she would have been content to sneak away unnoticed, rejoicing in her newfound bliss. But the Lord had something better in store for her. He knew the difference between the jolting of a curious, or even rude mob, and the individual touch of divine faith. And so the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before Him and told Him all the truth. First, *she* had received the blessing; now, as she confessed Jesus as her Saviour before that great multitude, He received the glory. You see, confession is meant to follow conversion. And just see what rich additional blessing came to her because of her confession of the Lord. For Jesus said to her: "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and *be whole* of thy plague." Why should Jesus say to her "be whole," when she already *was* whole? Is it not to assure her that her cure would be permanent; from now on she would remain whole? I can imagine this woman having gone home without confessing Christ as she did. Perhaps the very next day she might not have felt so well and immediately would have begun to worry, saying to herself: "Perhaps I never was cured yesterday; maybe it was just the excitement of the moment and after all, there is nothing to it; I only imagined I felt better." But now, through her confession of Christ, added to her actual healing, she had the assurance of her cure from the lips of the Lord Himself. Even so with us: faith saves us, but confession of Christ brings a deep sense of the assurance of salvation.

In the meantime, it takes no vivid imagination to picture the fearful anxiety of Jairus, as Jesus is held up by this woman with her trouble. Doesn't He know that his daughter is dying and that every moment is precious? Surely this woman with her ailment could have waited a while.

There was no rush in her case, for she had been ill for years and even now was in no danger of dying. And then—yes, there they come from his home to bring the crushing news that his daughter is dead. I am sure Jairus said to himself, I told you so; now it is too late, too late. And the servants chime in, don't bother the Master any longer; it's all over.

Here surely is something that has been repeated millions of times in the experiences of God's people. Why doesn't He come? Why doesn't the Lord answer our prayers? Why did He let that fearful accident happen to me or my loved ones? Oh, listen to the Saviour's tender words: "Be not afraid, only believe!" Jairus was yet to learn that this delay was not only for his own exceeding joy and wonder, but also for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Jairus was let down to the depths of despair that he might be lifted to the heights of bliss. Our God is a wonder-working God. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. If the Lord does not come in to help you when you think He should, remember that He, even as here with Jairus, has something still better in store for you.

When Jesus came to the house, He drove out the unbelieving weepers, taking in with Him only three of His disciples and the parents of the child. Unbelief shall not see His power, but faith shall. They were weeping, yet the maid was only sleeping. Death to us, sleep to Him. He took her by the hand, a tender human touch, and gently said: "Little lamb, arise." Straightway she arose and walked, and He commanded them to give her something to eat. All this is so natural, yea, so spiritual too, for a newborn soul, raised from the death of sin, also arises to walk in newness of life, and needs to be fed with the Word of God.

The Lord took Peter, James, and John apart with Him

here, as He did on two other occasions. They learned some valuable lessons:

The weeping showed them how helpless man is in the presence of death. It also reminded them of the awfulness of sin, and its sad results—death and judgment.

It showed them the opposition they should meet when preaching the power of Christ to save. They would meet the scorn of the unbeliever too.

It proved to them that the *Word* is the power of God unto salvation, for Jesus but spoke, and the maid arose.

It illustrated the need and wisdom of the personal touch.

It taught them that the young need to be saved, as well as the old. Yea, more so, that not only their souls but their lives too might be saved from sin.

They had the evidence that nothing is too hard for the Lord.

It taught them that those who are brought to life need to be cared for, need to be fed.

These are profitable lessons for every servant of Christ.

Two Prominent Examples of Jesus Casting Out Demons

And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.

And when He was come out of the ship, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,

Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:

Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.

And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.

But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him,

And cried with a loud voice, and said,

What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the most high God? I adjure Thee by God, that Thou torment me not.

For He said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.

And He asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.

And he besought Him much that He would not send them away out of the country.

Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.

And all the devils besought Him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.

And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.

And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done.

And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine.

And they began to pray Him to depart out of their coasts.

And when He was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed Him that he might be with Him.

Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel (Mark 5:1-20).

IN THE BEGINNING of this volume we noted that Mark records many instances where our holy Lord dealt with evil spirits. There are about twelve of these in Mark. These two are probably the most outstanding ones, and are representative of Christ's power over them. Since these two samples of the casting out of evil spirits, which we will here consider, illustrate very clearly Christ's method and mastery in dealing with unclean spirits; and since nothing special is said about the case recorded in Chap. 1:21-27 (listed in the table of contents under Part IV at the introduction to this volume) we omit commenting on that instance. The spiritual lessons it contains are quite evidently set forth in this present study.

These demons are said to be *unclean* or *evil* spirits, either designation being used interchangeably for demons throughout the Gospels. Satan is their "king," as Matthew 12:24-26 clearly teaches, for, when the Pharisees blasphemously claimed the Lord cast out demons by Beelzebub, the Lord in His reply said that that would mean that Satan cast out Satan, then how should his *kingdom* stand? Satan then is the leader of these vast hosts of unclean, evil spirits, called demons. Satan is the prince of the great underworld of devils, or demons. The Lord's mission, in part, was to destroy these works of Satan (Acts 10:38; 1 John 3:8).

The Bible reveals that these demons always wanted as a medium some person through whom they might act; or some material place in which to be. This would apparently connect them with Satan's angels who fell with him, for of them it is said in Jude 6 that they "kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation." This is taken by many Bible scholars to refer to the fact that these fallen angels came to inhabit human bodies, and for this were bound in everlasting chains under darkness till the judgment of the

great day. Others of those spirits were apparently permitted to roam loose, under Satan's dominion. This is suggested by the fact that in several cases the evil spirits cried to the Lord whether He had come to torment them "before the time," indicating they know they are free only till the day of their judgment shall have arrived.

The New Testament teaches that demons do exist; they have access to humanity; and that being demon-possessed always meant harm to the victim. There is never a suggestion in Scripture that a spirit of *good* takes possession of a human being. It is always a spirit that is evil, for evil purposes. Some of the evil effects of demon possession are clearly exhibited in the incident we are now considering:

Isolation, the man living among the tombs, in the place of death.

Lawlessness, as he breaks through all restraint.

A feverish restlessness, as he cries day and night.

Suffering, much of it self-inflicted, suggesting that suicide may often be due to the influence of evil spirits.

A menace to society, so that none dared to pass that way. In this demon-possessed man we see the purpose why these evil spirits possess mortals; it is that they might wreck man, seeking his destruction and debasement. Of course he is an extreme case, that the fearful state of one completely in Satan's power might be seen in all its horror. As God by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit spiritualizes man, so Satan by the indwelling of a vile, unclean spirit, demonizes man.

Does this fearful curse exist today? Without question. Only in this so-called civilized, highly intellectual, polite society, Satan hides the grossest forms under attractive guises. He is a past master in the art of camouflage. The whole realm of spiritualism (then as now) is engineered and operated by the devil. For demon-possessed man or woman

of Bible days, you may substitute the spiritistic "medium" of today. In lands like ours Satan deceives man by more refined methods, as through astrology, so fearfully prevalent in our so-called Christian land. But the believer is not ignorant of his devices.

The demons always recognized Christ and yielded obedience to Him. "Torment us not," said they, or "Send us not into the abyss." Let's look at the cure of this demoniac:

Verses 1 to 5 show us a man apparently mad, driven insane by satanic control. But he meets the Master, in whose presence all wild things are stilled.

"What is thy name?" asks our Lord in infinite tenderness of this man (not of the demon; I don't suppose they have names). That loving question touches the first rational chord in this pitiful wreck of humanity, for now he speaks for the first time, though the demon chimes in too. He says: "My name is Legion," and the demons add, "for *we* are many." The Lord orders the unclean spirit (notice the singular used here) to come out, and yet we learn there are many of them. The man himself is so fully possessed by these demons that it changes from the singular to the plural without any apparent break of thought. *He* besought Jesus that He would not send *them* out of the country. Satan does not readily relinquish his hold on the poor sinner and speaks through the man's mouth to plead for the demons. He *besought* the Lord *much*, which among other things indicates the demons' recognition of Christ's supreme authority over them. In His presence Satan has his last fling, for the demons are ordered to leave, and lo—behold the miracle! The wild maniac and demoniac is sitting at the feet of Jesus clothed and in his right mind. He is sitting in the right place; clothed in the right dress; and in his right mind.

This apparently is an extreme case, yet pictures how every

sinner is under the power of Satan and in a sense is not in his right mind. We learn this from Luke 15 where the prodigal came to himself ere he came to the Father. Coming to himself suggests that up to that moment he had been beside himself (or he could not possibly come to himself), and a man beside himself is out of his mind. Praise God for Him who came to destroy the works of the devil, to speak peace to the troubled, restless souls of men.

When Jesus came, oh, what a change was wrought in this man's heart and life! Now he sits, as once so restlessly he roamed; now he is clothed, when once he was naked; now he is in his right mind, as once he was insane. Those three things—sitting, clothed, in his right mind—suggest in spiritual thought *rest* from the guilt and burden of sin; *righteousness* divine, clothed in the garment of salvation; and *reason* restored, capacity now to understand the precious things of God. These all come to a soul when saved by grace.

There are four prayers in this story:

The demons pray that they may not be sent out of the country. Their ultimate doom is the eternal darkness of the abyss, which apparently they greatly fear. There is no possibility of salvation for them. But there is salvation now for every sinner, for everyone who will come to Christ.

"Send us into the swine," pray the demons. Why did the Lord grant their petition? Perhaps to test the owners thereof, to see whether they preferred their swine to the Saviour. Perhaps to show how vast a host of unclean spirits Satan has under his command, that he can spare two thousand of them to one man. We realize but little of the tremendous power the devil wields. Perhaps the devil made this a test case, to see whether he could hold the fort against the Son of God with an army of two thousand. If so, he

must have been disappointed. Jesus is greater than the god of this world; only under His command can we hope to be victors in the battle against Satan and all his hosts (Ephesians 6).

The Gadarenes prayed Him that He would get out. They preferred swine to the Son of God; they preferred demons to the Lord of Glory. Jesus went, *never to return*.

The saved demoniac prays that he may be with Christ. The other three prayers (of the demons and the Gadarenes) are answered in the affirmative; this one in the negative. Rather remarkable, isn't it, that the believer's prayer is the only one that is denied? The others got their prayers answered because they were asking for their doom; believers often do not get theirs answered because the Lord is seeking their blessing. He alone knows what is good for us, and so very often He has to say "No" to our shortsighted requests.

No, says the Lord to this redeemed soul, you stay here and be a witness for Me. "Go home and tell." It's a good word for young believers. Don't look away out to the mission field right away in some foreign land, but bear witness to Christ's saving grace where they know you. Let the folks at home see that you are really and truly saved, and that the Lord is truly calling you into His service on a wider scale.

"You stay here," said the Lord, "and witness right here where they don't want Me." They'll tolerate you, where they have rejected Me. Yes, for over nineteen hundred years ago our Saviour was rejected and crucified and sent back to Heaven, as it were, and He has left us here to be His witnesses, to tell all men what He has done for our souls. May we, like this happy soul, publish it much, so that men may marvel.

In this story there is:

The *plight* of this man (verses 1-5).

The *fright* of the devils (verse 7).

The *might* of the Saviour (verses 8-13).

The *flight* of the swine (verse 13).

The *slight* of the Gadarenes (verse 17).

The *right* mind of the healed man (verse 15).

The Case of the Demon-Possessed Child

MARK 9:14-27

FROM the Mount of Transfiguration the Lord comes down to the valley of satanic wickedness and human misery and helplessness. The only begotten Son of God finds "an only begotten son" under the power of Satan (verse 17)—for that is how it really reads. From the glory He saw the world in Satan's power, and so in mercy He came to bless and save. He finds a world full of unbelief when He comes down. He meets the willful scribes; the faltering father; an irresponsible, afflicted boy; and unbelieving disciples. What a world! No wonder the Lord groaned in spirit and said, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you?" It was the lack of faith that grieved Him. However wretched things may be, if there be only faith, all can still be well.

"If Thou canst do any thing," says the distracted father. "Ah," says our blessed Lord, "there is nothing wrong with My power; all depends on your faith. If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." What a challenging, searching, yet encouraging word is this! Faith puts us in touch with God; it is the switch that, when pushed, sets the current flowing with its resistless might.

"Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief"! The father did not have much faith, but he had faith in the right person. That's what counts. It was his first venture in the field of faith, and of course it was small. But faith grows with exer-

cise. Well may we pray, "Lord, increase our faith." As we learn to know His love and His power more, our faith should grow ever stronger.

This evidently presents a different type of demon possession than the one we have just considered. Besides being deaf and dumb, this child seemed to be suffering from something resembling epileptic fits. The Lord, as He alone can, recognizes the condition as due to demon possession, and compassionately heals him instantly.

The important lesson we should learn here is that Christ is superior to all other powers, whether human or satanic, and that faith on our part is the means by which His power is set in motion for the blessing of those who trust Him.

PART FOUR

Miracles Found in Mark

*THE UNCLEAN SPIRIT IN CAPERNAUM

THE HEALING OF PETER'S MOTHER-
IN-LAW

THE CLEANSING OF THE LEPER

THE CURING OF THE MAN BORNE
OF FOUR

THE MAN WITH THE WITHERED HAND

*THE STILLING OF THE STORM

*THE DEMONIAK RESTORED TO HIS
RIGHT MIND

*THE WOMAN WITH THE ISSUE OF
BLOOD

*THE RAISING OF JAIRUS' DAUGHTER

THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND

* See Table of Contents Part IV for page where this subject appears in the text.

*JESUS WALKING ON THE SEA

THE HEALING OF THE SYROPHENI-
CIAN'S DAUGHTER

*THE CURING OF THE DEAF MAN

THE FEEDING OF THE FOUR THOUSAND

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*THE CASE OF THE DEMON-POSSESSED
CHILD

BARTIMAEUS HAS HIS EYES OPENED

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THERE ARE eighteen miracles in all in the Gospel by Mark.

Two of these are found only in this record.

All the others are also recorded by Matthew.

Twelve of them are also noticed by Luke.

One miracle, the feeding of the five thousand, is the only one given in all the four Gospels. Besides that, John in his account records only one other miracle that is also found in the synoptic Gospels, the one where Jesus walks on the sea of Galilee.

The miracles marked with * or † have already been considered, so under this heading we will glance at the remaining eight.

The Healing of Peter's Mother-in-Law

And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell Him of her.

