STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST

by Rc Foster

Foster's systematic study of the life of Jesus Christ as recorded in the four Gospels, providing a harmonized treatment of His birth, ministry, teaching, death, and resurrection.

137 Chapters

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0.4. Preface

Preface This work is an effort to offer a comprehensive study in the life of Christ. Book One introduces this study. Much light is thrown upon the teaching of Jesus and the events of His ministry from an intimate knowledge of contemporary events and conditions in Palestine, and the truth or falsity of the claims of Jesus rests largely upon the historical merit of the records of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Much information in this volume has been available for centuries in the original documents, such as the Apocrypha, Josephus, and extant writings of early Christian scholars, and it has been frequently collected by writers who are hostile to the explicit claims of Christ and the New Testament. These writers usually preface their attacks with claims to scientific accuracy and entire absence of prejudice and then they proceed to weave very cleverly into their narration of facts the threads of their skeptical theories, so that the ordinary reader is unaware that theory is being presented as fact and is unable to discriminate between them. An effort has been made to offer a brief and plain survey of the material in this whole field.

Many conservative works which specialize on certain critical problems have appeared in recent years and many older, conservative works which cover the general field are still available. Book One is meant to supplement the older works by a discussion of the more recent theories and problems. Special attention is called to the chapter on the Two-Source Theory. This theory bears the same relation to the modernists' interpretation of the New Testament that the documentary theory of the origin of the Pentateuch does to their interpretation of the Old Testament. It is a most surprising fact that conservative writers should have concentrated their attention upon the latter instead of the former theory. Some able conservative authors have replied to the documentary theory, but if anyone has published an effort to analyze and discredit the Two-Source Theory, I have failed to see it.

Book Two is an inspirational exposition of the Gospel narratives. It deals with the early period of Christ's life, including the Sermon on the Mount. No attempt has been made to discuss every detail in the Gospel narratives, but the study has been concentrated upon the great scenes and sermons which show the movement of the narrative and which reveal most significantly the person and program of Jesus. Careful consideration of the whole range of current, critical discussion underlies the work, but the objective has been to present such a portrayal of the life of Jesus as will assist the student of the Bible in living over again with our Christ the scenes supreme in human history.

Book Three is more like a commentary than the other volumes. Instead of presenting discussion of selected scenes and sermons it attempts to consider the content of the entire narratives from the Sermon on the Mount to the Triumphal Entry. Exegesis of the text is combined with discussion of critical problems and practical application.

Book Four treats in detail the final week, beginning with Christ's arrival at Bethany, and includes the resurrection and ascension.

Two appendices, “The Aramaic Background of the Gospel Narratives” and the “Chronological Outline of the Life of Christ,” are added helps for the Bible scholar. With a burning desire for a deeper understanding of the mysterious glory of our Lord, for obedience to His will, and for proclamation and defense of the Gospel, this volume is sent forth on its mission.

Chapter 2

002. Book One An Introduction to the Life of Christ

Book One An Introduction to the Life of Christ

003. Chapter 1 - Scriptural Sources

Chapter 1 - Scriptural Sources The life of Jesus of Nazareth is so deeply imbedded in the literature, institutions, and the whole life of the civilized world that it is rather puzzling to stop and analyze the sources of our exact information concerning our Lord. Every way we turn we meet some reminder: the calendar which marks the passing of time, the buildings that face us on street corners and country roads, and the soul-stirring productions in the realm of art and music. But whence comes our actual knowledge of what Jesus said and did when on earth? Whence our conception of what Jesus is and shall be? The modernist talks of Christian experience as the source of our knowledge of Jesus. And we do come to know Jesus in our hearts and lives. We treasure this intimate and precious fellowship. But, as a source of actual information, what of Christian experience? The whole case falls under the slightest examination. It is merely a subtle, underhand effort to discredit and discard the Bible.. The Gospel Narratives The most important and almost the sole source of information concerning Jesus is the Gospels. Two of these are by eyewitnesses — the apostles Matthew and John; two are by early disciples. Mark may have been an eyewitness; but it is not probable that Luke was. Early Christian writers state that Mark wrote his Gospel as Peter dictated. If this be true, then the second Gospel rests solidly upon the testimony of the apostle Peter. Luke specifically states that he interviewed carefully the available witnesses and traced the entire course of Jesus' life with the most painstaking accuracy. The procedure of Matthew and Luke is similar: they both tell of the birth of Jesus, but they differ widely in the details recorded. The first three Gospels are called the Synoptic Gospels because of the similarity in their accounts. "Synoptic" comes from the Greek synopsis (seen together) — they can be arranged loosely in parallel columns and viewed together. John's Gospel is different from the others in point of approach and general treatment.

One of the greatest marvels of these biographers is that they tell so little out of such a great mass of available material. John himself pauses to comment on this feature and explain the purpose of the selective process (John 20:30, John 20:31). Compare the size of the New Testament with the lives of Washington, Lincoln, Napoleon and other great men, and witness anew the divine inspiration that controlled and produced the unique conciseness of the Scriptures. The greatest scenes and events in the life of Christ are repeated in the various Gospels, for none could claim to present a life of Christ and omit these. But each Gospel is thronged with scenes and intimate touches which are not recorded in the others. The Old Testament A second source of information concerning Jesus is the Old Testament. It does not so much offer new facts about Jesus as new light on the facts set forth in the Gospels. Every new angle of vision adds to the sum total of our conception of an object. The Statue of Liberty looks different and creates a new impression when we view it coming back into New York harbor. The death of Jesus creates a new impression in the soul of the Christian when he views it from the vantage-ground of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. Many of the scenes in the life of Christ could scarcely be understood without some of the prophecies of the Old Testament. It is not surprising that the Jews were so slow to believe when we remember they did not understand the real significance of much of the Old Testament. The

very personality of Jesus takes on a new grandeur and glory when we walk in company with the inspired historians, poets, philosophers, and prophets of ancient Israel. In the Book of Matthew alone there are more than forty quotations from the Old Testament cited to help the reader understand the unparalleled record he presents. Some striking examples are: the nature of Jesus' birth — of a virgin; the place of Jesus' birth — in Bethlehem; the home of Jesus in His youth — in Galilee; various details of the death of Jesus — soldiers casting lots over His garments; refraining from breaking His legs when they hastened the death of the robbers; piercing His side with a spear; and various other details. The Book of Acts

Another document which throws light upon the life of Christ is the Book of Acts. It is somewhat surprising that it so seldom refers to the life of Christ; but the author holds strictly to his subject: the acts of the apostles — the history of the founding and development of the early church. Even in the great sermons he summarily records, he passes over presentations of the life of Jesus. For the Gospels have already adequately set forth the life and personality of the Christ. In his summary of Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost he condenses into three verses what must have been the main body of his discourse: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves know: him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God raised up" (Acts 2:22-24). Peter's second sermon is summarized in the same sweeping fashion, Acts 3:13-18 indicating that the great emphasis was on the death and resurrection as related to the guilt of his hearers and to Old Testament prophecy. In Stephen's sermon the reference to Jesus' life is limited to one-half of verse Acts 7:52, but this probably means that the sermon he meant to preach was interrupted by his hearers as they rushed upon him in murderous rage. Philip "preached unto him Jesus," but what the details of his presentation to the eunuch were, we do not know. Luke holds himself strictly to his task of giving a history of the early church, since he has already written his biography of Jesus. Peter's sermon at the home of Cornelius presents Jesus' life in Acts 10:38-43 : "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all possessed with the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: him God raised up." Peter must have presented the life of Christ in great detail to this Gentile audience, and Paul evidently did the same in his sermons at Antioch and Athens, but the report of this part of the message is exceedingly brief.

New Material in Acts Does the Book of Acts present any new information about Jesus, any details not found in the Gospels? In two chapters, actual additions are made to our knowledge of the life of Christ. In the first chapter we learn of these events: 1. That as Jesus ascended "a cloud received him out of their sight" — a graphic touch which is not found in the Gospels. 2. That two angels appeared to the apostles gazing steadfastly into heaven, and predicted His return. 3. The fact that the appearances of Jesus covered a period of forty days. 4. Details of the final conversation of Jesus, which enable us to identify absolutely the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5) and give us the Great Commission in somewhat different form. In the twentieth chapter, Luke records the touching farewell of Paul to the elders of Ephesus, which closes with one of the most precious sayings of Jesus: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." No other book of the Bible records this wonderful word of our Master. The Epistles of Paul A further source of information

concerning Jesus is found in the Epistles of the New Testament. This source ranks second in importance to the Gospels, because of the tremendous discussions of His personality. There is the same restraint here as in Acts concerning a restatement of the life of Jesus. Paul was not an eyewitness of the ministry of Jesus as the other apostles had been. But this does not mean he was lacking in information. He explicitly affirms his knowledge and its divine source (Galatians 1:11, Galatians 1:13). The quotation in Acts 20:35 indicates the range of his information was not limited to that which was finally recorded in the Gospels. But Paul does not attempt to retell the life of Christ, because he is writing to those who are already familiar with these details, having heard it from him by word of mouth (1 Corinthians 15:1). Moreover, he is writing to meet specific problems which have arisen in the churches. These two reasons parallel those seen in the reticence of Acts. The Epistles of Paul do make frequent, though brief, references to the life of Christ. But these references are introduced to establish or illustrate his argument, just as the first chapter of Acts introduces such features of the ascension scene as will properly introduce the day of Pentecost — Luke's first great theme.

Some of the incidental references to the life of Christ in the Epistles of Paul are as follows:

1. Most significant is the account of the institution of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20-26). It is here alone that we have recorded the explicit declaration of Jesus that He expects frequency of observance: "This do in remembrance of me" as oft as ye drink it" as often as ye eat this bread." This is a most important addition to our knowledge. The whole passage is full of interest and of great value.

2. The ancestry of Jesus is set forth — "born of the seed of David" (Romans 1:3).

3. The character of Jesus is suggested — "Jesus meek and gentle" (2 Corinthians 10:1).

4. The preaching ministry of Jesus is cited (Galatians 1:9; Romans 15:8).

5. The mission of the apostles (Galatians 2:8; 1 Corinthians 1:14).

6. Jesus' poverty (2 Corinthians 8:9).

7. The sinlessness of Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:21).

8. His death on the cross (Romans 4:25; Romans 5:6, Romans 5:10).

9.The resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1, 1 Corinthians 15:8). This last is most important since it is the only record of the appearance to James and to the five hundred. In addition to these incidental references to the earthly ministry of Jesus, the Epistles of Paul offer some tremendous discussions of the personality of our Lord (Colossians 1:15-22, Php 2:6-11, etc.), which explain His relationship to God, to the work of creation, to the present universe, to man, and to the church. These discussions have the utmost value in the study of the life of Christ.

Hebrews The Epistle to the Hebrews contains a number of references to the life of Jesus: Hebrews 13:12, "Wherefore, Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate," makes absolutely clear that Golgotha was located outside the city wall. John 19:17 and Mark 15:20, Mark 15:21 intimate this, but Hebrews plainly asserts it. The present location of the "Church of the Holy Sepulchre," which rests upon Catholic tradition and is within the

city walls, is evidently not the proper site, since it is a plain contradiction of Hebrews 13:12. The Epistle to the Hebrews also offers a most touching picture of the sufferings of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, and affirms strongly the sinlessness of Jesus (Hebrews 4:14, Hebrews 4:15; Hebrews 5:7).

Epistles of Peter The First Epistle of Peter is famous for its reference to the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, in which the puzzling reference is made to His “preaching to the spirits in prison” (1 Peter 3:18-20). This obscure passage had an important influence on early Christian literature and art. Since the time of Martin Luther many scholars interpret the passage as referring not to any preaching by Jesus, but by Noah. Moffatt, by a slight emendation of the text (adding the Greek letter ch), would make it refer to preaching of Enoch. But there is no textual evidence to justify such a change. Moffatt’s arbitrary emendation of the text leaves it disconnected. The passage discusses in turn the death and resurrection of Jesus. Placed between the discussion of His death and His resurrection, the reference is to the time Christ spent in Paradise and in appearing to the disciples. There is no reference to Noah until 1 Peter 3:20, and it seems unjustifiable to make the statement in 1 Peter 3:19 refer to him. We know that Jesus talked with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration concerning His approaching death (exodus) in Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). This shows that the saints in Paradise were tremendously interested in the divine drama unfolding. It would have been natural for the saints to have been interested intensely in hearing Jesus tell of the redemption which had been achieved by His death. If the lost in Tartarus heard across the impassable gulf, even as when the rich man talked to Abraham, then they would have heard what Jesus declared in Paradise (Luke 16:23-31). The disobedient in the days of Noah appear to have been mentioned by Peter because he wanted to introduce the ark as a figure of baptism in his discussion. The Greek word used for “preached” here is not euangelidzo (to proclaim good tidings) but kerusso (to proclaim). Jesus had no good tidings to proclaim to the lost. The message He gave to them was the same kind of message that Abraham gave to the rich man (Luke 16:24-31). The Second Epistle of Peter contains our only testimony by an eyewitness to the great scene of the transfiguration: “We were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there was borne such a voice to him by the Majestic Glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: and this voice we ourselves heard borne out of heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount” (2 Peter 1:16-18). The Book of Revelation, in its towering and mysterious discussions of the Messianic character of Jesus and His second coming, adds no new facts, but leaves an abiding impression of the majesty of Him who is the “Alpha and the Omega.”

004. Chapter 2 - Pagan Sources: The Roman Historians

Chapter 2 - Pagan Sources: The Roman Historians The scanty mention which the world-famous authors and historians of the early Christian era make of the greatest figure in human history is characteristic of the way in which “the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not.” Jesus sought not the praise of men, but the will of God. The worldly-minded scorned His way of life. He avoided the spectacular. He did not use His power for self-aggrandizement in the earthly sense. And so the historians of the day passed Him by as insignificant. “Hath not God made foolish the way of this world?” Verily “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things to confound the mighty.” But “the foolishness of preaching” began to “turn the world upside down,” and the historians were compelled to notice the fact of Christianity, and explain its nature and origin, even though with a gesture of scorn. The extant writings of the Roman historians of the first century are very fragmentary. Only from the pens of Tacitus and Suetonius are there any considerable remains. But even if our possession were abundant instead of scanty, it is doubtful if it would yield extensive references to Jesus of Nazareth, a citizen of a remote province of the empire, a popular leader among a turbulent people, whose brief and tragic life was spent among the poor and unfortunate, and who was repudiated and slain by His own people. In such fashion would a Roman historian of the first century scorn the reports which came to him of Jesus. From Rome it would be natural to sweep aside the accounts of the miracles of Jesus as part of the current frauds. “Can any good come out of Nazareth?” would state the case against Jesus, a member of the hated race of Jews.

Tacitus

One of the most noted of Roman historians is Publius Cornelius Tacitus (a.d. 55?-117?). In his Annales — written in the early years of the second century, he describes the burning of Rome in a.d. 64, tells how Nero was accused of having started the fire, and says, “In order to suppress the rumor, Nero falsely accused and punished, with the most acute tortures, persons who, already hated for their shameful deeds, were commonly called Christians. The founder of that name, Christus, had been put to death by the procurator, Pontius Pilate, in the reign of Tiberius; but the deadly superstition, though repressed for a time, broke out again, not only through Judaea where this evil had its origin, but also through the city (Rome) whither all things horrible and vile flow from all quarters, and are encouraged. Accordingly, first those were arrested who confessed, then on their own information a great multitude were convicted, not so much of the crime of incendiarism as of hatred of the human race” (Annales 15:44). The strength of the prejudice of Tacitus against the Christians, as well as his lack of accurate information, is witnessed in this paragraph: “their shameful deeds,” “the deadly superstition,” “hatred of the human race.” So speaks the supercilious Roman. But his clear-cut testimony as to the death of Jesus in Judaea, under Pontius Pilate, has value he little dreamed when he wrote.

It may be an occasion for amazement how Tacitus, a capable historian, could possibly have lived in the same city with thousands of Christians and yet have been so ignorant of their noble

character as to have accused them of “shameful deeds” and have regarded them as being an important part of “all things horrible and vile” that infested Rome. We need to remind ourselves of what happens to the church because of “hypocrites in the church.” It would not require many instances such as the case of incest at Corinth to bring the church into disrepute among those seeking some evidence against the Christians. Paul describes the dreadful sin of incest in the strongest language: “Such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles” (1 Corinthians 5:1). Both the pride of Tacitus and his regard for his social standing and personal safety would have been obstacles in the way of an approach to Christians to secure firsthand information. Some Roman friend may have reported to him what he had heard in a secret meeting of the Christians which he had attended. If the preacher had strongly condemned current sins, the perverse and unrepentant Roman may have regarded this as an effort to deprive mankind of his cherished pleasures, and this may have led to the charge that the Christians were guilty of “hatred of the human race.” Although Tacitus says the Christians were horribly wicked people, he does not specify any crime except this charge that they were guilty of the crime of hating the human race. How strange a charge against those who preached the gospel of God’s love and man’s redemption from sin by the death of Christ! And yet an unrepentant pagan might have been perverse enough to spread abroad such a charge after he had heard a Christian preacher proclaim the doctrine of hell.