And He came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them (Mark 1:29-31).

THERE ARE some thirty-three distinct, different kinds of miracles registered in the Gospels, as performed by the Lord as He healed these various diseases and afflictions. Each one of these illustrates some spiritual ill afflicting the souls of men. Surely fever pictures the restlessness that marks the worldling, that constant thirst, that craving after pleasure or lust to satisfy the heart. Fever greatly weakens the sys-

tem. It reveals that man is but a weak, helpless soul, and that instead of improving he is constantly getting weaker. He is truly without strength, slowly dying; He can only be saved by the grace and power of God. He needs the Great Physician of the soul.

A person with a high fever often becomes delirious, and does not know what he is saying or doing. That is also the mark of the natural man. One who is very ill with a fever is unable to get up and go to the doctor; so the doctor must come to him. So Jesus must come to us first, for we cannot go to Him. He must needs leave the glory to come to seek and to save the lost.

First of all, they told Jesus about Peter's mother-in-law. That is our responsibility too. Before we tell the sinner about Christ, we should tell Christ about the sinner, and plead His mercy on his behalf. They told the Lord about Peter's mother-in-law, and immediately He responded to their appeal. They did not try to heal the patient themselves. Why should they, when the Lord was there, to heal and bless? Often, though, we Christians try to save souls in our own strength, instead of telling the Lord about them and seeking His help. Jesus came, took Peter's mother-in-law by the hand, and lifted her up. "Immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them." Not only did the fever depart instantly, but so did the extreme weakness that always accompanies a high fever. Not only does the Lord save our souls by His power but He also enables us to walk to His glory and to serve Him.

The Lord had but now ministered to her; now she ministers to Him, and to the others present. That is as it should be! We are saved to serve. It should be our joy to live now for Him, minister the gospel to the unsaved, and minister to the blessing and comfort of His own dear saints.

The Cleansing of the Leper

And there came a leper to Him, beseeching Him, and kneeling down to Him, and saying unto Him, If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.

And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.

And as soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

And He straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away;

And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to Him from every quarter (Mark 1:40-45).

LEPROSY is never spoken of as a disease. The Bible always speaks of the cleansing of lepers; never of their healing. Several passages in the Old Testament indicate that it is a type of spiritual *death* rather than of sin. This is plainly shown in 2 Kings 5:7 and Numbers 12:12. "Am I God to kill or *make alive*," said the king of Israel, "that this man sends to me to recover this man of his leprosy?" That is why leprosy is presented in Scripture as so utterly hopeless, for only God can raise the dead.

This leper realized that he was in the presence of One who had power even to meet *his* need. If only that power could be matched by His willingness, that would be won-

derful indeed. And so he prayed, "If Thou *wilt*, thou *canst*." And immediately, with the accompanying touch of His hand, Jesus said, "I will; be thou clean."

This reminds me of the pleader in Mark 9:22 who said, "if Thou *canst*," instead of, "if Thou *wilt*." That man questioned the ability of the Lord. In short, he doubted His deity, he questioned whether He was Almighty God. So the Lord refused to bless him but cast the responsibility back upon himself, saying as it were, "It is not whether I can do, but whether you can believe." But this leper fully believed in Christ; hence, Jesus blessed him instantly. The poor sufferer was perfectly correct in wondering whether the Lord were willing to grant his desire. Why should the Lord Jesus be willing to bless us, anyway? Who am I, that I should have any right to expect mercy? In questioning the Lord's willingness, he was acknowledging his own unworthiness; in believing in Christ's power to save, he owned the Lord's greatness and power. Every sinner combining those two attitudes shall never go away unblessed. Our sinfulness and His power and love make a combination that inevitably produces blessed results.

But not only did our gracious Lord cleanse this man of his leprosy, He also touched him. What a thrill of joy and wonder must have surged through that wretched man at that touch! He had been an outcast from society, defiled, unwanted, shunned. To touch him was absolutely forbidden by law, and rigidly practiced by very prudence. To touch a leper meant defilement for the one so doing. But not so here! When Jesus, in compassionate tenderness put His hand on this sore-ridden wreck, instead of being defiled Himself, He purified the other. He was and is truly holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. Contact

with Him causes sin and death to flee; He came to bring life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel. Jesus, wonderful Lord!

Everyone may well take lessons from this dear soul, and, like him, come to Jesus and go away blessed. For the leper *came* to Jesus; he *besought* the Lord for His mercy; he *knelt* at His feet; he *asked* for His blessing; he *acknowledged* his own unworthiness and the Lord's greatness; he *believed* and so he *received*.

The Lord bids him not to tell, but he begins to publish it much and to blaze abroad the matter. Man can certainly be contrary. We are told to tell the good news of God's saving grace everywhere, and our blaze goes out, instead of burning brightly. This man was told *not* to tell but he did. I imagine the Lord was more pleased with his disobedience than with ours, with his telling than with our not telling.

The Curing of the Man Borne of Four

And again He entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that He was in the house.

And straightway many were gathered together, in-somuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and He preached the Word unto them.

And they come unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

And when they could not come nigh unto Him for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. But there

were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?

And immediately when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, He said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?

Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?

But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (He saith to the sick of the palsy,)

I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion (Mark 2:1-12).

SOMEONE recently asked me, "What man in the Bible had ten legs but used only eight of them?" Here is the answer. It is this man who five times over in this story is called the "one sick of the palsy." He was carried by four men to the feet of Jesus. Luke tells us there was a distinguished audience present that day, but most of them were mere curiosity seekers, and some were only cold-blooded critics. They, as so often since, barred the way to the Saviour. But nothing could daunt these four men who meant to do business with Jesus. They were no idle sightseers; they carried a burden upon their hearts as well as in their hands.

They went up and then let the man down. If we want to bring souls to Christ we must first go *up*—to God in prayer and expectant faith—and then bring men *down* to His feet.

Jesus saw *their* faith. Did this include the paralytic as

well? Perhaps so; I don't see why not. At any rate, the Lord responded to their faith with the work of His love and power. But our Lord not only saw their faith, He also saw this man's internal spiritual need of pardon and peace. Perhaps their faith was only concerned, or more particularly concerned, with the man's need of physical healing. I can't but believe that Jesus read in this man's soul his longing for spiritual rather than physical health. How many even today seek the one; how few are vitally caring to have the greater blessing of the forgiveness of sins!

"Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." His detractors immediately charge the Lord, in the recesses of their hearts, with blasphemy, thinking, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Now the Lord shows that not only can He see invisible faith and the man's invisible need of pardon, but also that invisible thoughts are wide open to Him. "Why reason ye?" says He. "Which is easier to say to the sick of the palsy—'Thy sins be forgiven thee,' or to say 'Rise up and take up thy bed and walk?'"

I suppose, had they replied to the Lord's question, they would have told Him it was much easier to say "Thy sins be forgiven thee." All it requires for that is just "words," but to make a paralytic walk simply by speaking the words would require results that were visible. How could anyone know whether his sins were forgiven or not? That's an invisible experience, but to make a man walk—that required visible demonstration. To them, no doubt, saying sins are forgiven was by far the easier, but, if they thought so, as usual they were wrong. For it costs God absolutely nothing to make a cripple walk; it cost Him everything to be able to forgive sins. He had to go to Calvary's bitter cross, with all its unutterable woe, so that pardon might be provided for the guilty souls of men. Those who make so much of the

healing of the body (even as some Christians do) seem to forget that the cross of Christ is left out in physical healing. It does not require the death of our Saviour for the healing of the body, but it does require just that for the salvation of the soul. To say "Thy sins be forgiven thee" was ten thousand times ten thousand times more difficult for God's dear Son.

But, that *they* might know Jesus could indeed forgive sins, He said to the palsied man, "Take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house." His walk proved that the Lord's words were words of power; if He could make a totally helpless man walk by speaking the Word, then He was God and therefore could forgive sins also. It is even so, that by our walk, which means the life we live as Christians, we prove to the world around that our sins are gone.

There are only two instances in all the Gospels where those words of forgiveness were spoken by our Lord, here and in Luke 7:48. There the woman's *love* proved she was truly a forgiven soul; here the man's *life* showed it. It is so still.

The Son of Man has power *on earth* to forgive sins, said Jesus. Note this! Once the soul has passed from time into eternity, forgiveness is no longer possible. The soul that is gone to Heaven won't need it; the soul in hell can't have it. Oh, if you are still out of Christ, hear Him speak your sins forgiven. He will forgive every sin ever committed, for His Name's sake.

Just a word about these four men who brought this soul to Christ. How many of us have been borne to Christ, perhaps by many more than four. I know of some in my own case—my dear parents for instance, brothers, and friends. It is our privilege to bring sinners to Jesus, by prayer, by effort, even if the efforts are rather unorthodox, as in this

case. You have heard how a brother found fault with the methods a certain believer used to reach precious souls. "Well," was the answer, "how do you do it?" Shamefacedly the other said, "To tell the truth, I don't do it." The reply to that was, "Then I like my way of doing things better than your way of not doing them."

This man was saved through the efforts of these four. He was not only *borne* by them, but he was *born* through them.

They did not try to cure him themselves; no, they brought him to Jesus. And it cost them something. It took labor, expense, trouble. Note also that they worked together for one common purpose. They did not quarrel about who was to do what, but each stuck to his small corner and together they produced the happy result. May we take a lesson from them! Let's admire their evident zeal, earnestness, and determination, and, by God's grace, imitate it.

The Man with the Withered Hand

And He entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand.

And they watched Him, whether He would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse Him.

And He saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth.

And He saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.

And when He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, He saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him (Mark 3:1-6).

ALL THREE of the synoptic Gospels record this incident, as they do so many of the others. I have treated it in some detail in my book *Meditations in Luke*. It seems one of comparatively small importance, yet must contain valuable lessons or it would not be repeated thrice in the divine Word.

After all, the *hand* plays a big part in Scripture symbolism. It speaks of receiving, of holding, of giving, of doing,

of communion, and of other functions. The Bible talks about the "right hand of fellowship." And the *right* hand, which was paralyzed in this man's case (Luke 6:6) has the added significance in Bible thought of *power* (Exodus 15:6; Matthew 26:64); of *pleasure* (Psalm 16:11); of *righteousness* (Psalm 48:10); and also of *approval* (Hebrews 1:13).

Hence, a withered hand implies the lack or limitation of all these. It suggests that man is by nature helpless, unrighteous, unhappy, out of touch with God. It pictures the weakening effect sin has on the whole human personality. There are millions of people in whom we don't see any special or outstanding lack, yet through sin the whole life has been marred. The sinner by nature is not what he should be; he is not what God wants him to be.

This man had come to "church." What for, we do not know. Perhaps to beg; perhaps because he had heard that Jesus was there. At any rate, he came into contact with the miracle-working Saviour, and that is what mattered. Once again the Lord healed on the Sabbath day. As He said at the close of Mark 2: "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." God rested after the six days of creation, and when He chose Israel as His people He gave the Sabbath to them—and to them *only*—to be observed as a day of rest (Exodus 31:15-17). The Pharisees had reversed God's order and made its keeping a burden rather than for the relief of burden, for which purpose it had been instituted. It is hardly necessary to say that the Sabbath does not apply to Christians. It was never given to any but to the nation of Israel. In all the New Testament it is never once ordained for observance by Christians. It is only mentioned once in the Epistles (Colossians 2:16), and then with a rebuke attached for those endeavoring to keep it. The Church has its day—the Lord's day—which is the first day

of the week and not the last, as the Sabbath was. It is the day our blessed Lord rose from the dead; also the day on which the Church of God was formed on the Day of Pentecost, by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This had been foretold in Leviticus 23 for it was on *the morning after the Sabbath*—the first day of the week—that the sheaf of first fruits was offered to the Lord and also, on the same day of the week, the two wave loaves were presented to the Lord, fifty days later, answering to Pentecost. These two feasts picture the Resurrection of Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit.

We keep the first day of the week, not as a form nor as merely a day of rest, but as a day to be devoted to the praise and worship of God and, as Jesus did here on the Sabbath day, for the blessing of man. God has seen fit to order it so that the governments under which we live have recognized the first day of the week as one of cessation from physical labor. That day enables us to rest from our secular labor and devote the time to spiritual exercise and service for our Lord Jesus Christ.

In his account Mark adds that Jesus looked on those hypocrites with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts. This is a precious human touch, omitted by the other Gospels. In the Greek we find that this anger was for the moment only; the grief was permanent. It truly grieves our gracious Saviour when men resent His mercy. This man's hand was withered, but it could be remedied, and was; these cavilers' hearts were withered, and could not be reached.

"Stand forth," said Jesus. "Stretch forth thine hand."

Come away from the crowd; fix your eyes on Christ; reach out your paralyzed hand for His blessing; and lo, the miracle is done! It works exactly the same way in the con-

version of the sinner. The crowd is going its own self-willed way to perdition. Don't remain with it or follow it. Let the Lord deal with you personally; obey His Word and you will be saved.

Perhaps, when Jesus spoke those words, this man was only looking for a hand *out*. If he was a beggar, this was logical. In reality, the Lord Jesus was looking for a hand *out*. He is looking still for a hand *out* on the part of every sinner—the hand of faith.

This man had been stretching out his good left hand often; now was told to stretch out his bad right hand. The Lord might have given him some money, but He did so much more for him. He enabled him henceforth to earn his own money. Even so, the gospel of the grace of God is not a mere gift to a beggar. Nay, it is God's mercy to the soul, empowering the saved one henceforth to serve God and to labor for the blessing of others. For we are saved to serve.

The Feeding of the Five Thousand

And when the day was now far spent, His disciples came unto Him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed:

Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat.

He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto Him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?

He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes.

And He commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass.

And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties.

And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, He looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided He among them all.

And they did all eat, and were filled.

And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes.

And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.

And straightway He constrained His disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while He sent away the people (Mark 6:35-45).

THIS MIRACLE has been considered in my books on Luke and John, and little can be added here. As is known to most Bible students, this is the only wonder performed by our Lord which is noticed by all the four writers of the Gospels. John alone mentions the fact that the five loaves and two fishes were furnished by a little lad.

Mark alone states that the grass was green (verse 39). This agrees incidentally with John's version, for he tells us that this miracle took place at Passover time, in the spring, which was about the only time in that land that the grass would be green.