Suetonius

Suetonius (a.d. 65-135), a Roman historian of less ability, but contemporary with Tacitus, also gives important testimony. He tells of a Messianic movement during the reign of Claudius (a.d. 41-54). In his Lives of the Twelve Caesars (Claudius 25), he says: “He (Claudius) expelled from Rome the Jews because they were constantly raising a tumult at the instigation of Chrestus.” Acts 18:2 tells of Aquila and Priscilla coming from Italy “because of the decree of Claudius that all Jews should leave Rome.” The two statements agree as to the expulsion of the Jews. This seems to have occurred in a.d. 49. In other words, this evidence proves that within twenty years after the death of Jesus a strong movement of His followers was in evidence in Rome. Graetz holds that “Chrestus” does not mean Christ, but the name of a Christian teacher. Some radical scholars hold that “Chrestus” refers to some unknown Jewish Messiah in the city of Rome. Bousset and Klausner show that this is untenable since it is without historical support. The Jews in Rome evidently were torn by dissension over the preaching of the gospel of Jesus. Suetonius makes the mistake of supposing that the Messianic figure responsible for the commotion and expulsion was actually present in Rome at the time. He doubtless spelled the name “Chrestus” because of confusing “Christus” with the Greek adjective “Chrestos.”

Suetonius was not nearly so good a historian as Tacitus, but his mistake in supposing that Christ was in Rome at the time stirring up trouble among the Jews may have a comparatively simple explanation. Being without firsthand information just as Tacitus was, and for the same reasons, Suetonius could have heard the report of some Roman friend who told him: “I was once in one of their underground meetings. One of their number arose and affirmed that Christ was in the midst. I did not see this person they call the Christ. No one pointed Him out to me. But this speaker said that Christ was always in the midst even if only two or three were gathered together in His name. Several other speakers said the same thing. Evidently this person they call Christ is keeping under cover, but is visiting all of the meetings.”

Pliny

Pliny the Younger, Roman author and orator (a.d. 62?-114?), governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor about a.d. 112, wrote to the Roman emperor, Trajan, asking advice as to what he should do with the Christians in his province. He gives a valuable picture of the Christians in the opening of the second century. The most significant statement from his letter follows: “They affirmed that the sum of their guilt or error was to assemble on a fixed day before daybreak, and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to God, and to bind themselves with an oath not to enter into any wickedness, or to commit thefts, robberies or adulteries, or falsify their work or repudiate trusts committed to them: when these things were ended, it was their custom to depart, and, on coming together again, to take food, men and women together, yet innocently.”

Lucian

Lucian (a.d. 125?-180?), rhetorician, lecturer, author, master of wit and biting sarcasm — Mark Twain of his day — says that the founder of the Christian religion was a man who had been fixed to a stake in Palestine, and was still worshiped because he had established a new code of morals.

Value of the Testimony And what is the value of this scanty evidence — casual statements of famous men of the Roman world? Just this: it establishes absolutely Jesus of Nazareth as a historical figure. This evidence is not necessary to one who accepts the Bible as historically true. But a school of radical critics has arisen who insist on calling themselves “Christians,” but who deny that such a man as Jesus ever lived. The question has been hotly debated in Holland, Germany, England, and in radical educational institutions in America.

Professor Macintosh, of the Yale School of Religion, published in 1926 a book entitled, The Reasonableness of Christianity, in which he argues at great length that “Belief in the historicity of Jesus is not indispensable, logically, to the exercise of an essentially Christian faith or to the living of an essentially Christian life” (pp. 138-139). In other words, if Jesus never lived at all, we could still maintain “Christian faith.” His argument brilliantly illustrates “The Unreasonableness of the Modernist.” The Jews have likewise leaped at the chance to join hands with these modernists in denying that Jesus ever lived. Moffatt, in his Everyman’s Life of Christ, says: “An American rabbi spoke the other day of Jesus as a ‘man whose very existence is denied by many Gentile scholars.” Rabbi Wise raised a raging storm among his learned Jewish friends when he declared that he could no longer hold to the view that Jesus had never lived. A heated discussion followed over the orthodox Jewish view that such a person as Jesus never lived. Like arrows shot at random, but leaping to an unseen mark, the casual and contemptuous references of these hostile Roman writers to Jesus and His followers pierce the shallow skepticism and stupid prejudice of this modernistic denial of the existence of Jesus.

Although Tacitus and Suetonius wrote some seventy-five years after Jesus’ death, they must have had access to many earlier documents, and their discussion of the Christians, who run in unbroken current straight back to Jesus, furnishes the evidence that Christ lived in Palestine in the reign of Tiberius, and that He was executed by Pontius Pilate; that a great movement of His followers grew up which spread with power even to Rome within two decades; that His followers worshiped Him “as a God”; that they maintained regular meetings and faithful adherence to His teachings, which include high moral standards; that they were so devoted to their Christ that they would endure

torture and death rather than disown Him and their faith.

005. Chapter 3 - Jewish Sources: Josephus and the Talmud

Chapter 3 - Jewish Sources: Josephus and the Talmud

Philo

Philo, the great Jewish philosopher of Alexandria, was a contemporary of Jesus, but makes no mention of Him. This is not surprising, considering his residence outside of Palestine and his exclusive devotion to philosophy.

Josephus

Josephus (a.d. 37?-100?), the famous Jewish historian, was reared in Jerusalem during the stirring days of the rise of the Christian church. In his greatest work, Jewish Antiquities, he gives the history of the Jews from its beginning to the Jewish War (a.d. 66). We should expect a full account of Jesus in this history. But Josephus was moved by the common Jewish prejudice against the Christians, which was especially bitter after the fall of Jerusalem, when he wrote. Moreover, he wrote during the reign of Domitian, when the Jews were being violently persecuted; he was attempting to write for Roman readers an apology of the Jewish people, and would not desire to mention the Christians who were so despised by the Romans. He shows a labored attempt to avoid treatment of the Messianic ideas and movements of the Jews, a political topic likely to bring disfavor. The Reference to John the Baptist The following paragraph from the Antiquities gives his summary of John's ministry: "Now, some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and that very justly, as a punishment for what he did against John, who was called the Baptist. For Herod had put him to death, though he was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to justice toward one another, and piety toward God, and so to come to baptism for baptism would be acceptable to God if they made use of it, not in order to expiate some sins, but for the purification of the body, provided that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness. Now, as many flocked to him, for they were greatly moved by hearing his words, Herod, fearing that the great influence John had over the people might lead to some rebellion (for the people seemed likely to do anything he should advise), thought it far best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause, and not bring himself into difficulties by sparing a man who might make him repent of his leniency when it should be too late. Accordingly, he was sent a prisoner, in consequence of Herod's suspicious temper, to Machaerus, and was there put to death" (XVIII. 5:2). The evident conflict of this account with the New Testament, in some particulars, shows it could not be an interpolation. The description of John as "a good man" is evidently written in terms Roman readers might understand. His assertion that baptism was for "purification of the body" shows how far he had missed the significance of this rite. He deliberately avoids mentioning John's prediction of the coming of the Messiah, and hence leaves unexplained the excitement of the multitudes at which he hints. He matches this by emphasizing the political zeal of Herod for Roman authority and good government as his reason for killing John, and by omitting the personal reasons. The Disputed Reference to Christ The first reference of the Antiquities to Jesus has been discarded by many

scholars as a Christian interpolation. It is defended notably by Home. Joseph Klausner, the learned Jew of Jerusalem, who has published a very radical life of Christ entitled Jesus of Nazareth, holds that the passage in the main is genuine, but that the italicized parts are Christian interpolations: “Now there was about this time (i.e., about the time of the rising against Pilate, who wished to extract money from the temple for the purpose of bringing water to Jerusalem from a distant spring), Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call Him a man. For He was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men, as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to Him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was the Messiah, and when Pilate at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned Him to the cross, those who loved Him at the first ceased not (so to do), for He appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning Him, and the race of Christians so named from Him, is not extinct even now.” The whole passage is doubtful, for it is not likely that a Jew who rejected Jesus would write such declarations. All extant manuscripts of Josephus contain it, but Origen (a.d. 185-254) states that Josephus did not believe that Jesus was the Christ, which would seem to indicate that the above passage was not in the manuscripts of the Antiquities, with which Origen was familiar. Eusebius, the church historian of the fourth century, quotes the passage. The Undisputed

Concerning the second reference of Josephus to Jesus, there can be no doubt as to the genuineness. He tells how Annas, the high priest, seized the opportunity given by the death of the procurator Festus, and before the arrival of Albinus, his successor, brought before the Sanhedrin a man by the name of “James, the brother of Jesus who was called the Christ,” and, with others, had him stoned to death. Some of the Jews lodged complaint against Annas for this illegal act, and he was deposed by Agrippa II and Albinus. This passage bears no evidence of Christian influence. The phrase, “who was called the Christ,” sounds like a prejudiced Pharisee, and not a Christian. The attempt is made to clear the more faithful supporters of the law from the blame for the summary execution of James. No attempt is made to exalt Jesus or defend James from the charge of being a breaker of the law, hence the whole temper of the passage fits with Josephus as the author. Hegesippus, early Christian writer, tells a variant account of the death of James, how he was thrown from the roof of the temple, stoned, and finally killed by a fuller with his felting-stick, and that Vespasian laid siege to Jerusalem immediately after this. Origen appears to combine the two accounts in referring to the death of James. But the almost unanimous opinion of critics is that the Josephus passage is genuine. It substantiates clearly the passing references of the Roman writers to Jesus. The Talmud A further Jewish source which has but slight value consists of occasional references to Jesus in the Talmud and Midrash. Talmud means “instruction” or “doctrine.” It is the civil and canonical law of the Jews, consisting of the Mishna (text) and the Gamara (commentary). The Mishna is the collection of endless oral traditions which the scribes had woven about the Old Testament law. The Gamara is the explanation and interpretation of these traditions. The Midrash is the imaginative development and exposition of the Old Testament Scriptures, abounding in all sorts of stories added to the Old Testament accounts in some such fashion as the Apocryphal Gospels. Edersheim says of the Talmud: “If we imagine something combining law reports, a Rabbinical Hansard, and notes of a theological debating club, all thoroughly Oriental, full of digressions, anecdotes, quaint sayings, fancies, legends, and too often of what, from its profanity, superstition and even obscenity, could scarcely be quoted, we may form some general idea of what the Talmud is.” The Mishna dates back to the close of the second

century of the Christian era. The Gamara is some centuries later.

Even Klausner, who gives a most detailed study of Talmud sources in his Jesus of Nazareth, admits that the references to Jesus “have little historical value, since they partake rather of vituperation and polemic against the founder of a hated party, than of objective accounts of historical value. All the noble qualities of Jesus which the disciples had found in Him were twisted into defects, and all the miracles attributed to Him into horrible and unseemly marvels.” “They are deliberately intended to contradict events recorded in the Gospels; the selfsame facts are perverted into bad and blamable acts. For example, the Gospels say that Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit, and not of a human father; the Talmud stories assert that Jesus was indeed born without a father, yet not of the Holy Spirit, but as the result of an irregular union. The Gospels say that He performed signs and wonders through the Holy Spirit and the power of God; the Talmud stories allow He did indeed work signs and wonders, but by means of magic.” So says Klausner, world-famous student of the Talmud, and himself a radical Jew (Jesus of Nazareth, p 19). Its Slanderous Attacks

Many of the references are unbelievably coarse and vulgar — simply unquotable. Others are so silly that they make no sense at all. Often the references to Jesus are not by name, but by use of some subtly insulting epithet such as “Son of the Stake,” “That Man,” “Such-a-One,” “The One Hung,” “The Fool.” Klausner quotes and sifts the Talmudic stories that Jesus was born of the illegitimate union of Mary with a Roman soldier named “Panther” and decides the whole thing an invention, “Panther” being a corrupt travesty of the Greek parthenos (virgin). The Christians called Jesus by the name “Son of the Virgin”; so, in mockery, they (the Jews) called Him “Ben-ha-Pantera”; i.e., son of the leopard. From this beginning the vulgar legend arose that Pantera was the name of a man — a Roman soldier. In like fashion, they wove legends about His stay in Egypt; that He practiced sorcery there, was a “worshiper of a brick” (whatever that might mean), etc. A characteristic Baraita from the Talmud is as follows: “On the eve of the Passover, they hanged Yeshu (of Nazareth), and the herald went before him for forty days, saying, ‘Yeshu of Nazareth is going forth to be stoned in that he practiced sorcery and beguiled and led astray Israel. led every one knowing aught in his defense come and plead for him.’ But they found naught in his defense, and hanged him on the eve of Passover.” Klausner attaches some importance to the chronological statement “on the eve of the Passover,” but sweeps aside the “forty day” trial of Jesus as an invention of the later Jews. It was intended to offset the hasty, farcical trial by which Jesus was condemned. The Talmud offers the climax of vituperation by saying Jesus would be condemned in eternity to be thrown into boiling filth (Jesus of Nazareth, pp 25-27). The Evidence Sifted

What is the sum total of all these insulting and ridiculous references to Jesus in the Talmud? On the one hand, they are utterly unable to displace or shake the details of the Gospel records. Although written to deny the Gospel accounts, they destroy themselves as accurate history by the poisonous venom with which they are filled. Klausner tries desperately to use them to discredit the Gospels. With a great show of fairness, he sets aside the Talmudic stories as mere legends of hate, then subtly attempts to swap off the Gospels in the balance. The undercurrent seems to be: If he, a Jew, is willing to admit as a myth the story of Mary and “Panther,” and the illegitimate birth of Jesus, the Christian should likewise set aside Matthew and Luke and the virgin birth and agree with him in saying Jesus was simply the son of Joseph and Mary. He likewise attempts to sift the

Talmud accounts, and tries to make out a case for the Jews by affirming that the earlier stories are milder and more kindly toward Jesus, and that only after the Christians began to persecute the Jews so furiously do the venomous stories of the Talmud come in. But he fails to make a convincing argument in either case. The Gospel records shine out with a clear, heaven-born light that can not be dimmed. And the attempt to show that the early attitude of the Jewish leaders was kindly toward Jesus fails in the presence of the crucifixion of Christ, and the whole current of early Christian literature. The fact that the Jewish rabbis from the close of the first century on down have attempted so many attacks upon Jesus helps to prove the reality of His earthly life. Here is another hostile group of writers joining unconsciously with the Roman writers in their contemptuous references to Jesus, and bearing witness in spite of themselves to the historic character — Jesus of Nazareth.

006. Chapter 4 - The Catacombs

Chapter 4 - The Catacombs The word “catacomb” comes from the Greek kata (down) and kymbe (hollow). The catacombs of Rome were vast quarries and underground passages where the early Christians buried their dead and took refuge when persecuted. Christian abhorrence of cremation, which was practiced by the lower classes of Romans, led to burial in cemeteries which were the property of wealthy members, or purchased for the purpose. Where the rock was easily worked, underground quarries for burial purposes developed. Such catacombs have been discovered in Crimea, Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt, Cyrenaica, Malta, Sicily, and Italy. The catacombs of Rome are by far the most important.

Origin and Nature The old theory of the origin of these catacombs was that they were sand pits or rock excavations by the Romans, which were appropriated by Christians for burial and refuge. But the archaeologists Marchi and De Rossi exploded this theory and proved that they were dug by the Christians themselves. Some wealthy Christian would start a small catacomb for the members of his family, which was gradually developed and extended to accommodate a multitude. The small galleries, at first, had loculi running out in various directions, some of which were large enough for a group of bodies; others were made for some distinguished person alone, often some martyr. Gradually a confusing maze of galleries running in all directions was excavated. The galleries were arranged on floors, sometimes four or five, connected with staircases. When the fierce persecutions arose, the Christians began to take refuge in the catacombs. Burial places had the right of asylum by law, and, when the churches were closed in the city, the Christians met here underground. About the middle of the third century the persecutors began to violate the catacombs, and the Christians then destroyed the old entrances and dug new and secret ones. The persecutions ceased with Constantine, and Bishop Damascus restored the catacombs to something of their original character. Through the fourth century the Christians still buried their dead here from the desire to rest beside the martyrs. The Pictures and Inscriptions

There are about sixty of these catacombs, all outside the city walls. They came to be connected and interwoven with all sorts of secret passages. It is estimated that more than 174,000 Christians have been buried here. De Rossi estimated that originally as many as one hundred thousand inscriptions were carved on the walls. Some fifteen thousand have been discovered. Wilpert has deciphered over ten thousand. The chambers where the most distinguished were buried bear pictures, inscriptions, decorative works of various kinds. We get here our first picture of early Christian art. The burial chambers of the common people were left undecorated, and the earlier burials bore the simpler inscriptions — the name, or the simple epitaph: “In Christ.” The symbolic pictures cover some 132 themes — twenty of these come from the first century, and three are Biblical: “Daniel in the Lions’ Den,” “Noah,” and “The Good Shepherd.” The great appeal which Daniel and Noah, or the protecting care of Jesus as the good Shepherd, made to Christians dying in the arena by wild beasts or crucifixion or fire is evidenced by these catacomb pictures. In the second century a great many pictures refer to Christ in some fashion. We see the Wise-men presenting gifts to the infant Jesus, Jesus healing the paralytic, Jesus and the woman with the

issue of blood, Jesus breaking bread in the upper room, the feeding of the five thousand, the last judgment, the resurrection, the life of the blessed in eternity. The catacomb evidence has been the subject of much controversy. De Rossi tried to use the inscriptions and pictures to establish the teachings and claims of the Roman Catholic Church. He was vigorously answered by the archaeologist Schultre. Various attempts have been made by pedobaptists to use the catacomb pictures as proof that the original action was sprinkling or pouring. But the very fact that the catacomb pictures are filled with heathen figures and conceptions intermingled with the Christian, shows that the simple faith had already begun to be corrupted, and that too much weight can not be attached to pictures which combine the Good Shepherd with flying genii, heads of the seasons, doves, peacocks, vases, fruits and flowers.

Evidence on Baptism

Dr. Bennett, a Methodist author, in his work on “Archaeology” shows that a heathen god is in the only picture of early Christian art where pouring is used for baptism. Dean Stanley says: “It is astonishing how many of these decorations are taken from heathen sources and copied from heathen paintings. There is Orpheus playing on his harp to the beasts; there is Bacchus as the god of the vintage; there is Psyche, the butterfly of the soul; there is the Jordan as the god of the river. The classical and the Christian, the Hebrew and the Hellenic elements had not yet parted. The strict demarcation, which the books of the period would imply between the Christian church and the heathen world, had not yet been formed, or was constantly effaced. The catacombs have more affinity with the chapel of Alexander Severus, which contained Orpheus side by side with Abraham and Christ, than they have with the writings of Tertullian, who spoke of heathen poets, only to exult in their future torments, or of Augustine, who regarded this very figure of Orpheus only as a mischievous teacher to be disparaged, not as a type of the two forms of heathen and Christian civilization. It agrees with the fact that the funeral inscriptions are often addressed dis manibus: “to the funeral spirit” (Inst., p230; cf. J. T. Christian’s Immersion, pp. 146ff.). The catacomb pictures, with their conglomeration of the heathen and the Christian, reveal the tendency of the masses to combine and compromise — to drift back into the heathen conceptions from which they had been called forth. The sturdy Christian scholars of the early period protested against this tendency of the common people as they did against the Apocryphal Gospels, another product of the imagination of the masses, but these tendencies still persisted and led to the corruption of Christianity. But the fact that early Christian art of the third and later centuries combined heathen conceptions and figures with the Biblical does not destroy the fundamental testimony of the catacombs to the historic reality of Jesus and His followers in this early period. It is thrilling to witness carved here in the rock the testimony of the early Christians, some of whom had listened to the preaching of the apostle Paul in Rome, to their undying faith in Jesus their Lord and Saviour. Who can read the simple inscriptions of the first century, “In Christ,” and not be forced back anew to the Gospels to perceive the power of this Personality that could stir the ancient world through the fiery proclamations of His followers, and bring together even here in Rome such a multitude of followers? Although their faith, as witnessed on the walls of the catacombs, was imperfect, and at times confused, the modernists will have to chisel off these pathetic and challenging inscriptions before they can ever convince the world that Jesus of Nazareth is a myth.

007. Chapter 5 - The Apocryphal Gospels

Chapter 5 - The Apocryphal Gospels A second source of the life of Christ, Christian and extra-Biblical, is the Apocryphal or Spurious Gospels. These, like the pictures of the catacombs, emanate from the common people and represent the ideas afloat among the masses. The word “apocryphal” meant originally “hidden.” These were hidden Gospels in the sense that their origin and authorship were unknown. But “apocryphal” came to mean “false,” expressive of the rejection by the church of these “Gospels,” which are so full of legendary material. Many scholars attempt to divide these Gospels into “The Uncanonical or Discarded Gospels” and the “Rejected or Apocryphal Gospels.” They agree that the latter have practically no value, and differ as to the value attaching to the former.

Gospel According to the Hebrews The most important of the “Uncanonical Gospels” is the “Gospel According to the Hebrews.” Papias (a.d. 60?-140?) says that Matthew composed his Gospel in the Hebrew dialect. Some identify the “Gospel According to the Hebrews” with the Hebrew edition of Matthew’s Gospel. Resch holds it was compiled from Matthew, and has, therefore, but little independent value. Harnack thinks it was composed independently about the same time as John’s Gospel. Moffatt calls it “one of the problems and enigmas of early Christian literature.” Needless to say, we possess no copy of this “Gospel According to the Hebrews.” It is known to us only through quotation by early Christian writers from the second century on. The most interesting quotations from the “Gospel According to the Hebrews” follow. They are so evidently at variance with the New Testament records that comment as to their legendary character is hardly necessary in this brief sketch:

“Behold, the Lord’s mother and brothers said to him, ‘John the Baptist is baptizing for the remission of sins: let us go and be baptized by him.’ But he said to them, ‘What sin have I done that I should go and be baptized by him unless, perhaps, what I have now said is ignorance?’

“It came to pass when the Lord had ascended out of the water, the whole fountain of the Holy Spirit came down and rested upon him, and said to him, ‘My Son, in all the prophets I was looking for thee, that thou shouldst come, and that I should rest in thee. For thou art my rest; thou art my first-born Son, who reignest to eternity.”

“The Holy Spirit, my mother, took me just now by one of my hairs, and carried me away to the great Mount Tabor.” (Evidently referring to the temptation.) The man with the withered hand says to Jesus (cf. Mark 3:1-6): “I was a builder seeking my living with my hands; I pray thee, Jesus, restore to me my health, that I may not basely beg my bread.” The following description is given of the appearance of the risen Christ to James: “The Lord, after handing over the linen cloth to the servant of the high priest, went to James and appeared to him; for James had sworn he would eat no bread from the hour at which the Lord had drunk the cup till he should see him rising again from those who are asleep. Bring, the Lord says, a table and bread….He took bread and blessed and broke it, and gave it to James the Just, and said to him, My brother, eat thy bread, for the Son of man is risen from those that are asleep.”

Other False Gospels

Another of the Apocryphal Gospels is the “Gospel According to the Egyptians,” of which we have a few unimportant quotations. It is cited by three writers. The Gnostics — one of the heretical sects of the early centuries — used this Gospel. It was probably written by them or taken up and colored by their heretical views. Recently in a tomb of a monk in Upper Egypt a fragment of the “Gospel of Peter” was discovered. The fragment begins with the trial of Jesus where Pilate is washing his hands, and closes with the Galilean scene of Peter going fishing. It also is heretical in color, and written up from the four Gospels sometime in the second century. Early Christian writers also make references to other Apocryphal Gospels — The Gospel of the Twelve, The Gospel of Bartholomew, The Gospel of Andrew, The Gospel of Barnabas, and others of which we know but little. Their Foolish Inventions

Besides the above there is a group of Apocryphal Gospels, fanciful and utterly untrustworthy, which attempt to fill in the spaces in the life of Christ such as the period of His youth at Nazareth. These can be read in the ante-Nicene fathers in any first-class public library. As examples maybe cited the “Protevangelium of James,” a history of Mary from her birth to the flight into Egypt; the “Passing of Mary,” a story of the death and assumption of Mary; the “Gospel of Nicodemus,” an account in two parts — the “Acts of Pilate,” which is an elaboration of the trial of Jesus, and the “Descent into Hades,” which relates the scenes enacted when Jesus “preached to the spirits in prison.” The earliest of these productions date from the second century. They are the products of the romantic and misguided imagination of certain circles of early Christians. Jesus is represented as a miracle worker in His boyhood, performing the most monstrous things at play, even striking children dead that displeased Him. A most ridiculous group of legends is told about Mary. Hill says in his Introduction to the Life of Christ (p. 24): “When it is said that what the New Testament tells us about Jesus is mainly the invention of later days, we have only to turn to these rejected Gospels if we would know what the invention of later days would produce….If such things are what Christians of the second century would invent, when they tried their imagination upon the life of Christ, we may rest assured that the story told in the four Gospels is not of their invention.” These Apocryphal Gospels are of great importance, however, in understanding the development of Christian art which is based so largely upon them, and also the development of the worship of Mary and various other teachings in the Roman Catholic Church.

008. Chapter 6 - The Early Christian Writers

Chapter 6 - The Early Christian Writers When we turn from the Apocryphal Gospels to the “Apostolic Fathers” and the succeeding early Christian writers, we pass from the realm of ignorant and unrestrained imagination to that of faith and learning. The earliest of these writers were Justin Martyr, Papias, Polycarp, Clement of Rome and Barnabas.

Justin Martyr

Justin Martyr wrote his Apology to the Emperor, Antoninus Pius, and one to the Roman Senate, and his Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew, sometime between a.d. 135-145.

Polycarp

Polycarp (a.d. 50?-155) “was instructed by apostles,” “conversed with many who had seen Christ,” and for thirty years was a contemporary of the apostle John, who lived at Ephesus while Polycarp resided at Hierapolis. Of the various Epistles of Polycarp, only that to the Philippians is extant.

Papias

Papias (a.d. 70?-160?) was the companion of Polycarp and others of the second generation. He lived at Hierapolis. He wrote An Exposition of Oracles of the Lord in five books, but we know his work only through quotations, mainly by Eusebius.

Clement of Rome

Clement of Rome died in a.d. 101, and wrote his famous Epistle to the church at Corinth about a.d. 96. It is extant in two manuscripts and a Syriac translation. The Epistle of Barnabas was written at an uncertain date sometime between a.d. 70 and 132.

Ignatius and others might be cited here, but the above are the most important.

These early Christian scholars add but little to the information given in the New Testament. They stand in striking contrast to the writers of the Apocryphal Gospels, who attempt to add to the life of Christ in such reckless fashion.

Justin’s Additions

Justin Martyr says that Jesus was born in a cave near Bethlehem (this does not agree with Matthew 2:1; Luke 2:11), that in His youth at Nazareth He made yokes and plows, that when He was baptized “when he stepped into the water, a fire was kindled in the Jordan,” and that when He was being mocked by the Jews they set Him up on the judgment seat and mocked Him, saying: “Judge us.” The Agrapha The early writers also quote a few sayings which they attribute to Jesus, but which are not found in the four Gospels. These sayings are called “Agrapha,” “Unwritten Sayings.” Some of these are as follows: “He that wonders shall reign, and he that reigns shall rest.” “In whatsoever things I may find you, in these shall I also judge you.” “Never rejoice except

when ye have looked upon your brother in love." "They who wish to behold me and lay hold on my kingdom must receive me by affliction and suffering." "Ask for great things, and the small shall be added to you; ask for the heavenly things, and the earthly shall be added unto you." "Be approved money-changers, disapproving some things, but holding fast to that which is good." In connection with the Agrapha found in the writings of the apostolic fathers, mention should be made of those found in certain ancient manuscripts of the Gospels. The most important of these is found in Codex Bezae (D), a manuscript of the sixth century. It was found by Theodore Beza, and presented to the University of Cambridge in a.d. 1581. This is a valuable manuscript and it contains a number of interesting variations. Following Matthew 20:28, it inserts a paragraph which is closely akin to Luke 14:7-10. And at Luke 6:4 there is the following addition: "On the same day, having seen one working on the sabbath, he said to him, O man, if thou knowest what thou doest, thou art blessed, but if thou knowest not, thou art accursed and a transgressor of the law."

Oxyrhynchus Papyri An intensely interesting discovery of certain sayings attributed to Jesus was made by two archaeologists — Grenfell and Hunt — at Oxyrhynchus in Idwer Egypt, in 1897 and 1903. A broken and well-nigh illegible leaf of papyrus was first found containing some sayings, and later others were found on the back of a survey-list of real estate. The latter was in such bad condition that the reading had to be conjectured in many places. The broken papyrus leaf begins in the middle of a sentence and runs as follows: "...and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote that is in thy brother's eye." "Jesus saith, Except ye fast to the world, ye shall in nowise find the kingdom of God; and except ye keep the sabbath, ye shall not see the Father." "Jesus saith, I stood in the midst of the world, and in the flesh was I seen of them; and I found all men drunken, and none found I athirst among them; and my soul grieveth over the sons of men because they are blind in heart." "Jesus saith, Wherever there are,...and there is one,...alone, I am with him. Raise the stone, and there thou shalt find me; cleave the wood, and there am I." "Jesus saith, A prophet is not acceptable in his own country, neither does a physician work cures upon them that know him." "Jesus saith, A city built upon the top of a high hill and established can neither fall nor be hid." The survey-list contained the following: "These are the (wonderful) words which Jesus the living (Lord) spake to...and Thomas; and he said unto (them), Every one that hearkens to these words shall never taste of death." "Jesus saith, Let not him who seeks cease until he finds, and when he finds he shall be astonished, and astonished he shall reach the kingdom, and having reached the kingdom he shall rest." "Jesus saith (Ye ask? Who are those) that draw us (to the kingdom, if) the kingdom is in heaven?...The fowls of the air and all the beasts that are under the earth or upon the earth, and the fishes of the sea (these are they which draw) you, and the kingdom of heaven is within you, and whosoever shall know himself shall find it. (Strive therefore?) to know yourselves, and ye shall be aware that ye are the sons of the (Almighty?) (Father) (and) ye shall know that ye are in (the city of God?) and ye are (the city)." "Jesus saith, A man shall not hesitate...to ask...concerning his place (in the kingdom. Ye shall know) that many that are first shall be last, and the last first and (they shall have eternal life?)" "Jesus saith, Everything that is not before thy face, and that which is hidden from thee, shall be revealed to thee. For there is nothing hidden which shall not be made manifest, nor buried which shall not be raised." "His disciples question him, and say, How shall we fast and how shall we (pray?)?...and what (commandment) shall we keep?...Jesus with...do not...of truth...blessed is he."

Critical Estimates

Critics date these two groups of sayings in the first half of the second century. They appear to be a free quotation or development of sayings of Jesus in the New Testament. Some of them are plainly contradictory to the Gospels; for instance, the emphasis on keeping the Sabbath and on fasting. Of course, there is always the possibility that some traditions concerning Jesus and His teaching may have been handed down outside the four Gospels. But the evidence to the contrary is powerful. Scholars are generally agreed that the most of the Agrapha are not genuine. Many scholars like Wellhausen and Jülicher maintain that all of them are spurious. Resch published an edition of “Agrapha” in 1889, and reckoned that seventy-four of them were genuine. In 1906 he published a second edition, and held that thirty-six were genuine. Professor Ropes, of Harvard, reviewed Resch’s work and decided that twelve are authentic, but even these can be indirectly derived from the New Testament. He held that the evidence is insufficient to prove that there are in existence any sayings or facts about Christ which are not to be found in the New Testament or to be derived from it.

Klausner, with the perversity of unbelief, undertakes to hold that the Agrapha give a clearer insight into the teaching of Jesus in some cases than the Gospels, and prove that the sayings in point in the New Testament are inventions. Keim, on the other hand, says: “It is a significant fact that as far as can be discovered from these (apocryphal) Gospels, and from the untenable notices in the writings of the fathers, at the end of a hundred years after Christ, every independent and really valuable tradition concerning this life, outside of our Gospels, was extinguished, and that nothing more than a growing mass of fables runs, as a pretended supplement, by the side of the latter.” The survey of the entire field of sources of the life of Christ sends us back with renewed reverence to the New Testament. The scattering references of hostile writers establish Jesus as a historical figure, and are not able to shake the testimony of the Gospels as to details. The entire mass of early Christian literature is able to add practically nothing to what has already been recorded in marvelous fashion in the four Gospels. God has given us here an inspired and infallible account of the life of Jesus, and has seen to it that it remains practically our sole source of information.

009. Chapter 7 - The Historical Background

Chapter 7 - The Historical Background The New Testament makes no effort to present the current of general history of the times. It concentrates on the telling of the “good news” from heaven. Incidentally references to kings, countries, and customs are made, but only when they are absolutely essential to the account of the life of Christ or the history of the early church. The Old Testament furnishes much more numerous and extensive references to historical events. Since it is giving the account of the rise of a nation chosen of God, it must record battles, campaigns, the rise and fall of kings and nations and the various events interwoven with the life of Israel. But even this record is very fragmentary. It is fortunate that we have so much help in reconstructing the New Testament times from Greek and Roman historians. Josephus, in spite of his faults as a historian, is of inestimable value. One of the interesting developments of modern times has been the renewed study of the historical citations of the Old and New Testaments in the light of the records uncovered by archaeologists.

Early History A survey of the sweep of general history and a study of the political and religious conditions prevailing in Palestine during the time of Christ are most essential to the understanding of the New Testament. The civilization of the world appears to have arisen in the two river valleys, the Nile and the Euphrates. Much of ancient history, as it is pieced out from inscriptions, is concerned with the mortal combat between these rival countries. Israel was between the two, and in almost constant touch with both. Abraham, the founder of the race, came out of the Euphrates valley at the call of God. Moses, the redeemer and lawgiver, forsook the great civilization of Egypt in order to lead God’s people to the promised land. A period of exile in each of these valleys forced Israel to endure centuries of sojourn in Egypt and, at a much later period in the development of the nation, a shorter term of servitude in Babylonia.