An interesting sidelight is furnished in the orderly arrangement of the crowd. They sat down by hundreds and by fifties. God is a God of order and not of confusion. It has been suggested that a hundred and fifty is about the right size for a congregation, a convenient size to minister to effectually. It is also noteworthy that all who ate of His bounty that day were counted. God knows each one of His own and knows how many partake of His mercies, whether these blessings be physical, or the deeper spiritual blessings connected with His rich grace.

Our Lord employed the disciples to distribute the food. Jesus never does what we can do. Praise God, He did what we could *not* do: He died for our sins and redeems us by His precious blood. And now it is our privilege to serve Him and men, to distribute the bread of life to the hungry souls of men.

The Healing of the Syrophenician's Daughter

And from thence He arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but He could not be hid.

For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of Him, and came and fell at His feet:

The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought Him that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.

But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.

And she answered and said unto Him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.

And He said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.

And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed (Mark 7:24-30).

OPPOSITION to the Lord by Israel's leaders had grown more determined and violent. So He had left the land of Israel and had gone into Gentile territory, a picture of how eventually, when Israel's rejection of Christ had reached its zenith at the cross, the gospel was to go forth to the whole

world. When speaking in His own city, Nazareth, the Lord had hinted as much, for He reminded those unbelievers that in Elijah's and Elisha's days God had also turned away from apostate Israel, and the blessing had been bestowed on Gentile sufferers. Elijah at that time had been sent to the very coasts of Sidon where Jesus Himself had now gone.

Since our Lord had gone there on purpose to carry His message and miracle of mercy, one might wonder why at first He seemed to turn a deaf ear to this poor mother's impassioned plea. But did His apparent reluctance not serve a double purpose? On the one hand, it brought out the beautiful faith and humility of an ignorant Gentile. On the other, by contrast, it exhibited the wickedness of the Jew, who, in spite of all the light he had, was yet so fearfully hard and rebellious. The disciples were here taught the first lesson of a truth which they found it so difficult to assimilate, namely, that the gospel of the grace of God was meant for the Gentile as well as for the Jew. Jesus was more than Israel's King; He is the Saviour of the world. And another lesson we may all learn here is the value of persevering faith and prayer. If the answer we crave does not come immediately, it is because of some infinitely wise reason, known only to Him who doeth all things well. No one who comes to Christ in the fervency of faith shall ever go away unblessed.

Matthew mentions that this woman first addressed the Lord as Son of "David," which is a Jewish title. Mark, writing for Gentiles, omits this note.

I think this is the only case on record where our blessed Lord is apparently unwilling to respond to a cry of need. But it only seems so. The Lord would impress upon her that she has no title to mercy whatever; it is when a sin-

ner today confesses *that*, that mercy is at hand. After all, we deserve nothing else than the judgment of God. Matthew adds Jesus' words that He had been sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But this only encourages her, as I feel sure it was meant to, for if those haughty, religious Jews needed His mercy, then there is hope for her too, for she needed it so much more. So she continues to cry to Him. But He replies, "Let the children *first* be filled." Here she reads further encouragement, for if the Jews come *first*, then there is hope for others afterwards. It is true that He was *sent* to Israel, but that does not mean that all others may not "come" to Him.

"It is not meet," says our loving Lord, "to take the children's bread and to cast it unto the dogs." Here is still more encouragement for this earnest, longing soul. Jesus uses the diminutive for dogs—he talks of the puppies under the table. The Lord did not refer to the ferocious scavenging dogs, so well known and despised in the East, but to house pets. In other words, Jesus intimated to this woman that there was a place for her in the "house," even if only under the table with the puppies. "Yes, Lord," comes the humble but bold reply, as she takes up the challenge He threw down, "yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." "O woman," Matthew records that the Saviour said, "great is thy faith!"

She meant business. She was willing to take the lowest place, to be nothing and nobody, if only she might be blessed of Him.

She is content with the crumbs. By faith in Christ we today may feast on the whole loaf, not under the table with the dogs, but at His table, in fellowship with His saints.

What impresses one is this woman's earnestness, her per-

severance, her humility. And yet she was but pleading for another, not for herself. Oh, that we might pray thus for others, for our loved ones, yea, for all men. We might see more souls saved if we were more in earnest!

The Feeding of the Four Thousand

In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and saith unto them,

I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat:

And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far.

And His disciples answered Him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?

And He asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven.

And He commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to His disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people.

And they had a few small fishes: and He blessed, and commanded to set them also before them.

So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets.

And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and He sent them away (Mark 8:1-9).

WHILE the miraculous feeding of the five thousand is found in all the Gospels, this one occurs only in Matthew and

here in Mark. One might say that this is almost the *forgotten* miracle. It is seldom spoken on, yet it contains some special features of interest to the student of God's Word.

The other account describes the setting as having been near Bethsaida (Luke 9:10), which was Jewish territory. This one took place near Decapolis (Mark 7:31), which was partly a Gentile city. So in the first miracle the multitude was largely composed of Jews; in this present miracle mostly of Gentiles. Hence, in these two accounts of the feeding of the five thousand first and then of the four thousand, we have a picture of the gospel of God's grace going out first to the Jew; then, as today, to the Gentile. This is further shown by the fact that the feeding of the five thousand took place at the conclusion of the Lord's ministry in Galilee, while the four thousand were fed at the conclusion of His ministry in Gentile territory—in Tyre and Sidon.

It seems almost unbelievable that the disciples wondered how the Lord was going to take care of this crowd, when but a short time previously they had witnessed the feeding of the five thousand. The unbelief of believers baffles one often; we too are so often guilty of the same lack of faith. Perhaps this unbelief pictures the difficulty the Jews had in conceiving the gospel's going out to the Gentiles. It says that some came from "far" (verse 3), which again intimates the bread of life being provided for those far off—the Gentiles (Ephesians 2:13).

The Lord here feeds four thousand. Four is the number of the world in Scripture. This suggests again that here is foreshadowed the gospel's going out to all the world. There were seven basketsful left instead of twelve, as in the other case. Twelve is distinctly the Jewish number in the Bible, while seven is the number of completeness and fullness, indi-

cating the full blessing of Christianity being ministered to all men everywhere.

Four thousand had their need met here. How thrilling to know that through that Bread of Life broken on the cross, millions of precious souls have feasted on that Bread that gives life and sustains life eternal in the human soul.

To substantiate further the Gentile color of this miracle, it is interesting to note that these seven baskets were very much larger than those used in the feeding of the five thousand. The Greek word used in that case means a small hand basket, while the one in our present miracle was a very large basket indeed. In fact, it was the size of the one in which Paul was let down the wall of Damascus; large enough to hold a full-grown man comfortably. Since that basket contained the Apostle Paul, perhaps we might conclude that these seven basketsful which were left over may suggest that, after provision has been made to meet the world's need in the gospel, we still have left all the truth for our own enjoyment and profit. The seven baskets, as it were, are filled with Paul, Luke, Peter, James, John, Jude, and the anonymous writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Certainly the seven basketsful are meant to assure us of the superabundance which divine grace has placed at our disposal. There is always far more left over than we can take in. God does for us exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think.

Bartimæus Has His Eyes Opened

And they came to Jericho: and as He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimæus the son of Timæus, sat by the highway side begging.

And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.

And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me.

And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; He calleth thee.

And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto Him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.

And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way (Mark 10:46-52).

AT VERSE 46 of this tenth chapter of Mark we definitely enter upon the dispensational section of this Gospel. It starts with the opening of this blind man's eyes, typical as he is of Israel, which shall be healed of her spiritual blind-

ness when Jesus comes. Then Israel shall cast away her garment of self-righteousness and shall, like this blind man, come to Jesus.

As Bartimæus heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, he began to cry out, "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." He could not see Jesus to come to Him, but he could call upon Him. We see a similar thing in the cleansing of the ten lepers in Luke 17. They were not permitted to come near, but they could and did cry. That's how all of us come to Jesus now. We can't walk to Him, but we can talk to Him. We can't draw near with our feet, but we can by our faith. And He will hear us, too.

This blind man's faith was true faith in the Person of Christ, for he called Jesus of Nazareth the Son of David. The leaders had despised this Jesus of Nazareth, and eventually were to put that title on His cross in derision, but this blind soul owned Him as the Messiah, the Son of David. Israel shall yet acknowledge Christ as such in the future day, when their spiritually blind eyes are opened and they look on Him whom they pierced.

This man was in earnest and no amount of rebuke or ridicule could stop him. He knew what he wanted and he got it.

Jesus stood still. It has been said that Joshua made the moon stand still, but the cry of an anxious soul will make the Son stand still, the Son of God. He first called Jesus; now Jesus calls him.

He cast away his garment and came to Jesus. Was he so in earnest that he could not allow his robe to hinder his speed? It seems so. In spiritual thought it shows that a sinner throws away his own self-righteous garments when he comes to Christ for salvation.

"What wilt thou?" says Jesus. Ah, it depends, on what

we will whether *He* will bless us or not. "Lord, that I might receive my sight." The answer comes, "Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole." Jesus tells the happy man to go *his* way, but he went *Jesus'* way. Henceforth, says he as it were to the Lord, "Thy way shall be my way." And where did that way lead? To shame, suffering, and death; and beyond that to the glory on high. Yes, fellow believer, your way and mine, too, leads to the glory, though often by the way of the cross.

Notice the many *c*'s in this portion:

cry—Bartimæus began to cry out.

charge—many charged him to hold his peace.

cried—he cried the more a great deal.

commanded—Jesus commanded him to be called.

comfort—be of good comfort.

call—rise, He calleth thee.

cast away—he, casting away his garment, came to Jesus.

came—he came to Jesus.

PART FIVE

Parables Recorded by Mark

OLD GARMENTS AND OLD BOTTLES

†THE SOWER, THE SEED, AND THE SOIL

A CANDLE, TO BE SET ON A
CANDLESTICK

†THE SEED, THE BLADE, THE EAR,
THE CORN

†THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

THE VINEYARD LET OUT TO
HUSBANDMEN

THE REJECTED STONE MADE THE HEAD
OF THE CORNER

† See Table of Contents Part V for page where this subject appears in the text.

Old Garments and Old Bottles

No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.

And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles (Mark 2:21-22).

THE PARABLES marked above with † are all from the fourth chapter of Mark, and are considered in Part II, "A Brief Review of the Whole Gospel."

In the previous verses the Lord hints at His going away, back to the glory, when His own would be left behind here without His visible presence to comfort them. The disciples would fast in those days. However, fasts in God's purpose were not seasons of pretended sanctimonious solemnity; rather, they were meant to be times of joy and gladness. God's fasts were God's feasts (see Zechariah 8:19).

This truth is enlarged upon in the subject of our parable. Christian blessing is set forth in this parable, for Christianity does not consist of patched-up garments nor of rotten wineskins and leaking wine, but is an altogether new and virile power. In place of the old garment, there is the new garment of divine righteousness and acceptance in the Beloved; . . . instead of the old wine in old bottles, there is the new wine (the vibrant joy and power of eternal life)

in those who have been made new creatures in Christ Jesus . . . etc. In other words, Christianity is not a patched-up Judaism, as the religions of the world are today, but an entirely new revelation and inspiration of God. The old is decayed and ready to vanish away (Hebrews 8:13).

Our very Bible is divided into the Old and the New Testaments. The old covenant (of the law) appealed to man, for it offered him the chance to work for his own salvation; to provide himself with a garment suitable for the presence of God. But all man's righteousnesses only proved to be nothing more than filthy rags, even as the garment in our parable is said to be old. The word "old" there means worn-out, rotten. Man under law was, as it were, proven to be only a worthless vessel, beyond mending, for not only does the Scripture declare that there is none that doeth good; it also says there *is* none good. Externally, man boasts of a righteousness of his own, but in God's sight it is only a filthy rag. And he knows no real joy, for old worn-out wineskins can't hold the wine.

It is useless to try and patch this worn-out human righteousness, neither does it pay to attempt to preserve the leaking old vessel. Yet man is ever at such hopeless jobs. He takes a piece of the new garment to mend the old rag. In other words, man seeks to fill out his own worthless, sinful life with a piece of the new garment, which stands for the perfect righteousness, of God procured for us through the precious death of Christ. This is offered as a perfect garment of salvation to every poor sinful beggar, on the principle of simple faith (Romans 3:21-26). But the religious sinner rejects God's all-sufficient, divine righteousness, and wants to mend his own works with a little of what Christ did. "I must do my part," says he, "and God must do His."

No, indeed. The sinner must throw away his old rags, and let God clothe him in the best robe of His own providing, as pictured in Matthew 22:11 and Luke 15:22.

And not only is man's righteousness no good, referring to the things he has done, but he himself is no good, as illustrated in the old leaking vessel. He must be made a new creature in Christ Jesus, a new bottle, in order to contain the new *wine*, typical of the effervescent joy and power of God's great salvation. What's the use of mending one's own rags when a beautiful robe of divine perfection is provided in the precious sacrifice of Christ? Why seek to find joy or satisfaction in empty religious performances, when Christ fully satisfies, when His love fills the soul with joy unspeakable?

There's love and life and lasting joy,
Lord Jesus, found in Thee.

Yes, in the New Testament there is unfolded, unveiled in Christ, God's provision for the outside—a new garment of divine perfection, to be worn by the believer so that the world may see Christ in him; and God's provision for the inside—the new wine, the new, bubbling joy, of a realized, indwelling Christ. Away with the old rags and the old bottles! The Christian is not in the junk business. For him, by faith, everything is new, perfect, complete. And, praise God, shall remain new eternally. Christ saves and satisfies.

A Candle, to Be Set on a Candlestick

And He said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?

For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad.

If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

And He said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given.

For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath (Mark 4:21-25).

WHEN SPEAKING of hidden things to be manifested and secret things to come abroad, in verse 22, to what is our Lord referring? The answer is found in Matthew 10:27, where in this very connection the Lord says: "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops." There the Lord comments on the truths which He had revealed to His disciples when alone with them, and which they in due time were to preach publicly. He is speaking of the great truths of the Christian faith, that until then had not been unfolded. Those are the things which at that time were "secret," but which now are declared far and wide. There

are fourteen definite such secrets (called "mysteries") unveiled in the New Testament, such as the rapture of the saints, the truth of the Church, or of the Kingdom of Heaven in its present spiritual form, etc.

And it is those glorious truths, that radiate the blazing light of God's grace and glory, which the believer of to-day is not to hide under a bushel or under a bed, but to set on a candlestick. (The words are *lamp* and *lampstand*.) We are to let our light shine, to make known far and wide the wondrous, emancipating truths of the Christian faith.

Here is the challenge! We must not conceal our witness under a bushel (the pressure of this world's business and cares); nor under a bed (a life of ease and self-indulgence); but must let it be seen clearly, that others may be brought into the blessings of God's salvation and God's will for His people today.

"Take heed that ye hear," says verse 23.

"Take heed what ye hear," says verse 24.

Some fail to listen to what *God* has to say; others are only too ready to listen to what *man*, or the devil, has to say. Hence the double warning in these two verses. Be sure you listen to God's Word; be as sure that you refuse to listen to the devil's lies.

If you hear, you naturally will speak. The believer who hears God will make Him known. So the rest of verse 24 shows that those who measure out the precious things of God to others, shall themselves receive more. For the more one gives, in regard to the things of God, the more one will receive in return. "There is that which scattereth and yet increaseth."

And from him that has not, even what he has shall be taken away from him. A similar statement is found five times over in the Gospels. This arresting thought implies

that if one does not employ the gifts God has given him, does not let his light shine for Christ, that he shall lose the spiritual power and ability to use the gifts he possesses. In other words, there is no such thing as a static condition in a believer's life. He is either growing and going, or he is shrinking and going backward. The light in the believer can become darkness, as our Lord said on another occasion.

The Vineyard Let Out to Husbandmen

And He began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard.

And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty.

And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled.

And again he sent another, and him they killed, and many others, beating some, and killing some.

Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.

But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be 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 (Mark 12:1-9).

ALL THREE synoptic Gospels observe that the Jewish leaders recognized that the Lord had spoken this parable against them. It sets forth, in brief compass, the entire history of Israel, her past and her future. And the Lord closed His message by calling attention to the great present parenthesis of grace, to the Church period (verse 10-11).

The opening verse of this parable is a quotation from Isaiah 5, and leaves no doubt that Israel is the subject of this parable. God had chosen that nation to be His people; He had separated them from all the nations in the world, setting a hedge about them, consisting of His revealed will in the Word of God, His laws, and His ritualistic worship. "What," says He, through the pen of His servant Isaiah, "could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" (Isaiah 5:4). The Jews truly had been richly favored, and therefore God had a right to expect fruit from them; a right to look for their obedience, their witness to His Name, and their service. He sent His servants—the prophets of the Old Testament—but they beat them or killed them all. Their history of old is summed up in 2 Chronicles 36:16: "But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy." What a fearful commentary!

And then, in the final tremendous gesture of love, God sent to them His only Son, His well beloved, saying, "They will reverence My Son." Alas, today we all know that their reaction to that marvelous act of grace was the crucifixion of their Messiah. They took Him, killed Him, and cast Him out of His own vineyard.

They said, "Let us kill Him and the inheritance shall be ours." The awful irony of it all is that by killing Him they lost their inheritance instead of acquiring it, as our Lord

proceeds to say: "What shall the Lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others." This took place, as we know, in A.D. 70, when fearful retribution fell upon that unhappy race; when Israel was driven out of the land, never to return for over nineteen centuries. As recorded in 2 Chronicles 36, Israel was carried captive into Babylon because of her idolatrous departure from the Lord, to remain there for seventy years. Then, after their rejection and crucifixion of God's Messenger, His own dear Son, Israel was driven forth into all the world, fugitives for nineteen hundred years. Such is God's judgment, the judgment of a holy God against sin.

Yet, such is His grace, while Israel lost her inheritance because of her crucifixion of Christ, eventually she shall regain that inheritance because of that very Cross. For every blessing, whether for Israel or for the Church, is based on the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ upon Calvary.

This future blessing of Israel is seen in that the vineyard was given unto "others." Matthew 21:43 puts this as being "to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof," having in view the future, when Israel, as God's redeemed and restored people, shall be brought back to their land and shall yet enjoy the blessings, and shall yet bring forth fruit, for God's glory and praise. In all this, the whole present day of grace is omitted, for the parable carries us on from Israel's past to her future. The present age is suggested in the next two verses (Mark 12:10-11), at which we now look for a few moments.

The Rejected Stone, Made the Head of the Corner

And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? (Mark 12:10-11).

THE FIRST VERSE of these two carries us back again to Calvary. Our blessed Lord was refused by Israel, as foretold long ago in Psalm 118:22-23.

But the stone which the builders rejected, saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us," has become the headstone of the corner. The Apostle Peter, in I Peter 2, tells us this stone is the Lord Jesus, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious. We, as living stones are built up—upon Him—as living stones a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. In other words, we are told there that the Stone rejected by Israel is now become the foundation of the Church. Not only so, but that rejected Stone not merely has become the foundation of the Church, but is the Head of the corner. In other words, God has highly exalted Him and set Him on His own right hand in Heaven. Jesus of Nazareth is on the throne of God. That, to the Jew blinded by unbelief, is indeed a stone of stumbling and rock of offence (I Peter 2:4-8). All through this age, while Israel stumbles over Him—for the preaching of

a crucified and now glorified Christ is to them a stumbling block—to the Church, to those who believe on Him, He is truly “the preciousness.”

This, says the Psalmist, as quoted by our Lord in our text, is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes. True, *Israel* despised Him and clamored for His death, yet it is all *God's* doing, in the final analysis. For He was crucified by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23). God turned the vileness and hatred of the human heart into an occasion for the outpouring of His marvelous grace. Truly this is marvelous in the eyes of all who have learned to know Him, to understand some of His ways of wisdom, love, and power. We shall never cease to wonder, worship, and adore Him!

PART SIX

Thoughts to Challenge and Comfort

THE FEAST IN LEVI'S HOUSE

COME YE APART AND REST A WHILE

THE JEWS REQUIRE A SIGN

WHAT PROFIT IF ONE GAIN THE
WHOLE WORLD?

PRAYER AND FASTING

LO, WE HAVE LEFT ALL AND
FOLLOWED THEE

THE WIDOW'S MITES

WATCH YE THEREFORE

ALL ABOUT SIMON PETER

THE YOUNG MAN WITH THE LINEN
CLOTH

The Feast in Levi's House

And as He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphæus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him.

And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and His disciples: for there were many, and they followed Him.

And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto His disciples, How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?

When Jesus heard it, He saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (Mark 2:14-17).

MATTHEW, writing his own account of his call, gives his name as "Matthew," but Mark calls him Levi. Perhaps Levi was his original name, and the Lord changed his name to Matthew, meaning "the gift of God," even as Simon's name was changed to Peter. When enumerating the list of the twelve in Matthew 10, he calls himself Matthew the publican. How tender and Christian this is! Mark, writing of his brother in Christ, kindly omits that once-despised epithet of *publican*, but Matthew himself is not ashamed to own his former lowly estate. It but brings out the more the

grace of God, which had called him and enlisted him in the higher service of a better Master.

Luke states that Levi left all, rose up, and followed Jesus: three steps that surely express the experience of every soul that is saved by grace divine, henceforth no longer to live unto self, but unto Him who died and rose again. For, upon faith in Christ, the believer turns his back upon the past. He leaves all, including his sins; then he arises from the death of sin to walk in newness of life; and henceforth follows His steps, led on by the Spirit of God.

Matthew, in true humility, omits something Luke includes: that Levi made Jesus "a great feast" in his own house. Having come to know and love the Lord, this converted publican wants all his old friends and associates to meet the Lord too. So he hit on the successful idea of making a banquet for them, which is always a drawing card for many. He invited the Lord to the feast, confidently expecting that His presence, His words, and His grace would win many of his guests to Him. And Jesus came to the feast. How gracious and kind of our Lord to respond to Matthew's desire! We may be sure the Lord accepted the invitation, not for the sake of the splendid repast, but that He might reach those needy souls with the Word of Life.

The Pharisees, in their religious self-sufficiency, find fault. The criticism here is like that of Luke 15:2, where they complained that "this Man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." They could not have spoken truer words. Yes, He does receive sinners. Had He not done so, none could ever have been saved, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And He eats with them, too, for He loves to have fellowship with all who come to Him and receive His word.

Jesus heard their caviling, which had been addressed to His disciples rather than to Him; *at* Him instead of *to* Him. And He replies in those memorable words, so simple yet so obvious: "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick." "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." The Lord, of course, did not intimate for a moment that these Pharisees were really righteous, but only that they *thought* they were. Hence they had no use for Christ; they refused His mercy, unaware of their desperate need of the Great Physician's skill.

It is still so today. Man never changes. He is still the proud, self-righteous sinner who rejects the gospel of God's grace. Still the publicans and the harlots go into the Kingdom of God before them. Yet it remains sublimely true that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

Come Ye Apart and Rest a While

And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told Him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.

And He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat (Mark 6: 30-31).

THE LORD had sent forth the twelve to go out on their own, as recorded in verses 7 to 12 of this chapter. Now they have returned and bring a report to their Lord of all that happened. No doubt they were elated over their success, and withal very tired, too, with the unwonted strain and labor and excitement. These men, most of them at least, had been hard-working laborers in their former lives, but the work of the Lord brings an even greater fatigue than does manual labor. Many believers today do not realize how very strenuous spiritual work is, and how extremely tired one can become in it. Not tired of it, of course, but in it. On the one hand, there is the snare on the part of the servants of Christ to take their responsibilities too lightly and to loaf on the job; but generally most preachers and all kinds of Christian workers overdo, and as a result many suffer heart strain or nervous depletion early in life; and some die at an early age. Our bodies are not yet redeemed, and can take only so much; and there is wisdom in taking

time off for the restoration of exhausted nerves and over-worked organs.

"Come ye apart, and rest a while," said our Lord. Someone once said that "if a servant of the Lord does not come apart, he will come apart." Rest a while. There are always many coming and going, for there are so many needs to be met and so many calls to be answered; nevertheless, come apart, fellow laborer for Christ, and rest. A famous physician stated that he could not do his work in twelve months, but he could do it in eleven. There is more truth than poetry in that observation. Take heed to it, ye who serve the Lord.

The Jews Require a Sign

And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with Him, seeking of Him a sign from heaven, tempting Him. And He sighed deeply in His spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation. And He left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side (Mark 8:11-13).

IT SEEMS almost inconceivable that these men dared to ask *the Lord for a sign*. They had witnessed again and again His mighty power over demons, disease, and death; they had seen Him feeding vast multitudes with a few small buns; they had listened to His wondrous words of grace and compassion as He forgave sins and enabled the forgiven one to walk who had never walked before. Could unbelief possibly be greater? No wonder we read that our blessed Lord sighed deeply in His spirit.

Matthew records the additional words that to that generation "there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40-41). In other words, God gave man the stupendous sign, or miracle, of the death and the resurrection of His only Son. If Man won't believe in Him, it is useless to show or tell him anything else. "If they believe not Moses and the

prophets—God's Word—they would not believe if one rose from the dead."

Israel wanted a sign from Heaven. They had it when Christ came from glory to the Cross; they shall have it when this same Christ shall return, for "then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn" (Matthew 24:30), as they recognize that the One who returns in power and glory is the very One whose love they refused when He came to them in lowly grace. How good to know that, while the Jews require a sign and the Greeks seek after wisdom, to us right now this same crucified but glorified Saviour is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

What Profit If One Gain the Whole World?

And when He had called the people unto Him with His disciples also, He said unto them, Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels (Mark 8:34-38).

THE TRUE DISCIPLE of Christ is to deny self, take up the cross, and follow Him. To deny self means to deny oneself certain things, desires, pleasures, and so on, but it means more than that; it involves the enthroning of Christ in the heart and life. Not I, but Christ. There can be no mere negative self-denial. If self is put out and Christ does not take the place, then Satan will. If Christ fills the heart and mind instead of self, it will result in taking up the cross. It will mean sharing in His sufferings, bearing the reproach of Christ. The cross as brought in here does not mean the trials or problems of everyday life which we meet. The unsaved

soul knows them as well as the Christian does. It refers to shame, suffering for Christ's sake, deliberately endured as one walks in fellowship with a rejected Saviour down here. Taking up the cross thus, the believer will follow Him, for such is the life our blessed Saviour lived. The Spirit's guidance will be truly realized by a believer who follows His steps, in obedience to the Word, in fellowship with Him.

The Lord speaks here of losing one's life. A believer loses his life in this world as he sacrifices everything for Christ's sake and for the furtherance of the gospel, and in that way he actually saves it for eternity, for the measure of our real *living*, up there, is governed by the measure of devotion to Christ down here. Contrariwise, if the believer lives a selfish life now, he saves it in that way down here, but will lose it for eternity. John puts this truth in an even more emphatic manner when he speaks of "hating" our life now, and thus keeping it unto life eternal.

For, says our Saviour, what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? What infinite worth is here placed upon the human soul! My soul is simply myself; I, made in the image of God, am of incalculable worth. So valuable indeed that the blessed Son of God gave Himself to redeem it, and restore it to its originally planned usefulness.

Not only is man's soul lost through sin, but it states in our text that *he* loses it. It is a deliberate act on the part of the sinner. Seeking the things of this world, he loses himself—his capacity for life, joy, beauty, glory—for all eternity. But when the soul is saved through faith in Christ, the believer not only does not lose that soul, but also gains the whole world. He gains both the salvation of his precious soul, and the whole world as well, while the sinner who rejects God's offer of salvation loses both. Yes, the believer

gains the world as well, for Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 3:21, "All things are yours," and Scripture assures us that the saints in the day of Christ's reign shall judge the world.

"And what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" This question intimates that, while sinners shall lose their souls if they refuse God's salvation, once they are lost, it is impossible to get them back again. Nothing is sufficient to exchange for a soul that is eternally lost. This impresses the Scriptural truth that it is not possible for one to be saved after death has come in; now is the day of salvation.

The *soul* in Scripture stands for man in his capacity to enjoy, to taste, to desire, etc. Thus to lose one's soul hereafter means the soul shall nevermore be able to know joy, to taste the pleasures and delights God would have had him know; shall desire things but shall never have them satisfied. All he will know eternally will be weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Oh, may your soul now find its rest and joy in Christ, and then you shall be blessed with Him eternally—there where is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore!

Jesus is a wonderful Saviour. To be ashamed of Him is something of which to be truly ashamed.

Ashamed of Jesus; can it be?

A mortal man ashamed of Thee?