Israel’s Foes When the promised land was conquered, Israel’s chief foes were the remnants of the Canaanitish tribes infesting and encircling the land. The Philistines to the southwest were especially troublesome. Later, Israel faced a rising Syrian nation to the north with Damascus as the capital. Assyria then became the dominating nation of the Euphrates valley, and finally destroyed the northern kingdom in the days of Shalmanezer (722 b.c, 2 Kings 17:3, 2 Kings 17:5). Nineveh succumbed to Babylon, and the latter captured Jerusalem and ended the southern kingdom (586 b.c., 2 Kings 25:2). The rise of Medo-Persia brought the end of Babylon and the return of the Jewish captives. A desperate duel between the civilizations of the East and West — Persia and Greece — which brought forth the Greek victories of Marathon, Thermopylae and Plataea and the preservation of the Western civilization, finally ended with the dominance of Macedonia and the world-wide conquests of Alexander the Great. The Maccabean Period The historical record of the Old Testament closes with the work of Ezra and Nehemiah in rebuilding Jerusalem. Between the Old and New Testaments there lies a gap of four centuries. The New Testament fits perfectly with the Old Testament, taking up the inspired record of the coming of the Messiah as the natural sequence to the closing predictions of the Old Testament as to His coming. But we have a strong interest in what happened in this intervening period.

Few Bible students can give a comprehensive summary of the events, characters, developments and literature of this period. But a knowledge of all this is certain to be of great profit in understanding the background of the New Testament. For instance, the student of the New Testament begins immediately to read of synagogues. When he turns back to the Old Testament to get some light on what a synagogue is and when and where it arose, he can secure no help, for no such thing is mentioned therein. He begins to read in the New Testament of Sadducees and Pharisees, and, when he searches the Old Testament for these sects to study their origin and character, he finds no help whatsoever, for they are not mentioned.

He reads in the Old Testament of the struggles of the Jewish nation against Philistine, Syrian, Assyrian, and Babylonian or Egyptian foes, and in its closing historical books he learns of the fall of Jerusalem, the captivity in Babylon, the experiences of the Jews there, the rise of Medo-Persia and the freeing of the captives and the return and restoration of Jerusalem and the temple. But in the New Testament he finds Judaea in the hands of the Romans and a dynasty of Herods firmly on the throne ruling the country by the consent and support of Rome. How did this take place? When did the Jews first come in contact with Rome? How did the Jews come to have a king again? Whence the Herods? The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, but we find the New Testament written in Greek. How did it happen that the Jewish people began the use of a foreign language? When did this occur? Greek names occur in the New Testament. Even two of the twelve apostles (Philip and Andrew) bear Greek names. How did such a strong Greek influence exert itself in Palestine?

These and a thousand other questions naturally arise as we begin an intelligent study of the New Testament. A brief, popular sketch of this period should assist in our approach to the life of Christ. The Apocrypha The first question is that of sources of information. How do we know what happened during this period of four hundred years? Where can we learn of this? Are our sources accurate and dependable? The chief source is a group of books written after the close of the Old Testament period which is called “The Apocrypha.” At the close of the New Testament period a similar group of writings arose which is called “Apocryphal Gospels.” Although these popular romances are entirely untrustworthy, portions of “The Apocrypha” have something more of a sober, historical character. This is especially true of the historical books which trace the political developments of these four centuries. Most large pulpit Bibles in Protestant churches will be found to contain the Apocrypha, because they are printed for general use, and the Roman Catholic Church has declared these books to be a part of the Bible. Neither the Jews nor the early Christians ever considered them a part of the Old Testament or New Testament, but the Roman Catholic Church, at the Council of Trent, in a.d. 1546, declared all the books of the Apocrypha to be canonical with the exception of the Prayer of Manasses and the two books of Esdras. The Apocrypha may be divided into the following groups of books: (1) Additions to various books of the Old Testament: Epistle of Jeremiah, Baruch, Prayer of Manasses, and additions to Daniel and Esther. (2) Continuation of canonical books: I Esdras and II Esdras. (3) Romances — as Tobit and Judith. (4) Books of Wisdom: The Wisdom of Solomon, and Ecclesiasticus (or the Wisdom of Jesus, the Son of Sirach). (5) Historical books: The Maccabees. In the Vulgate (Latin version of the Bible used by Roman Catholics) the Epistle of Jeremiah occurs as the sixth chapter of the Book of Baruch. It is a protest and warning against idolatry. Baruch is the name of the scribe of Jeremiah, and, although the authorship of the Epistle is unknown, the name of Baruch has been

prefixed to it. The book is filled with appeals to the captives in Babylon and predictions of their return. The Prayer of Manasses is a sort of appendix to 2 Chronicles. Two lost documents of Manasseh's repentance are referred to in 2 Chronicles 33:18, 2 Chronicles 33:19, and this was evidently written because of this statement. The early Christians were fond of this book because it contained a beautiful example of devotion. The additions to the Book of Daniel are highly fanciful and quite evidently spurious. They consist of two fragments: (a) The Song of the Three Children. This is interpolated into the account of the three young men in the fiery furnace. It is a prayer by Azarias in the furnace and a song by the three. (b) Bel and the Dragon. This tells of an exploit of Daniel, who fed a dragon lumps of pitch, burst it asunder and thus exposed a hoax of priests of Bel. The Latin Vulgate calls these books III Esdras and IV Esdras, because it counts the canonical Books of Ezra and Nehemiah as the first two Books of Ezra. I Esdras works over the Biblical account of the return of the captives from Babylon, with apocryphal additions. William Lyon Phelps, in his syndicated articles, has called attention to the delightful literary style of this book, which is mainly devoted to the description of a contest before the king of young courtiers on the problem as to the most powerful thing in the world. "Truth" is the answer of Zerubbabel; he is declared the winner, and the favor of the king to Jewish captives is the result. The second Book of Esdras is not extant in the original Greek, but only in versions. It describes revelations to Ezra concerning the future of the Jews and Jerusalem. It was probably written after most of the New Testament books, about a.d. 70. The Book of Tobit was probably written in the first century b.c., and is a fantastic story of family life in the Assyrian captivity. The heroes are Tobit, the father, and Tobias, his son. The book is famous for containing the Golden Rule in a negative form: "Do that to no man which thou hatest."

Judith is the romantic story of how Judith, a Jewish heroine, saved the besieged in the fortress of Bethulia from the general of Nebuchadnezzar, Holofernes. She surrendered herself into the hands of Holofernes, but immediately outwitted and slew him. The date of the book is uncertain. The Wisdom of Solomon was written in Greek by an Alexandrian Jew about the first century B.C. It is full of noble sentiments in praise of wisdom and the justice of God in rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked.

Ecclesiasticus (The Wisdom of Jesus, the Son of Sirach) is similar, but of inferior merit both as to literary structure and spiritual content. It closes with a sketch of Jewish heroes from Enoch to Simon, the Maccabean high priest. It was written in Hebrew and then in Greek paraphrase in Alexandria in 182 b.c.

There are two books of Maccabees; both are historical in character. The First Book of Maccabees was written by an orthodox Jew who lived in Palestine, and describes the history of the period from 175-135B.C. It was written in Hebrew probably soon after the death of John Hyrcanus in 105 b.c. The Second Book of Maccabees is not so trustworthy as the first. It is an abridgment of a large work by a certain Jason of Cyrene, and treats of the period from 175-160 B.C. It was written in Greek before 40 b.c. One of the evident reasons for the desire of the Roman Catholics to canonize these books is the fact that the second Book of Maccabees offers support to their system of purgatory and prayers for the dead in a reference which states that Judas Maccabeus "made a reconciliation for the dead, that they might be delivered from sin" (2Ma 12:45).

Josephus The second great source of information concerning this period is the work of Josephus, the Jewish historian, who wrote his Jewish Wars in a.d. 75-79, and his Antiquities of the Jews in a.d. 93. He lived near enough to the Maccabean period to have had access to considerable historical information, and he uses the books of the Apocrypha freely. In spite of his rhetorical style, his tendency to exaggerate and his free use of the imagination to invent and fill in where he lacks historical data, his work is of very great value.

Alexander the Great The account which Josephus gives of Alexander the Great's visit to Jerusalem is one of many interesting narratives. He marched against Jerusalem to destroy it for the refusal of the Jews to support him in his siege of Tyre, but, when met on Scopus by the high priest and a long procession of priests in white robes, he relented and worshiped in the temple. The death of Alexander caused his vast conquests to fall apart into four segments. Judaea became the spoil first of the Ptolemies of Egypt and then of the Syrian kings at Antioch. Judaea was a sort of city-state, ruled by the high priest and a senate of leaders associated with him, subject to the will of the Egyptian or Antiochian rulers. The rise of a Hellenistic party among the Jewish priestly aristocrats threatened the utter destruction of the Old Testament religion. Hellenistic culture, customs, and idolatry along with the use of the Greek language threatened to inundate the nation. Countering this infidel and pagan movement among the priesthood, there arose a group of pious Jews full of devotion to the law, and fierce in their opposition to the corrupting Greek influences. A situation somewhat similar to the present controversy which envelops Christianity arose. The people, unwilling to think or to sacrifice much, attempted to follow the course of least resistance unless stirred by some tragic circumstance or some popular leader. In the midst of such a time of uncertainty and turmoil, the Maccabeans appeared.

Rise of the Maccabees

Antiochus Epiphanes, having captured and sacked Jerusalem twice, began a campaign of systematic extermination of the Jewish religion by the massacre of the faithful and the propagation of Hellenism at the point of the sword. A Syrian officer came to Modem in the hill country of Judaea to compel the Jews to offer heathen sacrifice. An old priest, Mattathias, struck down a Jew who was sacrificing, and his sons killed the officer, and the group fled to the mountains, where they were joined by a little army of bold, patriotic Jews. Then followed decades of desperate fighting for the freedom of the Jewish nation and the preservation of their religion. The five sons of Mattathias — John, Simon, Judas, Eleazer, and Jonathan — succeeded one another as head of the army of Israel. As one was killed, another took his place. Judas was the boldest military genius of the group; Jonathan, and especially Simon were the shrewd strategists and statesmen. History contains but few more surprising and engrossing narratives than the story of their heroic struggles. Mattathias died after a year of campaigning, and named Judas as his successor. Eleazer was killed in a desperate battle near Beth-zur when he rushed through the ranks of the enemy and stabbed the elephant on which the young Antiochus was riding. He had hoped to dismount and kill the young king, but the elephant fell on Eleazar and crushed him to death. Judas himself fell in battle near Jerusalem when he attacked a vast army of Syrians with only a handful of shock troops to support him. John was killed by a tribe of Nabataeans beyond the Jordan who suddenly turned traitor. Jonathan was persuaded to meet the Syrian general, Trypho, under a flag of truce, but was entrapped and slain. Simon and his two sons were treacherously seized and killed at a banquet in the fortress of Dok. But before the last of these hero brothers passed from the stage, they had led

Israel for a third of a century and had founded a family which was to lead for a century more; they had built up a strong nationalistic spirit in spite of the many factions among the Jews; they had reestablished religious liberty and practically established the independence of the nation.

Rome

While these momentous changes had been taking place in the East, Rome had arisen in the West, destroyed her rival, Carthage, and started on a campaign of world conquest. The Maccabean rulers, with keen statesmanship, had sensed the future greatness of Rome, and sent embassies to form an alliance with her. Treaties were made with Rome by both Judas and Jonathan, and later by Simon.

Pharisees and Sadducees The Maccabeans were supported in their campaigns by the Pharisees, but when John Hyrcanus, son of Simon, succeeded to the rule, he formed a close alliance with the Sadducees, who remained the party supporting the government so long as the Maccabeans remained in power. The Pharisees were a religious party which had grown up to meet the crisis when Judaism was threatened with destruction. It was only with reluctance that they entered politics or took up arms. The Sadducees were the priestly aristocrats — a political party — who adopted a skeptical attitude toward the Old Testament, and had favored the Hellenizing movement. The change in the party supporting the government shows how the character of the government was changing, its religious zeal fading and its monarchical ambitions growing.

Antipater A period of internal strife and continued struggle against Syria followed. As the Maccabean line continued to war among themselves and weaken, a strong man of Idumea, Antipater, took the lead in the civil war on the side of Hyrcanus II. At this juncture Rome interfered. Pompey marched on Jerusalem, was admitted by the Pharisaical party, and was only able to capture the temple area, where the Sadducees had barricaded themselves, after a bitter siege of three months. Antipater leaped into sudden fame by coming to the aid of Julius Caesar in his campaign in Egypt, and arriving just in time to rush on the battlefield, turn the tide of battle, and change the current of world history. As a result, Rome established Antipater as ruler in Jerusalem coordinate with the high priest. Antipater immediately made his son, Phasaelus, governor in Jerusalem, and Herod, ruler of Galilee. Then followed a series of brilliant moves by Herod for about fifteen years, and he emerged from the tangle of internal strife, both in Judaea and in Rome, as king over Judaea by authority of Rome. Herod immediately executed forty-five of the most powerful of the Sadducees. This brought the Pharisees back into power. Herod then proceeded to destroy the remnants of the Maccabean house; in the course of his reign he murdered Aristobulus, the handsome young high priest; the aged Hyrcanus II; Mariamne, his beloved wife who was also a Maccabean; Alexandra, her mother; and the sons of Babas, the last of the Maccabeans. Insane with jealousy for his throne, he proceeded to kill all who came under his suspicion, including three of his own sons — Alexander, Aristobulus, and the villainous Antipater.

Herod the Great

Herod the Great provided his greatness not merely as a daring military leader, but as an astute statesman and an ambitious builder. He changed Jerusalem into a city of marble, and filled Palestine with beautiful cities and castles. He rebuilt the citadel of the temple and named it Tower of Antonia, in honor of Mark Antony. He added numerous other fortresses to the defenses of the

city. He built a theater and an amphitheater at Jerusalem in spite of the protests of the Pharisees at his Hellenizing tendencies. He built beautiful cities at Sebaste, Caesarea, and elsewhere. Perhaps his greatest building enterprise was the reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem.

Civil war and open hostilities against Rome broke out when Herod died, but Augustus confirmed Herod's will, making his son Archelaus ruler of Judaea, Samaria, and Idumea; Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea; and Philip, ruler of the Trachonitis country. Because of cruelty to the Samaritans, the "barbarous and tyrannical" Archelaus was deposed in a.d. 6, and Judaea was placed under a Roman procurator, with headquarters at Caesarea. Pontius Pilate (a.d. 26-36) was the fifth of these. Herod Antipas (Herod the Little) inherited the virtues and vices of his father on a small scale. He married the daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia, but later fell in love with the wife of his brother Philip, of Rome. Herodias proved his evil genius, and her ambition brought about his downfall at Rome and his exile to Lyons. Philip, ruler of Trachonitis, was the best of the three rulers. Philip and Herod Antipas continued the building activities of their father, notably Bethsaida Julias and Caesarea Philippi in the Trachonitis country and Sepphoris and Tiberias in Galilee.

Languages: Greek and Aramaic The use of the Greek language and the acceptance of Greek art, customs, and architecture grew during this whole period. Scholars dispute among themselves as to how far the Greek language prevailed in Palestine in the time of Christ. Hebrew became a dead language after the Babylonian captivity. The people no longer spoke or understood it. In its place a dialect with somewhat different vocabulary and syntax had arisen: Aramaic, a combination of Hebrew and Phoenician, named after Aram, a part of Assyria. The Jews accepted this dialect instead of Hebrew sometime in the second or third centuries b.c. Large parts of the Talmud were written in Aramaic. All of the Old Testament is written in Hebrew, except Ezra 4:8-24; Ezra 5:1-17; Ezra 6:1-18; Ezra 7:12-26; Jeremiah 10:11; Daniel 2:4-49; Daniel 3:1-30; Daniel 4:1-37; Daniel 5:1-31; Daniel 6:1-28; Daniel 7:1-28. There were particular dialects of Aramaic in Galilee and Judaea at the time of Christ, but we have practically no literature of the period. When a rabbi arose to read from the Old Testament in the synagogue, the people could not understand him, but custom required that an interpreter stand beside him, unless he did the interpreting himself, and after each verse of the law or every three verses of the history and prophecy, he translated into Aramaic for the benefit of the people. When Jesus read in the synagogue at Nazareth, He evidently interpreted for the people as He read. Jesus seems to have used Aramaic for instructing the people, although He may have used the Hebrew, especially as He quoted Old Testament passages or as He gave solemn words like the model prayer in the Sermon on the Mount. The words of Jesus quoted directly in the Gospels when He raised the daughter of Jairus, healed the deaf stammerer, or when He quoted from the Old Testament on the cross, prove this (Mark 5:41; Mark 7:34; Matthew 27:46). Did Jesus Speak Greek? The question as to whether Jesus spoke Greek is hotly disputed. This is not whether Jesus could speak Greek, for all who believe Jesus to be the Son of God believe He could speak as He chose, and even the modernists would grant Him enough intelligence to learn Greek; but it is, rather, whether Greek was so common in Palestine at the time as to make it probable that Jesus would teach His disciples or the multitudes in Greek.

G. F. Moore argues that the idea that Jesus preached in Greek rests upon three erroneous assumptions: (1) Because the Decapolis had a Greek government, therefore the people spoke Greek. (2) Because Greek customs, architecture, etc., prevailed in certain cities of Galilee, therefore it was spoken in Capernaum and Nazareth. (3) Christ would have taught His disciples in

a foreign language. But the most convincing evidence as to the extent to which Greek was used in Palestine is not the remains of Greco-Roman cities now in ruins with their marble columns, stadia, outdoor theaters and every evidence of Greek customs in Palestine in the time of Christ, but the fact that the books of the New Testament were written in Greek. These began to be written within two or three decades of the crucifixion. Language changes do not proceed so rapidly as to change completely from one language to another in so short a time. This indicates that a transition was taking place at the time and the country was more or less bilingual. The inscriptions on the cross would verify this. But the fact that the books of the New Testament were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to be read not merely by those to whom they were first sent, but for all people and times, limits the force of this argument. A divine guidance seems back of the fact that the New Testament was written in the most flexible, accurate and beautiful language ever known to man. From the time of Alexander the Great, Greek customs and language prevailed to a great extent in Palestine and over the countries he had conquered. It seems probable that Jesus preached regularly in Aramaic, but when in a section like the Decapolis, where the Greek influence was especially prevalent, He may have found it more effective to speak Greek. The Synagogue The synagogue arose in the period immediately following the exile. While deprived of the temple and colonized in a foreign country, the Jews felt the critical need for some means of teaching the Old Testament to the children and of maintaining the religious life of the people. The synagogue came to fill this need. It was a schoolhouse for the children during the week and a place of worship for all on the Sabbath. Every town had its synagogue, and cities would have a number of synagogues, according to the location and grouping of the people. The synagogue did not have a regular preacher, but was ruled by a group of elders, who took turns in leading the service or who invited some visitor to speak for them.

Greco-Roman Civilization The Decapolis, beyond the Jordan, was really, as the name indicates, a collection of ten Greek cities, the remains of which astound the modern traveler: city streets flanked by commanding rows of marble columns and spanned by triumphal arches, theaters and amphitheaters of amazing size and beauty, and even an inland artificial lake where mimic naval battles could be fought. Tiberias, on the shores of Galilee, was a thoroughgoing Greco-Roman city with palaces, stadia, and streets with colonnades, all surrounded by a wall which today is crumbling in ruins. These facts show the use of the Greek language among the Jews in the time of Christ, to some extent at least. All of these innovations were doubtless resisted stoutly by the more pious Jews. The Roman rule had brought about the unification of the whole civilized world and had established in a remarkable degree the regime of law and order, for which the Romans were famous. Roman roads, built with amazing ingenuity and skill, linked all the world together. The tolerance for local religions and customs which marked Rome’s provincial policy was a strong element, as was the policy of securing world peace by persuading the soldiers of other nations to fight under the Roman eagle instead of against each other. The Jews stubbornly refused to fight in the Roman armies, and Rome did not attempt to draft them, but used Greek and Samaritan mercenaries for keeping peace in Judaea. The religion of the Jews was respected by the Romans as far as possible. The Roman standards were kept outside Jerusalem; the Sabbath was observed; the Jews had the right to slay foreigners who attempted to invade the inner courts of the temple. The Roman procurators maintained order and administered justice. The trial of ordinary civil and criminal cases between Jews was left in the hands of the Sanhedrin. The right to inflict capital punishment had been taken away some time before a.d. 30. Legal matters which involved

both Jews and Romans were tried before Roman officials, and could be appealed to Caesar. The Sanhedrin was the governing body of the nation. It arose in the Maccabean period, and appears to have been an outgrowth of the old assembly of elders. Herod the Great destroyed its power by the massacre of forty-five of its leading members, but it regained its place when Judaea went under a Roman procurator. The Sanhedrin served as a municipal court for Jerusalem, enacted laws and exercised civil authority in Judaea and religious authority over the Jews scattered all over the world. It also assisted in the collection of taxes. A local Sanhedrin in each of the eleven townships of Judaea levied the major tax and poll tax. The customs tax was farmed out to publicans by Roman senatorial corporations. The synagogue is not mentioned in the Old Testament, and evidently grew up during and after the exile at Babylon. The Jews found complete liberty of worship in these synagogues which were found in every city and small town, and were the center of their intellectual and religious life.

There was the dark side to the Roman domination which becomes apparent in the downfall of the old Roman democracy before the absolute despotism of the emperors; the transformation of the virile Roman leadership of early days to the corrupt nobility of the empire; the breakdown of the home and the moral degradation of the city of Rome with its million and a half inhabitants, one-half of whom were either paupers or slaves. The pagan religions had become degenerate and the priesthood utterly corrupt. The worship of the emperor was an empty form which failed to take the place of the decaying religions. The philosophies of the period could not satisfy the hungry souls of men: Stoicism taught sobriety and self-restraint, but was hopeless and selfish; the Epicureans offered but the course of least resistance and unbridled self-indulgence; the restless push of mystery religions and hybrid combinations of Egyptian, Greek, and Syrian religions and philosophies into the West revealed a spiritual vacuum at the heart of the empire.

All things seemed to work together to make up “the fulness of time” in which God’s Son came to bring to the world the final revelation of heaven: (1) the world-wide use of a common and superbly unique language — the Greek; (2) the amazing Roman roads and the freedom of travel from one country to another under Roman protection; (3) universal peace, and Roman law and order; (4) the breakdown of heathen religions and the moral stamina of Rome;(5) the Jewish Messianic expectation which fired the nation and found echoes elsewhere; (6) the proselytes to Judaism circling the Mediterranean, which formed fertile soil for Christianity.

010. Chapter 8 - The Sects of the Jews

Chapter 8 - The Sects of the Jews No one could hope for an accurate understanding of the life of the American people who had not made a careful study of the political and religious parties or organizations which play a decisive part in its affairs. The social and business organizations would also demand study, but the political and religious units would be paramount. The Bible student who attempts to reconstruct the life of Judaea at the opening of the Christian era must make the same sort of investigation into the nature and significance of the various Jewish sects. The life of Jesus can not be clearly understood until it is studied in relation to the sects from which His enemies arose. The Jews at the time of Jesus were divided into the following sects: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Herodians, and Zealots. The Pharisees

“The Pharisees” means “the separated ones.” Whether this title is self-assumed or was bestowed by enemies is not known. They were devoted students of the Old Testament and sticklers for the observance of the law. They were the chief exponents of the “traditions of the elders,” the hedge which they had built about the law. They believed in a “theocratic democracy”: God was their sole King. But they bowed to the Roman rule as a punishment for the sins of the nation. They were a religious rather than a political party. Nevertheless, they looked for a Messiah to lead against Rome, and when they thought the proper time had come, they revolted with the rest. Josephus says there were more than six thousand Pharisees, but not all the Pharisees were scribes. The more learned of the sect were called scribes, and had supplanted the priests as instructors of the people when the Pharisees gradually won the favor of the masses. The scribes ruled in the synagogue, as the Sadducees in the temple. The Sadducees The Sadducees were the liberal theologians, the cultured aristocrats, and the smooth politicians of the time. They were of the priestly class. Not all the priests, however, were Sadducees, because many did not have the necessary wealth and culture. The Sadducees did not make the strict profession of religion current among the Pharisees unless they found it profitable in securing and retaining a place of power among the people. They were moved by policy continually, and usually adopted the principles of the Pharisees when they secured an official position. The Sadducees denied the existence of angels and the resurrection. They repudiated the traditions of the elders so treasured by the Pharisees. Scholars disagree as to whether they accepted all the Old Testament or only the Pentateuch. Their liberal views make it evident that they accepted the Old Testament Scripture in about the same way in which the radical critic accepts it today. They were influential in the Sanhedrin, and had a practical monopoly of the high priesthood. Both sects united in crucifying Jesus, but the Sadducees became the more relentless persecutors of the church in its infancy. In their attitude toward the Bible and in their program and policies, they were the counterpart of the “modernists” of today. The Essenes The Essenes are thus described by Philo: “They were a sect of Jews, and lived in Syria, Palestine, over four thousand in number, and called Essaei, because of their saintliness….Worshipers of God, they yet did not sacrifice animals, regarding a reverent mind as the only true sacrifice. At first, they lived in villages and avoided cities in order to escape the contagion of evils rife therein. They pursued agriculture and other peaceful arts, but

accumulated not gold or silver. No maker of warlike weapons, no huckster or trader by land or sea was to be found among them. Least of all were any slaves found among them, for they saw in slavery a violation of the law of nature, which made all men free brethren one of the other….For no one had his private house, but shared his dwelling with all, and, living as they did in colonies, they threw open their doors to any of their sect who came their way. They had a storehouse, common expenditure, common raiment, common food eaten in common meals. This was made possible by their practice of putting whatever they each earned day by day into a common fund" (cf. Hastings' Bible Dictionary, article "Essenes").

Josephus described them at great length. He said they had a peculiar kind of worship of the sun, and the sect arose at the time when the friendship between Sparta and Jerusalem was strongest. Possibly the sect arose under Greek influence. The sun worship must have come from the East. Various attempts have been made to show that John the Baptist, or even Christianity, was influenced by the Essenes. But the arguments are farfetched and feeble. It is very remarkable that the Essenes are nowhere mentioned in the New Testament when they were almost as numerous as the Pharisees. But they were localized west of the Dead Sea, and we know of no ministry of Jesus in this section. They were living apart like hermits, and were not touched by the main current of Jewish life. They did not combat the works of Jesus. This is what brought the Pharisees and Sadducees into such prominence in the New Testament. The Zealots The Zealots are called "the fourth sect of Jewish philosophy" by Josephus. They were the political extremists, who favored revolution to throw off the Roman yoke, and were most active in bringing it about. Their rallying cry was "No tribute to Caesar; no king but Jehovah; no tax but the temple tax." The party was founded by Judas of Gamala, and led in the revolt against the enrollment of Quirinius (a.d. 6, 7). They played a leading part in the final siege of Jerusalem, and were fearful opponents both of the Romans and of the milder sects of the Jews. One of the apostles of Jesus was a Cananaean or Zealot (Matthew 10:4; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). The Herodians The Herodians were probably a political party devoted to the interests of the Herod family and eager to restore them to full power. Archelaus was deposed a.d. 6, and a Roman procurator placed in power. This party had adherents both in Jerusalem (Matthew 22:16; Mark 12:13) and in Galilee (Mark 3:6). These are the only passages where they are mentioned in the New Testament. They may have played some particular favorite; i.e., the Herodians of Galilee may have been particularly interested in the pretensions of Herod Antipas. Tertullian says they were a religious party, but this is probably true only in the sense that all the sects of the Jews were more or less religious. The Multitudes When one counts up six thousand Pharisees, four thousand Essenes, and a much smaller number of the other three sects, and remembers the dense population of Palestine in the time of Christ, it becomes evident that the great mass of the Jews did not belong to any of these sects. They are constantly called "the multitudes" in the New Testament. The frequent references contrasting the Pharisees and publicans might give the impression that all the people belonged to either one of these upper sects or to the miserable horde of tax collectors. But this is not true. The mass of the people who found it impossible to keep the strict regulations of the Pharisees, and who had grown disgusted with the Sadducees, were eager for some great religious movement like that of John the Baptist, which would open its doors to them and into which it would be possible for them to enter. This helps to explain the general response to the call of John the Baptist. Among the masses there were devout men and women like Simeon and Anna, Joseph and Mary, Zacharias and Elisabeth. These were the people who belonged to none of the sects of the Jews, but were spiritual and

saintly. They were anxiously awaiting the coming of the Messiah. Sanday calls these people “the special seed-plot of Christianity.” How many simple, pious folk of the masses awaited Christ’s coming, we do not know. John and Jesus were born in such homes, and from this class the leading disciples of John and Jesus doubtless came. Here was the nucleus of the Christian church.

Minor Sects in the New Testament

How does it happen that the other sects are scarcely mentioned in the Gospels while the Pharisees and Sadducees play such a prominent part? The reason the Essenes are not mentioned has already been discussed. The Herodian party, since it was political and limited in its scope to devotion to the ruling family, lay outside the range of Jesus’ activities. We have no record of Jesus’ ever enter mg Tiberias, the capital city of Herod Antipas. He seems to have avoided it. When Herod tried to drive Him out of Galilee by open threats, Jesus sent back the ringing answer: “Go say to that fox, Behold, I cast out demons, and I perform cures to-day and tomorrow, and the third day I am perfected” (Luke 13:32). When tried before Herod, He refused to answer a word to questions and taunts. Once when starting across the Lake of Galilee, He warned His disciples against the leaven of the Pharisees and “of Herod.” This may have reference to attempts of the Herodian party to influence the disciples. Thrice the Herodians are mentioned as joining in the plots of the Pharisees against Jesus (Mark 3:6; Matthew 22:16; Mark 12:13).

Influence of the Zealots on the Ministry of Jesus The Zealots perhaps played a much larger part in the ministry of Jesus than we realize. They are practically never mentioned, but they, with their great influence among the fiery Galileans, strongly underlie the Gospel records. The continual necessity which Jesus had of warning men who were healed by prodigious miracles to keep silent about it, and not to stir up too much excitement by reporting it abroad, doubtless came from the constant pressure of the Zealots to start a revolution against Rome. The movement to take Him by force and make Him a king whether or no, at the time of the feeding of the five thousand, was doubtless engineered by the Zealots, who were attempting to compel Him to be an earthly Messiah and lead on against Rome. “And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and men of violence take it by force” (Matthew 11:12), doubtless refers to the insidious pressure of the Zealots to turn His movement from its spiritual to a material mission.

Jesus and the Pharisees and Sadducees The gospel story is woven in a large measure about the Pharisees and Sadducees and Jesus. The terrific controversy with these sects, which culminated in the death of Jesus, was in part inherited from John the Baptist. The cultured aristocrats and the self-righteous Pharisees, although they deigned to send delegations to investigate and question John, scorned his baptism and repudiated his mission. John blazed forth against them in thrilling denunciation, and by a mighty effort wrested the leadership of the multitudes from these two sects. Here lies the first secret of the desperate struggle which ensued. The Pharisees and Sadducees controlled the nation. The movement of John and later that of Jesus, which must have seemed to them to have grown out of John’s work, directly challenged their authority, their way of life, and their leadership of the nation. And so they fought back in a most bitter and unscrupulous way to retain their leadership. The first collision which Jesus had with the Sadducees was in the nature of a bold and sensational challenge of their whole management of the temple which must have

electrified the nation. John had denounced them from a distance, but when Jesus, after a few weeks of quiet work in Galilee, went up to Jerusalem for the great opening of His public ministry, He walked into the temple court with a whip in His hand and drove out the entire horde of merchandisers. The infuriated Sadducees who had been perpetrating this piece of graft were dumbfounded and could only make a lame demand for His authority. But they immediately began their incessant plotting to bring about His death.

Continual Opposition of the Pharisees The encounters with the Sadducees were in the main periodic because they were centralized in Jerusalem; Jesus' visits here were only occasional. But His struggles with the Pharisees were almost continuous, for they were scattered all over the nation in charge of the schoolhouses and places of worship in every city and village. They were the real leaders of the intellectual and religious life of the nation, even though the Sadducees controlled the temple. Moreover, they had a keen interest in the great teachings of Jesus. The deadly skepticism of the Sadducees added fuel to their resentment when Jesus occasionally met them and challenged and pierced their shallow unbelief, but the devotion of the Pharisees to the traditions of the elders caused them to be in constant opposition to Jesus. The struggle between truth and false teaching, between divine love and hypocritical self-complacency and selfishness was fast and furious, and was fought out in each town and village. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye are as graves that appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them….Woe unto you lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered. And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things: laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him" (Luke 11:44, Luke 11:52-54). "And he again entered 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 said unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth, and he said unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath day or to do evil, to save life or to kill? But they held their peace. And when he had looked round about on them in anger, being grieved for their hardness of heart, 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. But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea" (Mark 3:1-7). These are characteristic scenes, the latter showing the controversy in an early stage, and the former in a more advanced stage. The Gospel of John shows how furious the encounters became as the struggle developed. The Pharisees regarded Jesus as a breaker of the sacred traditions of the elders, and continually tried to prove that He set at naught the Old Testament law. But when challenged, Jesus either showed that their traditions were false or that they had supplanted the great principles of the Old Testament with puerile traditions, which they reverenced more than the law itself, or, if He proceeded to set aside the law itself, as in the case of divorce or the law of unclean meats, He did so in such towering fashion that they knew not how to answer Him. The climax came in the terrific series of discussions during the last week in Jerusalem, when finally they did not dare to ask Him any more questions; they went off humiliated, but full of fury and of determination to kill Him. The farcical trial which the two sects staged, and the weak and conflicting testimony brought to prove He spoke against the temple and the law, upon which He was condemned by the Sanhedrin, show how hypocritical and cruel their attitude was. Before

Pilate they brought the empty accusation of “king,” but finally made the real charge that “he called himself the Son of God.”

It is customary to trace the life of Jesus in relation to the weak and the sinful — to broken humanity — but one needs to make a study of Him in relation to His deadly enemies to get a full-rounded picture. It is when we see Him surrounded by His enemies, seeking to save them in spite of themselves, pausing to be kind and patient with any one of them who gave the slightest indication of being fair or open-minded, striking out fearlessly for the truth and for the downtrodden publicans and masses, but suffering as a lamb led dumb to the slaughter when the affront was personal; it is in such moments that we see Jesus shine forth with heaven’s splendor in a dark world. The climax of this picture is: “Father, forgive them; they know not what they do.”