In our text the Lord is speaking directly of the nation of Israel, which was ashamed of Him and crucified Him. They looked for a Messiah to reign over them and would have acclaimed Him with joy had He come and delivered them from their enemies. But when He came in lowly guise and preached to them of their sin and their need of repentance, in scorn they refused Him and nailed Him to the cross. He shall come again, and at that time indeed come in

glory, with myriads of angels attending Him. And then *He* shall be ashamed of those who rejected Him as *they* were ashamed of Him nineteen hundred years ago. The tables will be turned. He will share His glory with those who shared His shame.

Prayer and Fasting

And when He was come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And He said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting (Mark 9:28-29).

PREVIOUSLY the disciples had cast out demons (Mark 6:13), but here they failed. The Lord's reply to their question indicates that perhaps one of the reasons for their failure was that they had neglected waiting upon God for spiritual power. They, as we so often do, had gotten into a sort of rut. Their former successes had subconsciously led them into a rather formal, mechanical type of service. If ministry is to be fresh and fruitful it must be the outcome of constant touch with God, the result of daily communion with Him, through prayer and meditation on His Word. There is nothing easier for a servant of Christ than to degenerate into a routine service, without any real spiritual exercise or concern.

This kind, said our Lord, can come forth only by prayer and fasting.

Prayer is the hand by which we grasp the invisible; fasting, the hand by which we relinquish the visible.

Prayer is the hand on God; fasting, the hand on self.

In prayer we learn the will of God; in fasting we surrender the will of the flesh.

Prayer comes first; fasting follows.

Though the word "fasting" literally means "not to eat," our Lord is employing the meaning here in its spiritual sense, of not feeding on that which satisfies the desires of the flesh in the Christian. If we would experience spiritual power in our lives and in our ministry, there is constant need of daily fellowship with God, constant need of self-discipline, so that self may not stand in the way and hinder God's blessing and fruit in our ministry of Christ.

It is good sometimes actually to fast in a literal sense, to go without food for a day or so. I have often found it very helpful—a real restorative to physical and spiritual freshness.

Lo, We Have Left All and Followed Thee

Then Peter began to say unto Him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed Thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

But many that are first shall be last; and the last first (Mark 10:28-31).

THE INCIDENT of the rich young ruler, who refused Christ that he might cling to his money, has just occurred. The ever-ready Peter calls the Lord's attention to the fact that he and the others did leave everything for Christ's sake and had taken up the cross to follow Him. "Lo, we have left all and followed Thee." Matthew adds a few more words that Peter spoke, "What shall we have therefore?"

How selfish and self-seeking this question sounds! Yet the Lord does not rebuke Peter. He knew just how much it had cost the disciples, and would cost them, to follow Him. Most of them would prove all their lives how expensive it is to be a true Christian, a devoted follower of Christ, and would eventually seal their testimony with their blood.

So our gracious Lord encourages Peter—as well as the

other disciples, *and us*—by telling him that there are great compensations in the service of Christ. Then He also tells him there are great sacrifices to be offered and sufferings to be endured. Leaving one's house, brothers, sisters, etc., one would receive a hundredfold now, and in the world to come eternal life.

In repeating the list of things given up for His sake, the Lord does not mention again either father or wife. One may, as a present reward for serving the Lord, receive a hundred mothers, sisters, brothers, houses, children, or lands, but not a hundred fathers or wives. God knows that *one* wife is all any man can well handle, for in the beginning He made them male and female. Fathers are left out too, because God bids us call no one "father" upon the earth but God alone. Besides God Himself, the believer can have only one other father in a spiritual sense, and that is the one through whom he is saved, as Paul says in I Corinthians 4:15.

Yes, in giving up the comforts of home and the intimacy of wife and children for Christ's sake, I too have enjoyed happy fellowship with hundreds of sisters in Christ, with godly brethren in the Lord; and have experienced the care and love of many spiritual "mothers." Hundreds of homes have gladly opened their doors to welcome me, in place of the one home given up for His sake, and the gospel's. With all this goes a measure of persecution, for we are to be partakers of the afflictions of the gospel as well as of its affections. We do indeed suffer but little for Christ's sake; millions in other ages and scenes have laid down their lives in martyrdom for His honor and glory. Ahead, for all of us, lies the bliss of eternal life in heaven above.

The Lord warns Peter that those who seem to be giving up much for Him—those who are first—may yet be last in

the day of reckoning. The Lord alone knows and He alone can estimate aright, the service, sacrifice, and suffering of each of His own. Many a Christian receives his reward here, in the praise and acclaim of men or in the life of plenty and comfort he lives. On the other hand, many a true servant of Christ, perhaps some lonely shut-in, shall hear His "Well done" then; one who here below was known to but few, and noticed by even fewer. He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, that is, the things done for Christ in the dark, unknown to any but Him alone. Then shall every man have praise of God.

The Widow's Mites

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

And He called unto Him His disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living (Mark 12:41-44).

JESUS sat over against the treasury. He still does. He sees who, what, and how everyone casts in. And He seeth not as man seeth. He was observing this widow, Himself no doubt unobserved by her. In eternity she'll learn just what He saw that day. What a glorious surprise awaits her, when she learns in that day the Lord's estimate of her tiny gift!

The Pharisees had asked the Lord a question about giving and were indirectly charged by Him with withholding from God that which was His due. They had failed to render unto God the things that are God's. How refreshing now to read of one, a poor widow, who gave her all. This scene is the last one recorded in the Temple. The Lord left it after this, never to return to it.

The Lord took note not *what*, but *how*, they cast into

the treasury. God is not particularly concerned with the matter, but rather with the manner of giving to Him. This widow undoubtedly gave because she truly loved the Lord God; that is what counts with Him. "If I have not love, it profiteth me nothing."

Many that were rich cast in much. One can easily read the pride, the ostentation, with which many deposited their large gifts, doubtless making sure that everyone around could see just how very much they did give. On the other hand, this poor woman probably tried to hide her insignificant little offering, ashamed of its trifling worth.

But wait! He who reads everything aright, tells us that "she cast in more than they all"—more than all the others together put in. Yet her two mites made only a farthing. True, but she cast in *all* that she had. They contributed of their superfluity; she of her necessity. She, so poor herself, was yet giving to the poor; she, so poor indeed, was giving to the rich God. A rare privilege indeed! And God valued it highly, not because of what she *gave*, but because of what she had *left*—nothing. Our giving in God's service is not measured by what we give, but by what we keep.

Our God values our *sacrifice*; it must *cost* to serve Him.

He does not need our money; He does appreciate our devotion.

He does not count what we put in; He counts what we do *not* put in.

He will reward us in the day of reward not for *what* we have done, but for *why* and *how* we have done it.

Watch Ye Therefore

Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping.

And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch (Mark 13:33-37).

FOUR TIMES in this brief passage the people of God are urged to watch. The Lord has gone, to return someday, in the meantime giving His servants their place—to every man his work, to labor in the service of Christ during His absence. While His return here has His public coming in relation to Israel in view, nevertheless it is equally important and incumbent on all God's saints in this present day of grace, to be ever on the watch, as we are so often urged to do in the Christian Epistles.

Each one is given his work, for to every believer is imparted a gift or gifts, that they might minister the same. There are to be no drones in God's beehive, in the Church of God. The porter is set to watch. The "porter" probably has reference to the Holy Spirit, who indwells the believer and leads him to watch, wait, and work.

In our text the period of our Lord's session in glory—His absence here on earth—is divided into four watches: even, midnight, cockcrowing, and morning. Matthew 14 tells us that the Lord comes to Israel in the fourth watch (Matthew 14:25) which is the last one and covers the space of time from three to six in the morning, including the sunrising. This agrees with other Scriptures, which assure us that Christ's coming to Israel will be like the "rising of the sun" (Malachi 4:2).

Luke tells us that the Lord may come in the second or the third watch. He omits the fourth watch, which has to do, as we just said, with Israel. Thus, His coming for us will take place, as Luke suggests, in the second or third watch. The second watch ended at midnight, and we know *now* that the Lord did not come at that time. However, according to Matthew 25:6, the announcement of His coming as an approaching event was then made. That period in the history of the Church of God can now easily be determined, for it followed the Sardis period as recorded in the Book of Revelation. This Sardis period, as all careful Bible students know, refers to the Reformation, when Protestantism was born. Many truths were then recovered which had been buried under Romish rubbish, but not till some centuries later was the hope of the Lord's coming for His Church fanned again into flame and the cry went forth, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh." This took place in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Since this was at midnight, according to Matthew 25, and the Lord did *not* come then, and since the coming of Christ to Israel takes place in the fourth watch, as Matthew 14 shows, then the rapture—the blessed hope of the Church—must take place in the *third watch*.

Now the third watch ended, as Mark puts it, at cockcrowing, which would be at about three in the morning. In full

agreement with this the Book of Revelation tells us the Lord will come for us as the Bright and Morning Star, the coming of which synchronizes with the crowing of the cock in the morning; both happen about the same time. Here then we have a clear proof, among many others, that the rapture will take place a definite length of time before Christ's Second Coming, and therefore the Church shall not pass through the great tribulation sorrows.

"Watch," we are told. His coming will be sudden, whether for the Church or for Israel later on. May He not find us sleeping, but watching and sober, as we are exhorted in 1 Thessalonians 5:6. We are looking for no signs; we are looking for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:20-21). While we worship, work, and watch, we should be fully awake to our privileges and our responsibilities; we should deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly and righteously in this present world.

All About Simon Peter

But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee. But Peter said unto Him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.

And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice.

But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all (Mark 14:28-31).

THIS CHAPTER records the sad story of Peter's denial of his Lord, and gives us the various downward steps which led to the fearful climax. No believer's fall is ever sudden, but rather the culmination of a certain course of wrong, which at last flares out into some open sin. The canker of evil had been eating away on the inside long before it came to the surface. Peter's fall illustrates the same possibility and tendency in all of us to fail and fall, and should serve as a solemn warning. For that reason no doubt all four Gospels record it; it is a lesson that needs to be pressed and stressed. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

This chapter might well be captioned, "The Confession of the Master versus the Denial of His Disciple." Peter denied the Lord with an oath; Jesus confessed Himself to be the very One that Peter denied, as He was put on oath before Caiaphas (Matthew 26:63).

As has often been suggested, the Gospels present seven downward steps in Peter's course here, ending with his denial of the Saviour he truly loved. Jesus had prayed for him that his faith might not fail and therefore we know that it did not, but his courage certainly failed miserably. Under the pressure of fear and cowardice any of us might make only a sad showing, for we too are so weak in ourselves. May we profit by Peter's collapse, and ever keep close to our Lord, looking to Him for strength and grace in every time of need.

Let us look at Simon Peter in that dark and awful night. All the features of that tragedy are found in this chapter. Look at the steps leading to his fall:

1. His overweening self-confidence. "Though all shall be offended, yet will not I."
2. Sleeping in Gethsemane, when he should have been watching and praying.
3. Smiting with the sword.
4. Following the Lord Jesus afar off.
5. Sitting with the servants and warming himself at the fire.
6. Cursing and swearing.
7. The climax, in his denial that he ever knew the Lord.

1. "I will not deny Thee in any wise," said Peter. It is true that all the others said so, too (verse 31) but as Peter was ever the spokesman, it is more than likely that their saying so was due to Peter's vehement assurance of his loyalty. We may be sure Peter really meant what he said, for he deeply and truly loved the Lord; but, alas, he did not know his own strength or, rather, his own weakness, as our Lord reminded him in the garden: "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." How weak and helpless any one

of us is without the sustaining grace and power of God! That is the vital lesson we may all learn here. As Jesus said elsewhere, "Without Me ye can do nothing."

2. Peter spoke of dying with Christ, yet he could not even keep awake a few hours when in Gethsemane. To Peter, the boaster, Jesus spoke there: "Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Notice that the Lord addresses Peter by his old sinner's name of *Simon*. This sleeping was no evidence of the renewed nature, but of the old. Peter should have prayed; there was such desperate need of waiting on God for strength. "Watch," said the Lord, keep the eye on self and realize how weak and worthless you are. "Pray," lay hold on God, you need Him. Jesus prayed in that dark and dreadful hour and when the fearful trial of Calvary came the next day He was gloriously triumphant; Simon failed to pray and when he was tested shortly, he shamefully collapsed. There is power in prayer!

3. "One of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear," John tells us his name—it was Simon Peter. Peter had said that he would not *be* offended; but he proceeded to offend another. He said he would die, but instead he tried to kill someone else. Here he denied the Lord before he denied Him with his lips, for to smite with the sword was as much a denial of the Lord as his curses and oaths were later on. Jesus' kingdom is not of this world, as He said to Pilate, else would His servants fight. Peter, in employing an actual sword of steel, was denying the whole of our Lord's mission, for He had not come to judge, but to save; not to inflict suffering, but to endure it; not to kill, but to give life. Simon's act was a total denial of all this.

How good to read in Scripture that later on, after the

Holy Spirit had come, Peter learned to use the right sword in the right way. He then wielded the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, on the Day of Pentecost, and as a result many were pricked in their heart (Acts 2:37), turning to God in repentance and saving faith. Here Peter chopped off a piece on the outside by using a real sword; there he reached the inside, as he struck with the spiritual sword—God's precious Word. Peter cut off Malchus' ear. Spiritually speaking, many preachers are apt to chop off ears as they ruthlessly brandish the Word. They should learn a lesson from Peter at Pentecost, realizing that the Word of God should prick the heart—reach the inside—and not wound the hearer more than necessary. In pricking with the sword the least possible wound is inflicted with the greatest possible results; in smiting with the sword and cutting off ears, the greatest wound is inflicted with the worst results. Let us learn to wield the Sword of the Spirit in such a way that we reach the hearts of men with the wonderful message of grace and truth.

4. Peter followed afar off. Needless to say, we should keep close to Christ, that we may hear His words of grace and wisdom; that He may imbue us with His own strength. However, we may say for Peter that he at least followed the Lord, while the other disciples, with the exception of John, were conspicuous by their absence. Had Peter not gone into the high priest's palace he probably would not have denied the Lord. So it is true that a measure of faithfulness to Christ will the more readily expose us to the danger of a fall. Satan does not tempt those who do not even seek to follow the Lord; the more we attempt to be true to Christ, the more we will prove Satan's opposition and be subjected to his temptations.