011. Chapter 9 - The Influence of the Weather Upon the Ministry of Jesus

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Conversation about the weather, unless an acute change renders life perilous or unbearable, is supposed to be heard only when a sluggish brain or an insufficient acquaintance renders unavailable any important topic. It is significant that the Bible says but little about the weather. The concentration upon matters of eternal portent causes almost all mention of the weather to fade from the picture, except when it plays a vital part in the momentous events recorded. Nevertheless, the careful attempt to reconstruct the ministry of Jesus and to visualize the actual surroundings of His daily life as He labored, traveled, taught, healed and preached, leads one to consider carefully such information about the weather as the New Testament and a study of the land of Palestine afford.

Power of Jesus over Nature When the Bible student begins to reflect upon the ideas of “the weather” and “the ministry of Jesus,” the mind naturally recalls the scene in which Jesus was asleep in the stern of the boat as the disciples crossed the Sea of Galilee. It was toward the close of the day, after He had delivered the great sermon in parables: “And there ariseth a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the boat, insomuch that the boat was now filling. And he himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion: and they awake him, and say unto him, Teacher, carest thou not that we perish? And he awoke, 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 fearful? have ye not yet faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” (Mark 4:37-41).

Jesus provoked a similar comment from the disciples when He came to them walking on the water in the midst of a storm: “But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, distressed by the waves; for the wind was contrary….And when they were gone up into the boat, the wind ceased. And they that were in the boat worshiped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God” (Matthew 14:24, Matthew 14:32, Matthew 14:33). But a consideration of these scenes may suggest to the reader the crisp rejoinder to the topic of this essay, that it should be changed to read: “The Influence of the Ministry of Jesus upon the Weather.” One of the amazing proofs of the deity of Christ is the fact that the wind and sea obeyed Him: the very elements of nature were subject to His control. On both of these occasions there were spiritual reasons why Jesus interfered with the course of nature and compelled the elements to obey His immediate orders. But the records of His life lead us to believe that this was entirely exceptional and that the ordinary current of His ministry shaped itself to meet the ordinary difficulties or opportunities which the elements of nature offered. Thus Jesus shared our experience, except when there was some divine reason for Him to rise above and control earthly circumstances. He did not still the tempest for His own comfort or advantage, nor did He walk on the water and cause the storm to cease that night for His own convenience. It was not even to save His own life. It was the desperate need of His disciples that caused Him to

control the elements. He rebuked the disciples because, even while they had the faith to awaken Him and appeal to Him to save them, they did not believe that God would care for His Son and not permit Him to perish, no matter how great the storm.

Further reflection is apt to call up the fearful transformation of the heavens when Jesus died: “Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour….And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and yielded up his spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom: and the earth did quake and the rocks were rent” (Matthew 27:45, Matthew 27:50, Matthew 27:51). While we may not solve the reason for the sudden coming of darkness at noonday when Jesus died, there can be no doubt as to its cause: the hand of an almighty Creator. Again the very world of nature was brought in a most amazing fashion into harmony with the supreme events being enacted by God as He gave His Son to die for sinful mankind. But, again, this is the startling exception to the general current of Jesus’ ministry. Did the ordinary course of the weather exercise any perceptible influence on the daily ministry of Jesus? What sort of weather prevails in Palestine? What does the Bible record concerning it? How did the ministry of Jesus fit into “all sorts of weather” which “must be taken in together, to make a year and a sphere”? The weather certainly has a decided influence upon the nature and success of our efforts today to extend the kingdom of God. Often we find our work hampered by weather which renders impossible intensive campaigning and the gathering of large crowds together to hear the gospel. Rain, excessive cold or heat are the things that usually hamper our efforts, and we try to take them into account as far as possible in laying our plans. There are certain indications in the Bible that the weather had an influence on the time and nature of the campaigns that were carried on for God. We usually overlook the fact that the weather was not uniformly favorable for the ministry of Jesus.

Geography and Climate of Palestine

Palestine is situated in about the same latitude as the southern part of the United States, but since it is a narrow, mountainous country with a great desert on one side and a great sea on the other, it offers considerable variation as to temperature according to the local situation. The land is fifty to seventy-five miles wide, and the deep crevice (The Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea) which extends through the length of the land (150 miles) and on out into the desert to the south, causes some variation in temperature between Jerusalem (2,600 feet above sea level) and the Dead Sea (1,312 feet below sea level). A rainy season prevails through the winter (November to April). During the seven summer months, when dry weather prevails, the heat is usually alleviated by the wind from the Mediterranean, which blows regularly from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. January is the coldest month and August the hottest. The rain in the winter is not incessant and sometimes in the rainy season there are several days together of beautiful southern Mediterranean spring weather. It gets cold enough to form ice in the mountains, but seldom in the plains. Snow is rare in Palestine, except on locations like the summit of Mount Hermon (over 9,000 feet above sea level). The desert to the south and east of Palestine might be expected to be much warmer in winter, but for the most part it is high, rough tableland. One of the surprises for the reader of Lawrence of Arabia’s fascinating Revolt in the Desert is the description of the bitter cold he had to face traveling on foot and on camel through the ice and snow, and the fierce blizzards that drove the Arabs indoors. One traveler, commenting on how sharp are the changes in the desert, where one burns up by day and freezes by night, even in summer, and often finds ice on his tent in the morning,

humorously remarked that the writer of the popular song, “True I will be, to the love I gave thee, till the sands of the desert grow cold,” either had never traveled much or else was an abominable philanderer. The climate of Palestine is much more even and delightful than that of the desert to the east and south. The wilderness about the Dead Sea is, of course, warmer than the desert tableland because the Dead Sea is the lowest-lying body of water in the world and the mountains rise sharply about it, making it like a boiling teakettle.

Winter in Palestine The Bible contains occasional references to the extreme changes of the weather. “Benaiah ...went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow” (2 Samuel 23:20).“The channel of brooks that pass away; which are black by reason of the ice, and wherein the snow hideth itself: what time they wax warm, they vanish; when it is hot, they are consumed out of their place” (Job 6:15, Job 6:17). “If I wash myself with snow water” (Job 9:30). “Drought and heat consume the snow waters” (Job 24:19). “He saith to the snow, Fall thou on the earth; likewise to the shower of rain, and to the showers of his mighty rain” (Job 37:6). “He giveth snow like wool; he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes. He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold? He sendeth out his word and melteth them: he causeth his winds to blow, and the waters flow” (Psalms 147:16, Psalms 147:17). “Fire and hail, snow and vapor; stormy wind” (Psalms 148:8). Proverbs abounds in such references: the extraordinary “cold of snow in time of harvest [April]” (Proverbs 25:13); the fool who “taketh off a garment in cold weather” (Proverbs 25:20); the ideal woman’s weaving heavy garments for winter: “She is not afraid of the snow for her household; for all her household are clothed with scarlet” (Proverbs 31:21). “The sluggard will not plow by reason of the winter; therefore he shall beg in harvest, and have nothing” (Proverbs 20:4). The ground baked hard by the hot, dry season could not be plowed until the first rains of winter softened it; the lazy farmer who refused to face the cold and rain in order to plant his wheat could expect no harvest in the spring.

Ezra’s Assembly

One of the very interesting and illuminating passages in the Old Testament which describes how the weather interfered with a great religious assembly at a critical moment in the history of the nation is recorded in Ezra. Even the remnant of the two tribes had disobeyed the law of Moses and married foreign wives; the purity and perpetuity of the chosen race was imperiled. Ezra called the nation together in the temple area and after great prayer and lamentation pleaded with the people to put away the foreign wives. It was a heartbreaking scene: “It was a very great assembly of men and women and children; for the people wept very sore” (Ezra 10:1). The north wind blew its icy blasts and the rain poured; the people stood helplessly in the elements and listened to the impassioned appeal of Ezra. The people cried Out, promising to carry out the law as Ezra directed, and then appealed to Ezra to dismiss them that they might escape the wild weather: “Then all the assembly answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said concerning us so must we do. But the people are many and it is a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand without: neither is this a work of a day or two” (Ezra 10:12, Ezra 10:13). The Jewish Feasts

God made the weather and the land, and chose the people. To them He gave the law which fitted perfectly the varying demands. It is interesting to notice that all three of the great feasts ordered in the law, when all the nation was obligated to come up to the central place of worship, were placed during the dry season. The Passover, in the early spring; Pentecost, fifty days later in the early

summer; the Feast of Tabernacles, in the fall. The Feast of Dedication (late December) was added by the Jews to celebrate the rededication of the temple after its defilement by Antiochus Epiphanes during the Maccabean period. The Feast of Purim (February) was also added by them to celebrate the rescue of Jewry by Esther. There was no compulsion from the Old Testament to attend these two feasts. It would have been a great hardship and an unnecessary one for the people to be compelled to make this pilgrimage during the cold, rainy season. The aged and the infirm, who might have come in the summer, would have found it well-nigh impossible in the winter. There is the wail of the north wind and the splash of rain and sleet in the sorrowful prediction of Jesus concerning the destruction of Jerusalem as He warned the disciples to flee from the city before it was besieged by the Romans: “Woe unto them that are with child and to them that give suck in those days! And pray ye that your flight be not in winter” (Matthew 24:19, Matthew 24:20). The Desert in Winter

Reflection upon these facts stirs a tremendous amount of speculation about the ministry of Jesus. When He went into the desert to be tempted of the devil, what suffering did He undergo from the elements without home or protection of any kind? It was evidently in the rainy season of winter, for while the baptism can not be definitely dated, an approximate count of time backward from the first cleansing of the temple at the Passover (April) through the brief stay at Capernaum, the wedding feast at Cana, the calling of the six disciples by the Jordan, and to the forty days of temptation in the wilderness, forces the date well back into the winter. And yet there is not a syllable of all this physical suffering suggested in the Scripture, except the two words, “he hungered.” The spiritual agony which Jesus endured was so great that rain or cold and lonely wandering fade into the background. John the Baptist grew up “in the deserts,” and what hardships did he endure? How rugged and powerful was he of body as well as soul! He began his ministry in the wilderness of Judaea, in the section just north of the Dead Sea where the Jordan River flows for some eight or ten miles through that wilderness. This was a most fitting place to begin, both by reason of his life in the desert, his message, the Jordan River, and the proximity of the capital, Jerusalem. But since he evidently began in the fall or winter, was it not also strategic because of the balmy weather which usually prevails about the Dead Sea even in winter? The wise minister plans his revival when and where the people can attend, and the location of John’s opening ministry probably was in part based upon this principle.

Preaching in the Rainy Season

What did Jesus do and where did He go when the weather was cold and rainy — in the winter? To whom did He preach? Here is a problem concerning the life of Christ which has been generally overlooked. Three conclusions seem probable: (1) The seasons of great revival, the times of the great multitudes crowding about Jesus in the outdoors, were in the dry season when the people found it possible to come together in this fashion. (2) The evangelistic work of the rainy season was for the most part confined to work indoors — teaching in the synagogues, preaching in the homes of the people, healing and ministering wherever an opportunity offered. (3) A great amount of traveling and reaching untouched places was done even in the rainy season, with occasional gatherings of multitudes in the open when the weather permitted. Considerable evidence confirming these conclusions appears in the Gospel narratives. Counting the ministry of Jesus as about three and a half years, we have nearly nine-tenths of the days of His ministry concerning which nothing is recorded. There doubtless were many thrilling scenes and great campaigns and

wonderful miracles enacted during these days, but there were also many “rainy days,” when the time was devoted to personal work in the homes of the people. This was the work in which Jesus delighted and excelled, even as in the preaching to great crowds. Look through the narratives and see how many conversations are recorded. The ministry at Sychar was in midwinter (December — “four months and then cometh the harvest” — John 4:35). Here He talked with the Samaritan woman and had a stirring, but brief, ministry. This had been preceded by a ministry in Judaea which was gaining great momentum in spite of the early winter season (John 3:22; John 4:1). But an entirely different type of winter weather seemed to be influencing the method of Jesus in John l0:22ff. Again it was December; Jesus was preaching in the temple; but notice how He is pictured: “And it was the feast of dedication at Jerusalem: for it was winter; and Jesus was walking in the temple in Solomon’s porch. The Jews therefore came round about him, and said unto him,...“For it was winter.” How sublimely brief, but significant, that clause! Rain and cold; Jesus preaching in Solomon’s porch, which afforded protection from the rain; Jesus walking as He preached (like the Peripatetic philosophers of Athens), and thus enabling those about to resist the cold as they listened; His enemies crowding in about Him to question and oppose. And thus the gospel was preached, whether in fair weather or in foul, whether to many or to few. What an example this is to us! When we picture Jesus traveling from place to place in His eager, but patient, ministry, we seldom think of His going through rain and cold, buffeted by the elements. Has any artist so presented Him, even though we have so many hundred famous paintings? Studdert Kennedy, in his touching poem, “Indifference,” contrasts the raging fury of those who long ago crucified Jesus with the cruel indifference of those who reject and pass Him by today. He pictures men today as they scornfully go their way and leave Jesus out in the winter rain: And still it rained the winter rain that drenched Him through and through; The crowds went home and left the streets without a soul to see, And Jesus crouched against a wall and cried for Calvary. This poetic representation of the rejection of Jesus by men today may well have been actually enacted many times as men refused to receive Him into their midst, even though the elements raged. We pass over with a gesture of impatience and regret the incident when James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven on the Samaritan village that refused to permit Jesus to spend the night in their midst. But has anyone really seen below the surface in that passage? What was the weather like as they hastened by forced march to the Feast of Tabernacles? What dire necessity did the apostles feel as they sought a refuge for their blessed Master? If we knew all the circumstances, we probably should marvel less at the sudden rashness of James and John, and more at the infinite gentleness and longsuffering of the Son of God. Rugged campaigners were these Jesus gathered about Him. How many things they must have endured as they traveled over mountain and plain, over rivers and deserts, accompanying their tireless and inspired Leader! What a stirring example our Master has left us!

012. Chapter 10 - The Two-Source Theory

Chapter 10 - The Two-Source Theory

Present Trends

It requires considerable temerity to maintain a position which is contrary to the entire trend of current scholarship. But trends of scholarship are the most fickle factors imaginable and are apt to rest more upon presuppositions and prevailing atmosphere than upon facts. The person who still holds that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were directly inspired of God to write their accounts of the life of Christ may feel rather lonely sometimes when he sees even scholars with the conservative reputation of A. T. Robertson yield to the current skeptical trend and adopt the radical Two-source Theory for the origin of the Synoptic narratives. But when the scholars of this present unbelieving generation are placed alongside those of all preceding Christian centuries, then the present group, whose voices sound like a unanimous chorus today, becomes a very small minority amid the roll call of the ages. The Issue The crucial question is, Does the change of conviction as to the method of composition of the Gospel narratives rest upon newly discovered facts — facts that were unknown to preceding ages? The answer to this is flatly, no. The change of conviction rests upon a change of mental attitude. The facts cited to prove the radical theories as to composite authorship or that the Gospel writers copied from one another or from common written sources are facts which were in the hands of the early Christian writers and those of all succeeding ages. It is the custom of the times to wave aside scholars of preceding generations and especially those of the early centuries with the contemptuous gesture which affirms that they were “ignorant and unlearned men” as compared with the “super-men” of our time. It is true that early Christian writers occasionally advance views which indicate a certain lack of information and insight, but the most extravagant statements available from Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, or Eusebius could not possibly compete in a lack-of-intelligence contest with the dizzy statements and theories which are the common product of the super-scholarship of our day. Furthermore, the early Christian scholars were very close to the time of the actual writing of the Gospel narratives; some of them had seen and talked with apostles; others were students under men who had been trained by apostles. They had every conceivable advantage for the ascertaining of the facts in the case, over any person trying to concoct novel theories two thousand years later. The real basis for the whole present trend in Biblical study is not any flood of light from new facts, but simply the application of the theory of evolution to the facts and problems of the Bible. The theory of evolution is the accepted basis of measurement for the “intellectuals” of this generation and everywhere is seen the blind and ruthless rejection or alteration of the facts in order to fit the preconceived hypothesis. A Modern Tower of Babel The varieties and shades of opinion among the radical scholars are so numerous and contradictory that it is well to remember the term “modernist” covers about as much latitude as the word “socialist.” The general trend of present scholarship, however, is so extremely hostile to Christ and the Bible and, in many quarters, even to the very existence of God, that the Christian will do well to examine with care the conclusions of modernists. It is a notorious fact that the modernists themselves are exceedingly

impatient with any effort to examine the basis of their conclusions. They urgently demand that Christians shall keep their minds in a fluid state, ready to change any belief or conviction they may have entertained concerning Christ and His teaching. But when someone proposes that they, themselves, halt their endless construction of superstructure, which constantly rises higher with the most amazing and intricate multiplication of adornment and decorative designs, in order to join in the investigation of the foundation of this huge structure, they view such a proposal with resentment and horror. The foundation is pure theory, but they have reiterated the hypothesis so often, they expect assertion to take the place of proof. They view any challenge of the foundation as heresy and announce that “it is unnecessary, at this late date, to discuss such matters” and “the consensus of opinion” has established their theory as “an assured result.” But all of this twisting and turning leaves a theory still a theory — which is quite different from fact and proof.