5. Peter sat with the servants and warmed himself at the

fire. This was truly a dangerous step. The first psalm warns against sitting in the seat of the scornful, or standing in the way of sinners. Not only did Peter linger among the servants, but he sat down among them. He sought comfort while his Lord was being abused and maligned. Peter was to learn, and we must do so too, that the way to escape temptation is to keep out of the way of it. "Flee," says the Scripture. I am reminded of a boy who stood longingly watching a tempting display of fruit. After a time the storekeeper came out and said to him, "Hey, there, are you trying to steal some of my fruit?"

"No mister," was the reply, "I am trying *not* to." The sure way to prevent stealing would have been to run away; not to linger there. Abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. Peter was in the wrong society; he should have remained near his Lord. So should we! We should cultivate the fellowship of Christ, and one way of doing so is to cultivate fellowship with His saints.

6. Peter began to curse and to swear, saying, "I know not this man of whom ye speak." Peter had been a rough Galilean fisherman, and I understand that their language often left very much to be desired. Now, in his extreme fear and confusion, he reverts to his old habit of profanity. He found, as we Christians so often do, that sin was not dead in him; that it could and would exert itself unless subdued through the God-provided means of prayer and faith. "Let not sin have dominion over you." Sin still dwells within, and it can and will manifest itself except we live in the Spirit, looking to God for the needed grace in every time of need. Let us learn the healthy truth of Scripture that our sinful nature is not removed while we are in this world. Only the rule of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus can set us free from the dominion of sin and death.

7. Three times over Peter denies his Lord. What an experience! How awful, yet how blessed! Never again, we may be sure, did he sin so. The Lord had said to him that Satan desired to have him that he might sift him as wheat. After the process was over, the wheat remained and the chaff was all gone. The blessed results showed a Simon Peter without those unpleasant traits of conceit and self-confidence which had marked and marred him before, and ever after the Lord would be able to use him for His glory.

A crowing rooster was the sign of Peter's fall. Roosters crow every morning, and one may be sure that, till the end of his life, whenever Peter heard the early morning call of the cock he would be reminded of his fearful sin. It would tend to keep him humble; it also would fill his heart with praise in remembrance of the rich grace that forgave him and restored him to the service of his Lord.

Luke alone records that the Lord "looked upon Peter." What a look that must have been! I am sure it did not imply the human "I told you so." It was a look full of pain and hurt, yet of infinite pity. The Lord was not surprised, only grieved. He knows our feeble frame; He remembers we are dust; He is full of compassion.

Peter must have looked upon Jesus, too, or he would not have seen Jesus looking on him. The moment the cock crew, Peter recalled the warning of the Lord. Immediately he turned and looked at Jesus, at the very moment that the Lord looked on him. Peter did not look around to see what John's reaction was, or what those who sat around him thought, but he turned to Jesus. Praise God, He is the One to turn to, what He thinks of us truly counts! His opinion of me is worth more than all the world's. And He alone is able to bring blessing out of a curse; He alone can restore the fallen, can comfort the broken in heart.

Peter wept. And Jesus saw those tears. They washed away Peter's fearful sin, in His sight. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Here is a page of what often is our own history, though the sin itself may be different. Let us not judge Peter, but profit by his sad experience.

The Young Man with the Linen Cloth

And they all forsook Him, and fled. And there followed Him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him:

And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked (Mark 14:50-52).

THIS peculiar happening is found only in Mark's Gospel. Some think this may indicate that the young man was Mark himself. Other conjectures have been made, such as the rich young ruler of chapter 10, James, Saul of Tarsus, etc. Yet, why try to say what God has seen fit to leave unsaid? However, since nothing in the Word of God is without its significance and spiritual message, there must be something here for our profit. I might suggest the following.

The incident is recorded by Mark, who presents our Lord in the character of the servant of Jehovah. This young man wore a linen cloth. Linen was the material worn by the priests in divine service. Linen in Scripture speaks of righteousness, typically of divine righteousness. Thus, the linen cloth typically set forth divine service and divine perfection, both so clearly the theme of Mark's Gospel.

Thus it seems to me this incident is an allegory. This young man shadows our blessed Lord. After thirty-three years of sojourn down on earth, and three and a half years of incessant service to God and man, He was—compara-

tively speaking and after the flesh—about to be taken and put to death by His enemies. He truly wore the linen cloth of perfect righteousness and of priestly service. Now man is about to strip Him of His glory by numbering Him with transgressors. As far as they are concerned, they left Him naked, as was the case of the young man of our subject. That young man fled, leaving his garment, but in bright contrast to all human failure, our holy Lord did not flee. He set His face as a flint, with the Cross ever in view.

Man stripped Him, but God honored Him. Joseph of Arimathæa wrapped His holy body in fine linen cloths (Matthew 27:59). Man might strip Him of His garment, but God saw to it that He was wrapped in another linen garment. The "linen cloth" of Matthew 27:59 is exactly the same Greek word as that of Mark 14:51 in our text.

Now take a look at the sepulcher the morning of His resurrection. What do you see? Why, the linen cloths are there (John 20:6-7). Again "the Young Man" has left the linen cloth. Not taken from Him this time, but left deliberately. He had miraculously withdrawn from those linen wrappings without in any wise disturbing them, thus giving an undeniable demonstration of His resurrection from the dead. All He left in this world were His grave clothes.

And now, as we look up into the glory, once more we see this same "Young Man" dressed again in linen garments. (We call Him reverently "Young Man," for does He not ever carry the dew of His youth?) Dressed so, He shall come forth someday to smite His foes, and reign supreme.

This odd incident, then, may well tell the story of how our blessed Lord was stripped and left naked (though He did not flee but went to Calvary to die for us); how His resurrection was declared as He left the linen cloths in the tomb; how He was stripped of His divine righteousness and

was numbered with transgressors that we might be dressed in the robe of divine righteousness and be numbered with the saints; and how He now is clothed with divine glory up there, for God hath highly exalted Him and given Him a Name above every name.

PART SEVEN

Expository Glimpses

THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

CAN THE CHILDREN OF THE BRIDE-
CHAMBER FAST?

THROUGH THE CORNFIELDS ON THE
SABBATH DAY

HE ORDAINED TWELVE THAT THEY
MIGHT BE WITH HIM

THE MURDER OF JOHN THE BAPTIST
ON THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION

IF THY FOOT OFFEND THEE, CUT IT
OFF

THE QUESTION OF DIVORCE
ONE THING THOU LACKEST

SHE HATH DONE WHAT SHE COULD
THE MAN WITH THE PITCHER OF
WATER

The Baptism of Our Lord

And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him:

And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

And immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness (Mark 1:9-12).

ALL FOUR GOSPELS comment on this baptism of the Lord Jesus, which was performed at the hands of John the Baptist. John could not understand why the Lord should be baptized, but the Lord told him just to let it be for the time being; it was needful thus to fulfil all righteousness (Matthew 3:14-15).

All those who came to John honestly came to express their need, their desire to repent and express this repentance in the act of baptism, thus confessing their sins. John realized that our holy Lord could not possibly insist on baptism for that reason, for He was sinless and pure; He had no sins to confess. Now, with the full light of God's Word shining upon our hearts, we realize that the Lord Jesus took his place in baptism, not to confess His sins, for He had none, but to indicate that He had come into the world to take our sins upon Himself. He confessed *our* sins as He had come

to be *our* Substitute, to bear our sins in His own body on the tree. Even so the high priest of old confessed the sins of the nation and put them on the head of the scapegoat. This is a beautiful illustration of our Lord confessing our sins as His and bearing them away forever, as He did when He died upon the cross. In Leviticus 16 He is seen both as the offering that died, and as the living sacrifice, which carried all the sins of the people away into no man's land, never to be found any more.

How carefully God guards the honor of His dear Son. The moment He came forth from the water of baptism, God opened the heavens, and the Holy Spirit, in the visible form of a dove descended upon His Son. Lest any should think that He had been baptized for His own sins, the Father's voice was heard: "Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are seen together here, as our blessed Lord starts out on His marvelous mission of mercy, proclaiming in the act of baptism His purpose to die for His creatures. His baptism of water here was the promise that He would endure the baptism of fire that awaited Him at Calvary.

John bore witness of Christ, but He has greater witness than that of John, for the Father Himself owns Him as His beloved Son, and the descending and abiding Holy Spirit marks Him as the sinless Son of God as well, for no human being ever received the Holy Spirit to *abide* prior to the cross of Calvary. John the Baptist, noting this miracle, declares "I saw and bear record that this is the Son of God" (John 1:34).

Immediately, says Mark, the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness, where He was to be tempted of Satan. In consistency with Mark's account of Jesus as the servant, it speaks here of the Spirit *driving* Him, while the other Gos-

pels say He was *led*. A servant is sent forth to his labors. The Lord immediately goes forth into His path of service, suffering, and sacrifice, and the very first foe He meets and vanquishes is the devil. David meets Goliath, and slays him with his own sword.

Can the Children of the Bridechamber Fast?

And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto Him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Thy disciples fast not?

And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days (Mark 2:18-20).

THE PHARISEES, as are all religious folks, were strong on observing outward forms. This is always so where spiritual reality is lacking; it is a cheap substitute for inward power and life. The Pharisees kept many fast days; in fact, the Pharisee in Luke 18 boasted that he fasted twice in the week, or over one hundred days a year. God had instituted only *one* fast day for the entire year. Other fasts had been added later on, as we read in Zechariah 8:19, making four in all, but that was the limit. God's fasts were at the same time "feasts," but these hypocrites had made them occasions for the display of a false sanctimoniousness.

How can the children of the bridechamber (today we call them bridesmaids and ushers, or groomsmen) fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as the bridegroom and the bride are around, everybody is happy, enjoying the good time and the good things that are being served. But when the bridegroom and his bride leave, then often there are tears at the parting. Undoubtedly in our text the Lord Jesus is referring to Himself as the Bridegroom. When He was about to be taken away from His own, He said unto them, "When I go, ye shall weep and lament; ye shall be sorrowful" (John 16:20). Notice this word "taken away." Our Lord was taken away from His own when nailed to Calvary's bitter cross. It left the disciples sad and sorrowing and perplexed. But when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, and revealed the full truth of Christianity to them, then they were glad, even though their Lord had gone home to glory (Luke 24:52-53). They did not *mourn* then, but they did *fast*. Notice that in the similar passage in Matthew 9:15 the word is deliberately changed from "mourn" to "fast." Fasting and mourning are two entirely different things. There is no thought of sadness in fasting, as so clearly set forth in Zechariah 8:19. But fasting, in its spiritual force, suggests the denial of the flesh and its lusts. So, during the absence of our Lord in the glory, His disciples live a life of self-abnegation, for His sake, while at the same time living in the joy of His love and daily communion.

The Bridegroom was taken away from His own nineteen hundred years ago, and went home to glory without His Bride. He gave Himself for her in matchless love at Calvary, and then returned to His Father's house without her. But someday, perhaps soon, He will come again. Then He shall take away His bride to be *with* Him, as once He

was taken away *from* her. Then all fasting shall be over forever, and eternally we shall feast in His glorious presence. What a honeymoon that will be, forever with the Lord!

Through the Cornfields on the Sabbath Day

And it came to pass, that He went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and His disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.

And the Pharisees said unto Him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?

And He said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him?

How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shew-bread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? (Mark 2:23-26).

THE DECALOGUE contains ten commandments, and the New Testament asserts that he who offends in one point is guilty of all. But the Pharisees had pretty much the same idea as some people do today, namely, if you keep the Sabbath, you've practically kept the whole law. They read as if James 2:10 said, "He that keeps one commandment [the Sabbath] is guiltless of all."

The Pharisees had made the keeping of the Sabbath an almost intolerable burden, instead of the blessing God had intended it to be. Let us say again that the Christian is not under law, and that the Sabbath was never given to him to keep, but only to the Jew. It is noticeable that, while all

the other nine commandments are quoted in the four Gospels, that one concerning the keeping of the Sabbath is omitted.

Our Lord repeatedly healed on the Sabbath day, rousing the ire of the Jewish leaders, when He might just as well have done those miracles on the other days of the week. The Lord evidently wanted it understood that the Sabbath had served its purpose, and this is fully borne out in the New Testament Epistles. It is mentioned only once (in Colossians 2:16) and then the believer is rebuked for keeping it. He is told that the Sabbath was connected with the shadowy system of the law, which has now become obsolete, because the substance of all blessing—Christ our blessed Lord—takes its place.

The first day of the week—the day our Lord rose from the dead—is the Christian's day. And, unlike the Sabbath, we are not told to refrain from work on that day, but rather to use it aright in the worship of our Lord, and in the service of God. The Sabbath was the day of rest for Israel (Exodus 31:16-17). The Lord's day, which is the first day of the week, is the day of privilege, of spiritual worship, and service for the Christian.

Returning to the cavil of the Pharisees, Jesus intimates that His disciples ate the corn because they were hungry, and that it was perfectly legitimate to satisfy the needs of the body any day of the week.

But in His reply the Lord goes further. He reminds those faultfinders how David ate the shewbread, which was not lawful, as it was supposed to be eaten by the priests alone. And David also gave to those that were with him (see the account in 1 Samuel 21:4-6).

In what way did this illustration from David's experience meet the question these men had raised here? The

issue of eating *on the Sabbath*, which they objected to, did not pertain at all in the incident to which our Lord referred. The Lord was touching a deeper chord, a deeper truth than they in their blindness realized, for David was a direct type of the Lord Jesus Christ. They both were kings anointed of God; they both were rejected by men. The whole order of things was out of course in David's day, with God's king a persecuted fugitive. The priesthood was a total failure during Saul's evil reign, and so David, God's king, assumed the rights of the priest as well. All this is a beautiful type applicable to our Lord. He, the rejected King, is at the same time God's high priest. Our Lord was intimating to these Jewish leaders that, inasmuch as they had rejected their King, as Israel had done with David, therefore their whole Jewish order was out of course. The Lord Jesus was taking over; He was God's priest, and the Jewish priesthood was set aside. God's order is in the hands of Christ. The Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath, for He is Lord of all, and He can do as He pleases.

In other words, Christianity was taking the place of Judaism; Christian liberty instead of Jewish bondage; the priesthood of Christ instead of the Aaronic priesthood. The rejected Saviour and King was to be Lord of all who would follow and obey Him. I believe all this is suggested in our Lord's reply to these men. Ah, it is great when one has learned to recognize in the rejected Christ the Saviour of the soul, the King of one's life, the Lord to be followed and obeyed.

*He Ordained Twelve That They
Might Be with Him*

And He goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto Him whom He would: and they came unto Him. And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach,

And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils (Mark 3:13-15).

JESUS CALLED unto Him whom He would. The call to the service of the Lord still comes from the Head of the Church today. It is not a question whether I want to go forth and serve Him, but whether He calls me to special service for Him. It is the Lord who puts in the Church evangelists, pastors, and teachers. If not called of the Lord, one would not be fit to go at all. He called His disciples to Him, and they "came." Some want to go uncalled; others don't come when they are called. But these came. Obedience to God's call becomes every believer whom the Lord would use for Himself. He ordained them.

He ordained twelve. The true ordination, then as now, is the ordination of His hands—today of the nail-pierced hands. He ordained them for a threefold purpose:

That they might be with Him.

To preach.

To have authority, for healing and the casting out of demons. In these three we read the servant's relationship to *Christ* first; then to the *world*; then to *Satan*.

That they might be with Him. How important that is! One might have a vast knowledge of the Word, might possess eloquence to preach it powerfully, but if one has not been with Him, all would be empty, like sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). How suitable that this should be the first thing mentioned. Walking with Him and talking with Him trains God's servant aright, and makes his ministry effective. For every hour that we stand before men, we should spend many hours before God—alone with Him, to learn in His school the lessons of humility, dependence, grace. To learn to know ourselves aright as we learn to know Him better.

He sent them forth to preach, and to have authority to heal sicknesses and cast out demons. In the Christian Epistles we do not read again of God's servants doing the latter things, or being sent forth to do so. Scripture evidently shows, I am sure, that these sign gifts were for the early days of Christianity, when the Lord *confirmed* this new message of the Christian faith by miracles, as Mark 16:20 states. Once the Word of God, the New Testament Scriptures, was written, there was no further need for miracles, but man is to receive God's truth on the basis of simple faith. So miracles soon disappeared.

We do not say that God is not able to do miracles, or even that He does not often do them, but it is no longer His custom, nor does He today send out servants to perform them. Many faith healers will claim this Scripture we are considering and will say that the Lord has given them the *power* to heal the sick and cast out demons. But the honest reader of the Word must remember that this word

"power" is the word "authority," which has a vastly different meaning. Those early servants of the Lord had the *authority* to cast out demons because the Lord gave them that, but the *power* to do so was never theirs. It was the Lord's alone. Today, since the Lord has authorized no one to heal the sick, the power, too, therefore, is utterly lacking. The Lord would not exercise His power through men when He has not given them the authority to represent Him.

No, today men are sent forth to preach. That is our business. Men's spiritual welfare is ten thousand times more important than the welfare of their bodies. Satan would turn men aside from his spiritual guilt and need to be occupied with his physical ills. Let us, who have been ordained by the nail-pierced hands, preach Christ—Christ crucified and Christ glorified.

What an odd group of men our Lord chose for His apostles, to carry on the work which He began, to become the founders of His Church! What an illustration of the truth of Scripture that God takes the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak to confound the mighty! Fishermen, publicans, politicians—all of them the common, garden variety of men. What did the Lord see in them? I believe it isn't so much what He saw in them, as what He was going to make out of them. He ordained them. The word ordain simply means "made." He made these common, ignorant, ordinary men His mighty messengers of the gospel, and through them shook the world. He is a wonderful God indeed who can do great things with such poor instruments. As Paul could say, "Our sufficiency is of God."

The list of the twelve is found four times in Scripture, with Judas always mentioned last. Nathanael and Bartholomew are identical. The sons of Zebedee were named

“Boanerges,” meaning “sons of thunder.” Not because they were that then, I suppose, but because the Lord was going to make them sons of thunder for His service, even as He called Simon and changed his name to Peter. Peter certainly was not much of a rock till the Day of Pentecost. The coming and indwelling of the Holy Spirit empowered these men for the life of service and suffering that lay ahead of them. Judas was chosen of the Lord, though an unbeliever, I presume to teach men the lesson that it is possible to walk with the Lord, to hear His Word, yea, even to preach and do miracles, and yet be unsaved all the while. Truly a solemn warning.

The Murder of John the Baptist

And king Herod heard of Him; (for His name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.

Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets.

But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead.

For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her.

For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.

Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not:

For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee;

And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt and I will give it thee.

And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask

of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom.

And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist.

And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist.

And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.

And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison,

And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother.

And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb (Mark 6:14-29).

HEROD'S BIRTHDAY proved to be John the Baptist's death day. The world's pleasure often proves to be the believer's sorrow. Praise God, on the other hand, the world's grief—when Christ comes—shall be the day of the believer's exultant joy.

Herod truly is a pitiable character in many ways.

He "feared" because he did *not* fear God. John fearlessly told him about his crimes. While others fawned and flattered, John humbled this proud and wicked monarch. It seems that Herod accepted it, but not so the wicked wretch he had illegally married. She would have killed John, but apparently Herod would not permit her to do so, and he had John put in prison for safekeeping from the spite of his spouse.

There are some good things said here about this king:

He was orthodox, for he believed in the resurrection of the dead.

He listened to John preach, even after he had locked him up (verse 20).

He heard him gladly and did many things (turned over some new leaves, I suppose) (verse 20).

He was exceeding sorry when tricked into the murder of John (verse 26).

But—

While he listened to John's message, he did not obey it and repent of his sins and turn to God.

He did *many things*, but not the one thing needful. Sinners often do lots of things they think are right, but continue to reject God's salvation as did this wretched king.

He swore a foolish oath and, more foolishly still, failed to go back on it, thus acting a real fool.

Here was a king, who is supposed to exhibit the characteristics of a king, yet he feared his own subjects for he was afraid to rescind his rash oath for their sakes. Here was a prison-keeper afraid of his own prisoner; a husband afraid of his wife. Think of a king afraid of his subjects, a warden afraid of his prisoner, a husband afraid of his wife, yea, a man afraid of himself. Truly the fear of man bringeth a snare. Had he only feared *God*, he never would have had all those other fears.

Apparently he did not fear to commit adultery; did not fear to imprison God's faithful servant; was not afraid to reject God's call to his guilty soul; did not fear to crown his many crimes with the inexcusable murder of the greatest man ever born of woman. He was exceeding sorry, but nevertheless he committed the crime. How many sinners are sorry, yet go on to the bitter end, rejecting God's mercy, refusing to heed His voice.

Herod had a conscience. For, hearing of the fame of Jesus, he said, "It is John, whom *I* have beheaded." He did not blame the deed on Herodias, as well he might have, nor on Salome, nor on the executioner, but on himself. Every sinner will do likewise, when standing before the great white throne.

As for John the Baptist, God saw fit he should seal his testimony with his blood, and thus join the noble army of martyrs. The herald was no longer needed, now that the One whom he had announced, was come. John, whom the Lord Jesus called a burning and shining "lamp," was put out when the brighter Light—of the Sun, the Son—arose upon the scene. The voice died out, but the Word ever remains.

On the Mount of Transfiguration

And He said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

And after six days Jesus taketh with Him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and He was transfigured before them.

And His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.

And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus.

And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid.

And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son: hear Him.

And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.

And as they came down from the mountain, He charged them that they should tell no man what

things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead.

And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean (Mark 9:1-10).

THE LORD said that some would not die till they had seen the Kingdom of *God* come with power. Matthew speaks in this connection of the Kingdom of the *Son of Man* (16:28). Mark, whose Gospel sets forth more the spiritual side of the kingdom, speaks of it as the Kingdom of God. On the Mount of Transfiguration the disciples saw a preview of the kingdom as it shall appear in the day of Christ's coming in glory by-and-by. We are plainly told so in 2 Peter 1:16-17.

Mark tells us it took place after six days, probably answering to the six millenniums that will have passed at the time of our Lord's return. Luke speaks of eight days, which in thought looks on to the eternal state that will be ushered in finally after Christ's millennial reign.

As Mark writes of our Lord as Jehovah's Servant, he describes His garment, glistening, exceeding white as snow, as no fuller on earth can white it. Christ's life was one of absolute purity and perfection.

Elijah and Moses appeared, and were seen talking with Jesus. Luke tells us the theme of their conversation was His exodus at Jerusalem. One Man occupied the central place on this mountaintop; one work was the subject of the one theme: Christ Himself, His sacrifice, His cross. That decease, or exodus, included in thought His resurrection, as did Israel's exodus from Egypt. Both Moses and Elijah knew about an exodus by experience, for Moses passed through the Red Sea, Elijah through the Jordan on his

way to Heaven (2 Kings 2). Our Saviour's exodus not only brought Him from death to life, but opened the way for all those who would trust Him as Saviour. Here on the Mount of Transfiguration the conversation was concerning Calvary's Mount.

On the Mount of Transfiguration His face shone as the sun; on the Cross His visage was so marred, more than any man's.

On the Mount of Transfiguration His raiment was white as the light; on Calvary He hung naked, bleeding, and thorn-crowned.

On this mount there were with Him two of history's greatest and holiest men; on the Cross He was numbered with two murderers.

On this mount we see the Shekinah glory of the divine presence; on the Cross outer darkness; He was alone, forsaken.

On the Mount of Transfiguration was heard the Father's voice in commendation of His beloved Son; on the Cross was heard the Son's cry of utter desolation, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

The lonely, outcast Sufferer of the Cross is the same as the glory-crowned Lord of the Mount of Transfiguration. We have seen Him by faith as the one; we shall see Him by sight as the other.

Peter wanted to build three tabernacles and stay up there. He forgot about the great need at the foot of the mountain. But not so our blessed Lord. He turned His back on the glory of Heaven, on His home above, and came down—down to be despised, scorned, crucified. Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace!

The cloud removed Moses and Elijah, and they saw no

man, save Jesus only. Thus it must be! There is none, Lord Jesus, there is none like Thee!

They were told not to divulge the glorious vision till after the Lord had risen from the dead. Then they might freely proclaim that the crucified Saviour is at the right hand of the Majesty on high; that someday He will come again, in power and glory, to redeem His own people Israel, and to judge the world. And before that shall take place, He will first come for His Church, to rapture her Home.

They wondered what the rising from the dead should mean. This was a truth brand new to these disciples, never revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures. They knew, of course, about resurrection because their Scriptures spoke of that a good deal, and these men were orthodox believers. But the resurrection *from* the dead was something entirely new. The Old Testament speaks of only one general resurrection; the New Testament speaks of two. Yet in spite of that, many today still believe in one general resurrection. In I Corinthians 15:23 we learn that Christ is the firstfruits of resurrection; afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming. With this agrees I Thessalonians 4, where we are told that at the Lord's coming the *dead in Christ* shall rise. Not all the dead, but only those who believe in Him. Revelation 20:4-5 further shows there will be at least a thousand years between these two resurrections. This first resurrection of saints takes place in at least three stages:

1. Those raised when Christ arose from the dead (Matthew 27:52-53).

2. The believers at the coming of the Lord (I Thessalonians 4:16).

3. The martyred tribulation saints (Revelation 20:4).

There are then two distinct resurrections: one before

the millennial reign of Christ (in the above three stages); the other after.

The first includes believers only; the other is of unbelievers.

The main resurrection of believers takes place at the coming of the Lord, as shown in 1 Thessalonians 4. There is no coming connected with the second resurrection, but it takes place after the millennium, when the great white throne is set.

It is this great truth of the resurrection of saints the Lord Jesus hinted at here. It is a blessed truth fully revealed in the New Testament Scriptures. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection" (Revelation 20:6).

If Thy Foot Offend Thee, Cut It Off

And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.

Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched (Mark 9:43-48).

THE LANGUAGE here is highly figurative. It impresses the truth that the Word of God must be spiritually discerned, for it is often couched, as here, in strikingly pictorial symbolism.

The Lord is not speaking, of course, of actually cutting off one's hand or foot, or plucking out the eye. But rather the idea is that if what I do with my hand, where I go with my foot, or what I see with my eye, hinders me from coming to Christ and trusting Him as Saviour, and thus causes

me to incur the awful doom of eternal hell, I better get rid of such things at all costs. It is better for a person to go to Heaven eventually, saved, even though a spiritual (and often physical) wreck, than not to be saved at all. With the eye, the sinner lusts after the things the world offers so temptingly; with the foot, he walks in the ways of pleasure or sin; with the hand, he seeks to grasp its riches or honors. Better sacrifice these, better lose the world, than lose one's soul.

It is most interesting that both here, and even more clearly so in Matthew, this warning is preceded by the Lord's calling attention to the simple, artless way in which little children are blessed. When such come to Christ, they are saved from the very things that cause the eternal perdition of older people. Children, when saved, are saved *whole*, not maimed as are those who have gone into sin. A fence at the top of a precipice is much better than an ambulance and a cemetery at the bottom. When a child is saved, not only its soul but also its life is rescued. There is no more satisfying ministry than the ministry of Christ to the young in years; it saves them from becoming wrecks in old age. Young Christian men and women should all join the society for the prevention of cruelty to human beings by joining the ranks of Sunday school workers; and those who are parents should bring up their little ones in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Note that the Lord speaks of cutting off or plucking out *one* hand or foot or eye. Even if a soul is saved after it has become a derelict, after sin has marred and scarred that soul and often the body, the person is not totally disabled for the service of the Lord. He still has one hand and one foot and one eye to use now to God's glory. Nevertheless the effects of sin often remain in a weakened constitution,

an impaired capacity for work, a mind less keen to see the precious truths of the Word. I am sure the Lord gave this solemn warning to impress on his hearers that it pays to be saved while one is young in years. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth!

In the lake of fire the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched. The "worm" expresses the horror of a gnawing conscience, the awful remorse that shall torment the soul when it will be forever too late to be saved. The "fire" speaks of God's wrath abiding on the soul eternally. The one comes from within; the other from without. God alone knows how dreadful such an eternal existence must be! May none of the readers of these lines ever know it! Rather, through faith in Christ, enter today into His kingdom, with both hands grasping His outstretched hands of mercy; with both feet walking in His ways; with both eyes seeing Him, who was once crucified to save your soul and who is now living at God's right hand to save you to the uttermost.

For everyone shall be salted with fire. This means that the believer in Jesus is preserved from eternal doom (as fire is here said to have the preserving power of salt, as it were), because he has passed through the fire of divine judgment in the Person of his substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ. The sinner shall be salted with fire, as he exists forever in that fire that never shall be quenched.