Damaging Admissions

It is a hopeful sign to see some from among the radical group dare to admit that all of this immense superstructure is really founded on a theory which itself has never been proved. The Dogma of Evolution, published by Professor Louis T. More of the University of Cincinnati, frankly challenges the whole intellectual attitude of the day toward the theory of evolution. The author takes the position that it is still a theory which has not been proved and which, in the very nature of the case, never can be proved. A somewhat similar volume published in 1934 challenges in part the theory on which the radicals base their whole structure of interpretation of the Gospel narratives: The Synoptic Gospels — a posthumous volume from the pen of James Hardy Ropes of Harvard. Both volumes have been like bombshells thrown into their respective fields. Modernists have been affirming and describing from their imagination such sources as “Q,” from which they claim our Gospel narratives were copied, for so many years that it is very disconcerting to hear a famous scholar of their own group push aside their concoction as pure theory. The Synoptics and John’s Gospel

Professor Ropes, of course, does not desert the modernistic position and is unwilling to see the whole radical theory of the composition of the Gospels challenged, but he writes with a modesty and sobriety of judgment very rare among modernists. He assails with vigor some of the fundamental props in the current modernistic view as to the origin of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. He frankly admits that some of their most “assured results” are not “assured” at all, but are only theoretical and that the whole amazing product of the skeptical speculation of a century is utterly inadequate to explain the facts. It is not surprising that his book has caused consternation in certain circles. The first line of division made in current study of the Gospel narratives is between Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which are called “Synoptic Gospels,” and the Gospel of John. Synoptic comes from the Greek “seen together” and is applied to these three narratives because they can, at least in certain sections, be arranged in parallel columns. They show a certain similarity in outline and, at times, in language. John’s Gospel is, however, entirely different from the others. He presents an immense amount of new material even in discussing the same scenes, and, for the most part, devotes his attention to speeches and events to which the others do not refer at all. The Gospel of John has been the particular object of hostility on the part of the critics because he so plainly and strongly affirms the deity of Christ. They attempt to place the date of this Gospel very late and to discard it as unhistorical. They hold that it does not tell facts about Christ as they actually happened or speeches that He actually made, but only the beclouded conceptions of the

Christians in the time in which it was written, as they came to deify Jesus and attribute all sorts of marvelous deeds and claims to Him. They claim to discern a clear line of difference between the way Jesus is presented in the Synoptics and in John, both as to the deeds, claims and speeches of Jesus. A typical example of the reckless rejection of John's Gospel as unhistorical is seen in The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate by Professor B. W. Bacon of Yale. There is perhaps no phase of New Testament criticism upon which radicals are so completely in agreement as in the assignment of the Gospel of John to a late date and the denial of its historical accuracy. There is no similar subject concerning which early Christian writers are in such complete agreement and upon which they write with such strong and impressive affirmations of the certainty of the facts they record, as the declaration that the Gospel of John was actually written by the apostle John, the son of Zebedee, and published about the year a.d. 90 during his residence in Ephesus. The whole weight of early Christian testimony is against the modernistic view. The internal evidence of the book itself, with its strange omission of the name of John, its use of the titles, "the disciple" or "the disciple whom Jesus loved," its emphatic declarations that the book is the work of an eyewitness (John 19:35; John 21:24, John 21:25), and the veiled identification of the author in the last chapter make it clear that the apostle John was the author. All of this evidence is so overwhelming that the best the critics are able to do is to attempt to confuse the evidence by admitting that somebody by the name of John wrote the book and then affirming that it was a John, the disciple, a later figure. When pressed for details concerning this person they suppose to be the author, the portrait they present is that of John the apostle with a later date attached. The discovery of a fragment of the Gospel of John which the most competent critics declare to have been written shortly after the close of the first century places in our hands evidence which promises to destroy completely this, the central conclusion of radical criticism of the Gospel narratives. This fragment was discovered by C. H. Roberts, Fellow of St. John's College, Oxford, while working through a collection of fragments that had been gathered from rubbish heaps in Egypt during 1920 and sent to the Rylands Library, in Manchester, England. Dr. Roberts, in the monograph which he published concerning his discovery in 1935, says: "On the whole we may accept with some confidence the first half of the second century as the period in which it was most probably written — a judgment I should be much more loath to pronounce were it not supported by Sir Frederic Kenyon, Dr. W. Schubart, and Dr. H. C. Bell, who have seen photographs of the text, and whose experience and authority in these matters are unrivaled." He argues that the presence of this manuscript in Egypt during the first half of the second century immediately thrusts the composition of the Gospel itself at Ephesus back to the close of the first century. If this dating proves to be correct, then this is the oldest extant manuscript of any portion of the New Testament. It actually dates from almost the very time in which the original document was written. This utterly demolishes the whole structure of radical attack upon the Gospel as of late origin, written by someone who lived in a later period and invented out of his imagination his own extravagant claims that Jesus said He was the Son of God. It is certainly the irony of fate that the critics, after many decades of attack on the Gospel of John, and after declaring repeatedly that they had discredited it as of late second-century origin, should now find themselves face to face with an actual copy of John's Gospel written shortly after the close of the first century! This fragment is sure to be the object of research and discussion during the next few years. If further study sustains the early date assigned to this manuscript, it will be a most important piece of evidence. The proof from the Gospel of John itself, and from early Christian writers, however, is already so

overwhelming that only blind bias could have suggested its rejection. The Two-source Theory

The current theory as to the composition of the Gospel narratives is that they were copied from one another or from some common source or sources. The accompanying outline of the Two-source Theory taken from The Life and Teachings of Jesus by Professor C. F.Kent of Yale offers a clear and convenient presentation of the prevailing theory. The sketch is arranged in decades with the names of the reigning emperors in the left column and the pertinent historical events in the right column. In this framework of history, Kent has arranged the Two-source Theory. Two main lines of descent are indicated by the lines drawn: the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost descends into Ur-Mark and then into the Gospel of Mark. Ur is the German word for “early” and by the name Ur-Mark is meant an earlier, shorter document than the Gospel of Mark which we possess. It is held that this earlier document grew by accretions into the Gospel of Mark as we have it today. Another line of descent is from the eyewitnesses who bore testimony to the things which they knew concerning the deeds and words of Jesus. This line proceeds through “brief gospels” into the Gospel of Luke. Preceding in time the formation of Ur-Mark and beginning another line of descent is “Q.” “Q” is the name given another document which they assume. The name comes from the German word “Quella” which means source, the first letter being used to designate the document. It is also called the “Logia” (“words” or “sayings”) because of the supposition that it contained mainly the words of Jesus. Speeches being harder to remember than events, they figure that the first thing to be written down would be some of the declarations and sermons of Christ. They hold that “Q” developed into the Gospel of Matthew as we have it by being combined with the Gospel of Mark or Ur-Mark, at least with generous use of this Gospel for general outline and framework, and with much of the same expression. Luke is held to have used both Mark and Matthew in compiling his narrative. Mark and Luke are also declared to have been influenced by the Pauline Epistles. All of these are held to have contributed to the compilation of John’s Gospel, in which a strong influence of Alexandrian philosophy is supposed to be found. This, in brief, is the current theory. The complexity of the hypothesis and the assurance with which the critics discuss and describe the imaginary documents which are the basis of the theory are little short of astounding to those who meet it for the first time. This is the huge structure whose foundation is to be examined in this chapter. It makes the modernist very indignant to ask for proof of the basic assumptions of this theory. It is simply the consensus of opinion of the scholars of the day, one of “the assured results.” Who has the right to challenge its foundation? The similarity of process and conclusions between this Two-source Theory and the theory of evolution, of which it is the offspring, is evident. A theory is conceived and asserted. Adequate proof cannot be offered to establish the theory as a fact, but repeated declarations that the theory is true are supposed to supply the lack of proof. Thus is the effort made to transmute theory into fact by mere repetition of the theory. Even Professor Ropes shows a touch of this impatience with any demand for proof of the major presuppositions: “It requires at the present day no elaborate explanations to justify the consideration by themselves of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, with the exclusion of the Gospel of John. Nor need I defend the assumption which I shall make that Mark is the source from which Matthew and Luke have drawn much of their material” (The Synoptic Gospels, p. 3). He thinks clearly in the frank admission that the whole proposition as to the use of Mark by Matthew and Luke is an “assumption,” but is it true that this hypothesis is so well established that it needs no defense “at the present day”?

Quotation from Papias The customary statement of the case for the Two-source Theory is that it is proved by the similarities and the differences in the synoptic accounts. In other words, in the passages where Matthew, Mark and Luke are parallel, the accounts are so closely identical that they must have risen from some interdependent relation; in the passages where they are entirely different, there are adequate reasons for any omissions or changes by the person who copied, and omitted and changed as he copied. An effort will be made to test this line of reasoning and some of the data upon which it rests. But another line of evidence which is adduced will first be considered. Two passages from early Christian literature are urged as evidence for the theory. Papias, leader of the church at Hierapolis in Asia Minor and associate of Polycarp and others who had been trained by the apostles, says: “Matthew composed the Oracles (Ta Logia) in the Hebrew dialect, and every one translated it as he was able” (Eusebius, Eccles. Hist. 111. 39). From this declaration they take the name The Logia and suppose it to have been an earlier, shorter work than our Gospel of Matthew. But neither the statement of Papias nor that of any other of the early Christian scholars gives ground for the supposition. Instead of implying that it was a different book, he implies exactly the opposite — that the book was their Gospel of Matthew which now furnished no difficulty of translation since it was in Greek, but which in its first writing was in Hebrew and caused such difficulty. The past tense “every one translated” implies that this was not true of the book at the time he wrote. His whole statement implies that the book was not in circulation in Hebrew at his time or he would not have had cause to inform his readers on the subject. Matthew wrote for Jewish Christians and to the Jewish readers; hence he wrote at first in Hebrew. But he himself doubtless published it in Greek when the early church swiftly took on a world-wide scope. If Matthew also wrote the Greek edition, this would explain the absence of evidence of our Gospel of Matthew’s being a translation from Aramaic. It is a curious quirk that the critics seeking for evidence of an Aramaic original should declare that Mark rather than Matthew furnishes such indications. Ropes declares: “Among the several Gospels, Mark is the one regarding which the claim of a direct Aramaic original has made most appeal to scholars” (The Synoptic Gospels, p. 97). Into the maze of theorizing which critics have wound around this statement of Papias in order to found here in history their theory of “Q,” Professor Ropes casts the following bombshell: “In using the term ‘oracles,’ it is not unlikely that he [Papias] had in mind a book like one of our Gospels, and he was unquestionably interested in reporting a tradition bearing on the origin of our Greek Gospel of Matthew, which was unquestionably known under that title in his day. His fragmentary sentence, detached from all context, has had great influence on the church’s view of the Gospel of Matthew, and must refer to some important fact within the Aramaic phase of early Christian life. But it is not to be taken as the basis for a theory of ‘Q,’ or, indeed, as having any bearing whatever on that pure hypothesis” (The Synoptic Gospels, pp 107, 108). The Apostle Peter and the Gospel of Mark A second statement from Papias has been much discussed: “Mark being the interpreter of Peter, whatsoever he recorded he wrote with accuracy, but not, however, in the order in which it was spoken or done by our Lord; he was in company with Peter, who gave him such instruction as was necessary, but not to give a history of our Lord’s discourses” (Eusebius, Eccles. Mist. III. 39). This has been the basis of endless theorizing upon the existence of an earlier form of Mark, called Ur-Mark. Professor Ropes also flatly contradicts this whole effort and declares that the statement of Papias refers to our Gospel of Mark: “A third piece of knowledge relates to Mark and Matthew alone. It is of prime importance, although limited in its bearing, more limited, in reality, than is sometimes thought. At some time before the year 160,

perhaps many years before that date, the Christian bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor, named Papias, wrote a statement which has been preserved for us in trustworthy form, although most of his book has been lost. He had had the advantage of acquaintances with older men who had themselves known some of the veterans of a still earlier, and even of the first, generation of Christians, and from his own conversation with these older men he reports what they had told him of their intercourse with those veterans. One of them had stated to Papias' informant that Mark had at some time been in contact with the apostle Peter, and Mark wrote down what he remembered of Peter's accounts of Christ's words and deeds. Whether anything beyond this in Papias' long sentence came to him thus, with only one intermediary, from the veteran, whom he calls 'the Elder,' and what Papias means by calling Mark the 'interpreter' of Peter, are questions of uncertain answer and are immaterial. There is no question that Papias, writing when he did, meant our Gospel of Mark by the book he refers to" (The Synoptic Gospels, pp. 105, 106). It should be noted in this quotation how Professor Ropes attempts to avoid the admission that Papias was actually trained by the apostle John himself. He attempts to create the impression that another generation intervened between the apostle John and Papias, even while admitting that Papias wrote this famous statement in a.d. 160 and "perhaps many years before that date." The early Christian writers declare that John wrote his Gospel at Ephesus about a.d. 85. Professor Ropes undertakes to leave room for an intervening generation by underscoring the fact that Papias in this passage speaks of John the Elder instead of John, the apostle. This is the radical theory, to which reference has been made before, that two Johns lived at Ephesus: one the apostle and, succeeding him, a younger man, named John the Elder. All of this is conceived from the title "the Elder" which Papias used concerning the aged apostle John.

Deadly Effect of the Quotations from Papias

Before leaving the external evidence from Papias, it should be noted that the passages strike hard at the Two-source Theory itself.Papias gives no indication whatsoever of any contact or connection between the writing of the two narratives, the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. His declaration that Mark was directed or informed by Peter in the writing of his Gospel upsets completely the theory that the author of our Gospel of Mark would need the help of so-called "sources." Peter had been with Christ from the beginning; if Mark had the information Peter gave, what need had he of more help? Moreover, Papias affirms that the apostle Matthew wrote his Gospel. Matthew was with Jesus in person. What need would he have had of "sources"? Who would know better than he himself? Why have to borrow from Mark, who was not an eyewitness, accounts of thrilling events he had himself experienced? Again, take notice of the implication in the affirmation that Matthew wrote in Aramaic. This certainly implies that Matthew's Gospel was the first to be written; Matthew wrote while the Hebrew element was still strong in the early church. This is death to the Two-source Theory which supposes that Mark was written first and that Matthew copied from Mark. That the above inference from the statement of Papias is correct, may be confirmed from the declaration of Irenaeus, who lived from about a.d. 135 to 200. He, too, had seen Polycarp in his youth and had been instructed by those associated with the apostles. He declares: "Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome and laying the foundations of the church. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter. Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the gospel

preached by him. Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who had also leaned upon His breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia" (Against Heresies, III. 1). The Two-source Theory must fly in the face of the testimony of the early Christian writers who had been in touch with the apostles or those instructed by them. The issue is history versus theory, facts versus presuppositions. Thus do the critics hang themselves from the very two passages of Papias upon which they had hoped to suspend their theory.