And every sacrifice shall be salted with salt (Leviticus 2:13). That is, a life lived sacrificially by a believer in Jesus, is preserved by the Holy Spirit from corruption. It is a life seasoned (made palatable and useful) with the salt of purity, holiness, and uprightness.

Salt is good! Such a life of fruitfulness and holiness is indeed good. But there is always the danger in every be-

liever's experience of drifting away from God, and thus for that life to lose its power and effectiveness. Once a Christian has wandered from the Lord and gone back into sin, it is almost impossible ever to regain the former freshness or influence on those around. As the Lord said, "Wherewith will ye season it?"

Then the exhortation follows: "Have salt in yourselves." I take it, that is, seek to live in communion with your Lord daily, by the exercise of faith and prayer; through meditation on God's Word. See that no sinful influence creeps in to corrupt your Christian testimony. "Have salt in yourselves; and have peace one with another" (Colossians 4:6). The one refers to your personal life; the other to your contact and fellowship with fellow believers. Be right with God yourself, and you will be in harmony with His people.

The Question of Divorce

And the Pharisees came to Him, and asked Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting Him.

And He answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?

And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away.

And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.

But from the beginning of the creation God made the male and female.

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;

And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.

What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.

And in the house His disciples asked Him again of the same matter.

And He saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.

And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery (Mark 10:2-12).

ONE WOULD PREFER to pass by this portion, but, as we are seeking to cover the entire Gospel, we must notice this

also. Without going into details, it is quite evident from our Lord's words that divorce was not originally contemplated in God's purpose. It was only permitted in Israel for the hardness of men's hearts. If their hearts were softer, they would love their wives as Christ loves the Church. From the beginning God made them male and female.

The Lord enunciates three great truths here:

From the beginning man was made male and female.

A man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife.

The two shall be one flesh.

Thus marriage is shown to be a unity, not a unit. Man is a dual, yet one. The ideal of humanity is the union of fatherhood and motherhood; man is represented, not by either the man or the woman, but in the union of both. Since man and wife are one, to divorce them would mean to cut one man in two and leave only half a man, which is impossible. Divorce therefore is an anomaly. To put asunder what God has joined together is defiance of His order, and disturbing to the peace and well-being of society.

To put away one's wife and marry another is to commit the act of adultery, or vice versa, in the case of the wife's doing so. Mark does not mention the one exceptional clause, "except it be for fornication," as Matthew does (19:9). It seems evident from Scripture that this act breaks the marriage tie in the sight of God, for in the Old Testament the death penalty was inflicted, in which case the remaining party was, of course, perfectly free to marry again. While today the physical death penalty is not executed, yet in God's sight death is still the penalty for adultery. Hence, I believe, the innocent party is looked upon as having lost the husband or wife by death, and so is free to marry again. But here one may well raise a ques-

tion. Who *is* the innocent party in a divorce case? I believe that in the vast majority of cases there is fault and guilt on both sides when it leads to divorce among Christians.

Therefore, it is far safer and wiser, far more consistent with God's glory, for the innocent(?) partner to remain single. I fully agree with the following sentiment, quoted from another's writings:

"There may be a grave reason why a Christian should take advantage of this concession in order to remarry, and in such a case fellowship at the Lord's table should not be denied. . . . On the other hand, there may be to a soul in real fellowship with God a higher question as to whether it may not be more according to Scripture and to godliness to refuse to take advantage of this concession, and to endure patiently and humbly such an unspeakable trial for the Lord's sake, especially in a day like this when the tendency is the other way. Higher interests than their own will, no doubt, prevail with those who occupy any prominence in an assembly and are looked upon as representative in any measure of its life and testimony. A high standard is required of those who walk before the saints as ensamples to the flock, and they will be ready, as far as in them lies, to forego their right in order to preserve their spiritual place and influence. It is a serious thing anywhere, to close the door forever against the return of a repentant spouse."

It is surely not without significance that both here, and in Matthew also, this subject of divorce is followed immediately by the Lord's saying, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not." In cases of divorce where there are children, they are generally the worst sufferers. And in a case where either or both of the parents are believers, it needs no saying what a fearful stumbling block a divorce throws in the path of those little ones com-

ing to Christ. One would think that parents would consider this angle so seriously that divorce in such cases would be practically impossible.

They brought young children to Him that He should "touch" them (verse 13). He did much more. He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them and blessed them (verse 16). The word "suffer," employed by the Lord, means to "let go, to leave them alone." The idea is that children will come to Him of their own accord, if we don't stand in their way by our foolish ways or wicked self-will (as in the case of divorce among Christians). Instead of *bringing* children to the Saviour, we often hinder them from *coming* to Him. Children just naturally will come to the Lord. "These little ones believe in Me," said He (Matthew 18:6).

One Thing Thou Lackest

And when He was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou Me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.

Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

And he answered and said unto Him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.

Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.

And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved; for he had great possessions.

And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto His disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a

needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?

And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible (Mark 10:17-27).

THIS YOUNG MAN possessed many admirable qualities. Yet, said the Lord Jesus, he lacked one thing. That word "lack" is the same as the "come short" of Romans 3:22. This was truly a remarkable, choice young man, yet he came short of the glory of God. He lacked *one* thing. He did *not* lack:

Earnestness, for he came running to Jesus.

Reverence, for he knelt at Jesus' feet.

Humility, for he confessed his ignorance of the way of life.

Right desires, for he craved the possession of eternal life.

Religion, for he knew the Scriptures and honored them.

Morality, for he had kept all the commandments from his youth.

Wealth, for he had great possessions.

Personality, for beholding him, Jesus loved him.

This young ruler had not gone into sin, but he had come short of righteousness. He had come short, while most sinners go beyond the line. He failed in perfection, while most of us were outstanding because of our imperfections. He pictures a moral, religious man, but a sinner all the same, for all have sinned. I imagine the Apostle Paul, in his unconverted days, was very like this rich young ruler.

Basically, I believe, this man lacked a realization of who Christ really was. The Lord's question, "Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but one, that is God," proves

that He, who knew the hearts of all men, knew that this young millionaire did not believe Jesus to be God. If Jesus was not God, then He was not *good*, for He repeatedly claimed to be God, and in that case, if His claim was false, then he would have been—God forgive the very thought—a liar and a blasphemer, as His enemies claimed He was. Since Jesus was *good* (for no one has been able ever to find a flaw in Him), then He was God, for only God is good. This young ruler evidently did not believe Jesus to be God manifest in flesh, and that is where the fearful underlying lack came in; it is the basic reason why men, rejecting Him thus, perish in their sins. By saying to this young man, "Take up the cross and follow Me," Jesus claimed deity, for no mere human being has such a claim on us. The young ruler knew a lot more about his own worth than about the worth of Christ.

The Lord puts him to the test. You want to do something? What saith the law? Do not commit adultery, do not kill, etc. He answers, "Master, all these have I observed from my youth." The commandments the Lord quoted to him are from the second table of the Decalogue and cover one's love to one's *neighbor*. "Very well," saith the Lord, "now we'll try the first table of the law, that of love to *God*. In fact, we'll try them both at once. 'Sell your goods and share them with the poor.' (You said you loved your neighbor as yourself.) Then 'come, take up the cross and follow Me.' (That will prove whether you love God.) Hitherto gold has been your god; now let Me, your true God, be your God." I believe that his real lack stood revealed then. He utterly lacked love to God to enable him to deny self and honor Christ. Only one in whose heart the love of God has been shed abroad is able to deny self and follow Jesus.

Note that Jesus did not tell him that he would gain eternal life by giving away his goods, but that he would have treasure in Heaven. Eternal life is not earned by us, but is the gift of God. But treasure in Heaven is laid up by those who, out of love to God's dear Son, deny themselves, follow Him, and thus use their time, talents, money, etc., in His service. Such lay up treasure in Heaven where neither moth nor rust corrupt and where thieves do not break through or steal.

The young seeker went away sad, for he had great possessions. The Christ rejector goes away sad, even though he have great wealth. The believer goes through life glad, even though he have nothing whatever of this world's goods. It is not money, but Christ, who satisfies.

The young man rejected the Saviour for the sake of money. What is *your* reason?

The disciples marveled when Jesus declares that those with riches shall only with great difficulty be won for God. As Jews, they had always been taught that wealth was a sign of God's favor. Therefore, if those under the special favor of God would hardly be saved, what about the rest of mankind? They had yet to learn that man's righteousness, the world's riches, and many other things, keep men from Christ rather than lead them to the Saviour. Blessed are the poor, for to them the gospel is preached, and they will hear it.

Who then can be saved? With men it is impossible, but not with God. It does not say *to* God, but *with* God all things are possible. *To* us, as we walk and work *with* God, impossible feats become possible and actual.

Many think the eye of the needle mentioned here refers to a small door in the large city gates of those days. When the large gates were closed after nightfall, that small gate

might be opened to admit late travelers. The contention is that a camel *could* get through such a gate, though with great difficulty. That gate is said to have been known as the "eye of a needle." I have failed to find any real substantiation of this claim. Personally I prefer to take the Lord's expression as it stands, referring to the eye of an ordinary sewing needle. I don't see how it could mean anything else than that, for a camel *could* get through this small city gate, but our Lord says it is *impossible* for a rich man to be saved, as far as man is concerned.

She Hath Done What She Could

After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by craft, and put Him to death.

But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people.

And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and poured it on His head.

And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?

For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.

And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on Me.

For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but Me ye have not always.

She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying.

Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that

she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her (Mark 14: 1-9).

How PRECIOUS to the heart of the Saviour must have been Mary's sacrificial love, poured out on Him so shortly before vile man was to pour forth on Him his gall and guilt! Matthew, Mark, and John record this lovely incident. John tells us definitely that it took place six days before that final Passover. Both Matthew and Mark put it down out of its proper chronological place, and this, as all else in Scripture, has its special significance. It is done undoubtedly that we might see, in sharp contrast, Mary's loving ministry and worship; Judas' shameful perfidy, Peter's sad renunciation; and the bitter animosity of the nation's leaders.

Only John gives us her name—Mary, the sister of Lazarus (John 11:2). Perhaps her name is omitted here to impress us with the fact that He knows the names of all who worship Him out of true hearts, whether those names are known to others or not.

Matthew and Mark both tell us that Mary poured the ointment on Jesus' head; John that she also poured it on His feet. She did both, of course. But the Gospel which portrays our Lord as the eternal God mentions the feet, showing us that the Highest of all took the lowest place, for His feet trod earth's weary way. We should pour out our all on Him who, the Highest of the High, became in wondrous grace the lowest of the low, that He might redeem and make us His.

The disciples, led by Judas Iscariot (John 12:4-5) call this act of adoration a "waste." Men, alas, still think so; sometimes even true Christians do. What's given to the Lord is considered a waste; what's given to others counts, in the estimation of such.

One wonders what the Jews in Old Testament days must have thought of the millions of burnt offerings that were wholly burned upon the altar, with no one getting any part of them, all of it going up to God. What a waste, they may have felt. But in God's estimate the highest service we can tender Him, the highest privilege that is ours, is to pour forth our praise and adoration upon Him. To lie at His feet, look up into His face, and love Him is time well spent. Our ministry would be more powerful, sweeter, and more fruitful for such exercise.

Wherever the gospel is preached, said our Lord, her act shall be proclaimed as a memorial of her. God will never forget it, and we may well imitate it.

"She hath done what she could." It has been said that only one higher commendation could be bestowed on any believer in Christ, namely, "He hath done what he could *not*."

The Man with the Pitcher of Water

And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, His disciples said unto Him, Where wilt Thou that we go and prepare that Thou mayest eat the passover?

And He sendeth forth two of His disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow Him. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with My disciples?

And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us.

And His disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as He had said unto them: and they made ready the passover (Mark 14:12-16).

THIS PECULIAR INCIDENT was probably meant to impress the disciples (and us too) with the truth that all things are known to Him and that He controls and guides in the minutest details that concern His glory. He knows, too, the end from the beginning. All men are in His hand and He can use whom He will and when He will in His service. As He travels on to the bitter end, to the Cross, we find here another proof that He is not being driven, but that He marches on as the complete Master of every circumstance.

A *man* bearing a pitcher of water was an unusual sight in

the East, where women always do that chore. So the disciples readily recognized the one who was to lead them to the upper room.

The man led them, carrying his pitcher of water, to where their Lord was to celebrate the last Passover. Usually the pitcher comes from the well. Here it went to the well—to the fountain of living waters, the Saviour of the world.

The man with the water pitcher led the disciples to the *upper* room—from the level of the world to a higher sphere. He led them to where the Passover was to be set aside, and the Lord's supper was to take its place.

These three facts emphasize the truths that Judaism was about to be set aside, and Christianity introduced. For Judaism was marked by water in a container—here, in a pitcher—as we see it in Judaistic worship in the basin, the laver, etc. But Christianity brings the blessing of the indwelling, upspringing well, the flowing river of the water of life. The man with the pitcher led to the fountain—Christ.

The Christian faith is that of the "upper" level. A large upper room, furnished. Judaism was on the world level. Christianity is a heavenly thing, calling the believer from the glory to the glory, making him a partaker of the heavenly calling, and bidding him set his mind on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. All this is pictured for us in this "upper room." It was a large upper room, for there is nothing stingy about God's marvelous grace in Christ. It is truly large, abundant, overflowing. A large upper room, furnished and prepared. Prepared at Calvary, furnished with all the riches of God's grace. All the tremendous purposes and revelations of God deck this upper room with beauty, comfort, and delight.

There we feast in His presence, above the level of earth's things or earth's religions.

Here our Saviour was about to celebrate the Passover for the last time. As far as God was concerned, it ceased to be on that night in which He was betrayed. In its place came the Lord's supper.

The Passover recalled the blood of the lamb; the Lord's supper, the precious blood of Christ.

The Passover recalled the deliverance of one nation from the bondage of Egypt; the Lord's supper, the redemption from sin and the blessing of every soul that trusts in Christ.

In the Passover feast Israel remembered some *thing*; in the Lord's supper we remember some *One*. "This do in remembrance of *Me*."

The Passover was celebrated once a year; we remember our precious Lord in His death once a week.

Do *you* remember Him? In partaking of the cup and in the breaking of the bread, do *you* remember Him?

That dark night the light broke. The night of the Saviour's pain and woe was to be succeeded by the morning of the saint's redemption. All glory to His Name!

May the Lord be pleased to bless this book to its readers, for the glory of His great Name! Amen.