Dilemma of Pseudo-conservatives The Two-source Theory arose in a period when the critics assigned the Gospels to a late date in the second century. Radical scholars of the nineteenth century held that the Gospels were written late by unknown "editors" who knew nothing at first hand of the facts of Jesus' life and had to draw on ancient "sources." They supposed these writers used the names of apostles to give authority and credence to their publications. Two monstrous inconsistencies now face the proponents of this theory. On the one hand, there is the group of writers who are ordinarily considered conservative, but who have adopted this theory. You can scarcely pick up a magazine or book commenting on the Gospel narratives but you will find this theory staring you in the face: Mark wrote first, Matthew copied, etc. When men of conservative reputation such as A. T. Robertson adopt and expound the Two-source Theory (A Harmony of the Gospels, p255), here is the ridiculous situation which results. They still hold that the Gospel of Matthew was written by the apostle Matthew who was with Jesus during His ministry and yet that he did not have such ordinary intelligence as to be able to record facts in the life of Jesus which he saw and heard without copying from Mark who was not present. Truly, the structure of Christian faith can not be made to fit on the warped and wobbly foundation of nineteenth-century infidelity. If our Gospels were written by eyewitnesses or those who were immediately in touch with eyewitnesses, then what need of "sources"? The Early Date of the Gospels The dilemma of the more radical scholars is not less embarrassing. They have on their hands a theory which was specially constructed to fit the theory of a late, second-century date for the Gospel narratives and, now that the evidence has become overwhelming, they have had to surrender the question of late date and move the books up into the first century. Professor Torrey, of Yale, declares there is not a scintilla of evidence to sustain the supposition of a late date (second century) for the Gospels. Professor Ropes frankly admits the fact that the Gospels must have been written in the first century: "From these circumstances it is a secure conclusion that about the year 125 after Christ, all the Gospels were already relatively ancient books, associated with an earlier generation. This certainly carries us back to a date not later than about the year 100" (The Synoptic Gospels, pp. 104, 105). Thus he finds himself in the embarrassing position of admitting that the Gospel of John was written at a time when the early Christian writers declare the apostle John was still alive and yet denying that it is accurate history written by the apostle! In casting doubt upon the Fourth Gospel, he must contradict the whole body of early Christian literature. He confesses himself "baffled in any effort to determine how much credible historical knowledge can be drawn from John" (The Synoptic Gospels, p. 91), after affirming it was written in the very period when the apostle John, an eyewitness, was still alive, according to the whole historic testimony of the period. The radical scholar feels that he must by all odds continue to deny the historic value of the Gospel of John because it is so powerful in affirming the deity of Christ, but how he can maintain this denial, while admitting the early date of the book, is a predicament which is indeed baffling. The Time Element of the Theory The critical need of the Two-source Theory, as of its parent — the theory of evolution — is time. Hear the evolutionist as he conjures up a sonorous and unending

array of figures - thousands of years, millions of years, billions of years. He must have unlimited time on which to weave the intricate threads of his theory. So with the current, skeptical theory of the composition of the Gospels. Now that the facts force the date of writing of the Gospel narratives back into the first century, how in such a compressed space is it possible to maintain any longer an extended development from source to source? Professor Ropes places the Synoptics between a.d. 70 and 100. This comes within one or two decades of the time which conservative scholars have always assigned to these narratives (probably 50-60, and certainly before a.d. 70). How could it be possible that during the short period of forty years, myths should grow up and be published as historic facts while hundreds of eyewitnesses of these events in the life of Christ, which are presented as astounding miracles, were still alive? How could it he possible, when the date of the Gospels is admitted to he at a time well within the probable lifetime of the apostles, that the writers should have to fumble with “sources” and copy from one another, if they themselves saw and heard or had immediate access to the eyewitnesses who had a leading part in the events recorded? The clinching question is: how could it be possible for the Gospel of Matthew, which was a “relatively ancient” document by a.d. 125 and quite evidently known and revered in the church during the closing years of the first century, to be a forged document — a pseudonymous writing — to which the name of the apostle Matthew had been attached under the very eyes of those still living who had been associated with him? If it is admitted that the apostle Matthew wrote the Gospel which bears his name, the Two-source Theory becomes ridiculous, for what need would an eyewitness of even ordinary intelligence have of copying such matter as the critics hold the author of Matthew’s Gospel copied from Mark? A scholar less acute in his reasoning or less conscientious in his writing might be unable to see or unwilling to admit this critical dilemma. Not so with Professor Ropes. He both sees and admits the difficulty and that he can not solve it. He starts his whole series of lectures with the declaration that he is building on an “assumption” in declaring Matthew and Luke copied from Mark. Then he uses this “assumption” to deny that the apostle Matthew wrote the Gospel bearing his name. One assumption is thus proved by another assumption! But he at least sees that he must deny the apostolic authorship of the Gospel of Matthew to maintain his theory. “Now it is inconceivable that one of the twelve, such as the apostle Matthew, should have been so dependent as the author of the First Gospel shows himself to have been on an informant (Mark) whose opportunities for knowledge of the events were incomparably inferior to his own. Consequently the conclusion seems inevitable that the author of the First Gospel, the so-called Gospel of Matthew, was not the apostle Matthew. What led to the name, which this Gospel has borne from the earliest times, what relation Matthew the apostle may have had to our Gospel or to one of its sources, can merely be the subject of conjecture, and, as a matter of fact. conjectures on this question have proved elusive and futile” (The Synoptic Gospels, p. 38). What a confession! It sounds like a person who finds himself driven into a corner and forced to throw up his hands. He has no explanation as to how this Gospel could have arisen at such an early time and have been attributed to Matthew the apostle, when it was not written by him. The Two-source Theory was built by the skeptics of the nineteenth century on the assumption that the Gospels are late, second-century documents; it simply does not fit into the admitted facts today that the Gospels were written far back in the first century.

“Q” the Mythical

One of the features of the Two-source Theory which has been most confidently affirmed is that back of Matthew is an earlier document, “Q.” Thousands of pages have been written describing this document. A. T. Robertson says in A Harmony of the Gospels: “The criticism of the Synoptic Gospels has been able to reach a broad general conclusion that is likely to stand the test of time. The reason for this happy solution lies in the fact that the processes and results can be tested. It is not mere subjective speculation. Any one who knows how to weigh evidence can compare Mark, Matthew and Luke in the English, and still better in the Greek. The pages of the present harmony offer proof enough. It is as plain as a pikestaff that both our Matthew and Luke used practically all of Mark and followed his general order of events. For this reason Mark has been placed first on the pages where this Gospel appears at all. But another thing is equally dear and that is that both Matthew and Luke had another source in common because they each give practically identical matter for much that is not in Mark at all. This second common source for Matthew and Luke has been called Logia because it is chiefly discourses. It is sometimes referred to as ‘Q.’ . . Unfortunately we do not have the whole of the Logia (Q) before us as in the case of Mark” (p 255). This flamboyant affirmation of “Q” comes from the supposedly conservative Professor A. T. Robertson, of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Now let us hear Professor Ropes, radical scholar of the Unitarian Harvard University, as with sledge hammer blows he smashes into bits this theoretical structure “Q.” “It is commonly held that Matthew drew much of his matter from an earlier compilation of Jesus’ sayings also used by Luke and nowadays sometimes dubbed ‘Q.’ But of such a book no ancient seems ever to have heard, and the grounds on which its existence is inferred by modern scholars are far less secure than is commonly represented or supposed” (p 37). Again he says: “The hypothesis is usually accepted that there was in existence at the close of the first century a book containing an extensive record of Jesus’ sayings, from which both Matthew and Luke drew, but which, having been largely reproduced in their Gospels, was thereafter lost. This supposed book was often termed the ‘Logia’ by scholars of the last century. In the present generation it is more commonly known by the symbol ‘Q.’ Matthew, as can be observed by anyone, has combined this material of Jesus’ sayings into his large unified discourses and blocks of connected paragraphs. Luke has it distributed in smaller portions, mainly in two long sections of his Gospel. Now, in view of these plain facts it is a necessary conclusion, that if Matthew and Luke wrote their Gospels independently, such a common source, ‘Q,’ must have once existed. However, in the discussion of this matter — which of late has reached enormous proportions and attained to bewildering perplexity — the fundamental assumption that Luke and Matthew were independent has been but lightly treated, and often the critical significance of this question for the problem does not seem to have been present to the critics’ minds. There is, however, an alternative; namely, that Luke drew these sayings from Matthew, and in the present state of the investigation it ought not to be excluded from consideration. That this alternative is still open renders unsatisfactory a great deal of current discussion of these Gospels and their sources, and makes even more futile the various inconclusive attempts to determine the limits, contents, purpose, and ideas of ‘Q,’ the hypothetical ‘second source’ of Matthew and Luke. The third possibility, that Matthew is dependent upon Luke for these sayings, may, for a variety of reasons, be dismissed, although the idea is sometimes advanced. In any case, it ought to be repeated that ‘Q,’ if it ever existed, is a pure inference, a strictly hypothetical document. No ancient writer known to us appears to have so much as heard of it, to say nothing of knowing it by personal inspection.

“This theory of a second written source, devised to explain the resemblances of Matthew and Luke, seems to have occurred to the mind of man, or at least to have been published to the world, just one hundred years ago. In the present state of our knowledge, whether such a document ever existed must be regarded as uncertain” (The Synoptic Gospels, pp. 67, 68). Repeatedly Professor Ropes attacks the assurance with which radical scholars conjure up “Q.” “That Mark, in substantially its present form, was drawn on by Matthew and Luke for the greater part of their narrative of events and incidents, can be regarded as an achieved result of Synoptic criticism, and can be used without scruple as the basis for modern study. But it is surprising, and a little mortifying to scholarship, to have to admit that this fundamental conclusion is the only assured result of the vast amount of incessant labor which has been expended upon the so called Synoptic problem in the whole of the past one hundred years and more. As to the other main question for the examination of which the material is directly open to students, that presented by the great mass of sayings common to Matthew and Luke, but not found in Mark, agreement among scholars is less than it was forty years ago. The widespread idea of a common source, now lost, for these two Gospels — the theory of ‘Logia’ or ‘Q’ — has tended to be modified, refined, and complicated to such a degree as, for that reason if for no other, to arouse doubts of its validity. There is a simpler, competing possibility; namely, that Luke drew these sayings from our Gospel of Matthew, which has never been shown to be impossible. If this could be made a probability, the hypothesis of ‘Q’ would lose at least its main ground of support” (The Synoptic Gospels, p 93). Thus, after one hundred years of discussion and endless speculation in which the towering structure of “Q” “has reached enormous proportions and attained to bewildering perplexity,” it is frankly admitted that its foundation is mere shifting sand and the evident doom of the theory clearly presaged. Did Luke Use Matthew? But what of the alternative which Professor Ropes offers — the theory that Luke copied directly from Matthew? Forced to yield the theory “Q” after all the years of toil spent in constructing it, he urges the possibility that Luke copied from Matthew. But this theory also has been thoroughly discredited. The famous English scholar Alfred Plummer has achieved a monumental work in his commentary on Luke. It is modernistic, in some positions advanced, but it stands in the sharpest contrast with other commentaries of the International Critical Series on the Gospel narratives. Allen’s Commentary on Matthew is devoted almost completely to a defense of the Two-source Theory and as a commentary is a most pathetic failure. Any meager grains of wheat are hopelessly lost in the chaff. But Plummer devotes himself to a careful exegesis of the text as would be expected of a commentator. However, he pauses ever and anon to point out the improbability of the theory that Luke copied from Matthew. Moreover, it is exceedingly interesting to notice that he holds that Luke did not even have Mark before him. He accepts rather the theory of Ur-Mark as a source of the three. “The early narrative (itself perhaps not primary), of which all three Synoptists make use, and which constitutes the main portion of Mark’s Gospel, was probably already in writing when Luke made use of it. Luke may have had the Second Gospel itself, pretty nearly in the form we have it, and may include the author of it among the polloi (Luke 1:1). But some phenomena are rather against this. Luke omits (Luke 6:5) ‘the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath’ (Mark 2:27). He omits the whole of Mark 6:45-56; Mark 7:1-37; Mark 8:1-9, which contains the digression into the borders of Tyre and Sidon and the incident with the Syrophoenician woman, which is also in Matthew (Matthew 15:21-28). And all of this would have been full of interest to Luke’s Gentile readers. That he had our First Gospel is much less probable. There is so much that he would have been most likely to appropriate if he had known it, that the

omission is most easily explained by assuming that he did not know it. He omits the visit of the Gentile Magi (Matthew 2:1-15). At Luke 20:17 he omits ‘Therefore I say to you, The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof’ (Matthew 21:43). At Luke 21:12-16 he omits ‘And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations’ (Matthew 24:14; comp. Mark 13:10). Compare the omission of Matthew 17:6, Matthew 17:7 at Luke 9:35, of Matthew 17:19, Matthew 17:20 at Luke 9:18; and see the section “Did Jesus Speak Greek.” Both to Luke and his readers such things would have been most significant. Again, would Luke have left the differences between his own Gospel and that of Matthew as they are, if he had been aware of them? Contrast Matthew 2:14, Matthew 2:15 with Luke 2:39; Matthew 28:7, Matthew 28:10, Matthew 28:16 with Luke 24:49; and generally mark the differences between the narratives of the Nativity and of the resurrection in these two Gospels, the divergencies in the two genealogies, the ‘eight days’ (Luke) and the ‘six days’ (Matthew and Mark) at the transfiguration, and the perplexing phenomena in the Sermon on the Mount. These points lead us to the conclusion that Luke was not familiar with our First Gospel, even if he knew it at all. But, besides the early narrative, which seems to have been nearly coextensive with our Second Gospel, Matthew and Luke used the same collection,or two similar collections, of ‘Oracles’ or ‘Sayings of the Lord’; and hence the large amount of matter, chiefly discourses, which is common to Matthew and Luke, but is not found in Mark. This collection, however, can hardly have been a single document, for the common material is used very differently by the two evangelists, especially as regards arrangement. A Book of ‘Oracles’ must not be hastily assumed.

“In addition to these two main sources, (1) the narrative of events, which he shares with Matthew and Mark, and (2) the collection of discourses, which he shares with Matthew; and besides (3) the smaller documents about the infancy incorporated in the first two chapters, which are peculiar to himself — Luke evidently had (4) large sources of information respecting the Ministry, which are also peculiar to himself” (Commentary on Luke, Introduction, pp. 23ff.).

Independence of Luke’s Gospel This compact citation from Plummer which is crammed to the limit with points of evidence and cross currents of the Two-source Theory, probably is enough to give the untrained reader an insight into what the learned Harvard professor was moved to call “enormous proportions” and “bewildering perplexity” of the Two-source Theory. Plummer advances some twenty-two points of evidence in the paragraphs quoted above. And some of these items of proof he offers to show that Luke did not have Mark before him in its present form, as well as Matthew. Thus that which Professor Ropes argued as absolutely assured (that Luke copied from our Mark) and the theory which he urged (that Luke copied from our Matthew) are both assailed. Those who will have the patience to look up in Plummer’s Commentary the various passages he cites in his introduction will find that the argument is powerful. Take, for instance, his elaboration of the omission by Luke of the entire narrative found in Matthew and Mark of the events from the feeding of the five thousand to the confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi. If Luke copied from Mark and Matthew, why did he omit the thrilling scene when Jesus walked on the water, when he had just recorded, as did the others, the feeding of the five thousand? What conceivable reason can any person give for such an omission, if he were copying from narratives which contained it? Why omit all the immensely interesting series of events up to Caesarea Philippi? Plummer, like Professor Ropes, tries desperately to ding to the Two-source Theory, but

all that is left, when it collides with the facts, is unintelligible fragments. After noting this strange series of omissions by Luke, Plummer says, “can he have seen either Matthew or Mark? So also here: both the others mention that the incident (confession of Peter) took place near Caesarea Philippi, on the confines of heathenism. Luke mentions no place. It is a desperate expedient to suppose with Reuss that the copy of Mark, which Luke knew, chanced to omit these sections” (Commentary on Luke, p 246). In addition to this, he points out the immense amount of new material which is found only in Luke. “According to one calculation, if the contents of the Synoptic Gospels are divided into 172 sections, of these 172, Luke has 123 (3/4), Matthew 112 (2/3), and Mark 84 (1/2); and of these 172, Luke has 48 which are peculiar to himself (2/7), Matthew has 22 (1/8), and Mark has 5 (1/37).” Now how can anyone explain all of this original material in Luke and the other Synoptics if Matthew and Luke copied from Mark, and Luke also from Matthew? Plummer tries to explain that there was a large number of sources from which Luke copied. But the Two-source Theory ceases to be “Two-source” and tends to become manifold and then infinitesimal. Thus the whole theory breaks up. This gives further significance to the admissions of Professor Ropes and his patient effort to try to turn back and collect the fragments of the theory and put them back again into a two-fold container (Mark and Matthew). The “bewildering perplexity” of the theory as the skeptical writers go round and round in their endless attempt to explain on a purely rational basis the similarities of the Synoptics makes the reader dizzy.

Independence of Matthew’s Gospel The peculiar gyrations of which the critic is capable in the effort to maintain this theory is abundantly illustrated in Allen’s Commentary on Matthew. He attempts to explain differences in Matthew from the account of Mark, from which he supposes that Matthew copied, by arguing the growth of the idea that Jesus was the Son of God and the dislike of the author of Matthew’s Gospel for any mention of human emotions on the part of Jesus. For example, in the section selected above for illustration to show the absolute independence of Luke from both Matthew and Mark (the events from the feeding of the five thousand to the scene at Caesarea Philippi), there is the strong evidence that Matthew also wrote entirely independent of Mark, to be found in the omission by Matthew of the healing of the deaf stammerer (Mark 7:31-37). Allen claims that the reason that “the editor of Matthew” did not copy from Mark this miracle and that of the healing of the blind man of Bethsaida (Mark 8:22-26) is that they were both private and in both the method of Jesus was peculiar! “The editor of Matthew” did not like the idea that Jesus used “physical contact or material means,” or sighed; the people disobeyed Christ, or that recovery of the sight was gradual! This shows the absurd extremities to which the advocates of the Two-source Theory are forced. Questions to be considered in regard to this are: (1) Is it true that Matthew does not record miracles in which Jesus touched the person healed? Cf. Matthew 8:3, Matthew 8:15; Matthew 9:29; Matthew 20:34. (2) Is it true that Matthew gives greater emphasis to the “immediacy” of Christ’s miracles? (3) Is it true that Matthew avoids attributing “emotion and effort to Christ”? (Note Jesus’ weeping over Jerusalem in Matthew and not in Mark!) (4) Is it true that Matthew avoids admitting that people disobeyed His injunctions? (5) Is it true that Matthew avoids picturing Jesus as “asking questions as though He had not absolute knowledge”? Notice how the account of Matthew generalizing on the work of Jesus here verifies, by a double reference to the dumb being caused to speak, the record of Mark that it was the healing of a deaf and dumb man which caused the most excitement. This incident is only one of a whole multitude of citations which could be offered to show that the assumption of the modernists that Matthew copied from Mark simply can not stand the test of the facts.

Independence of John's Gospel

It can be clearly established that one of the Gospel writers had seen the other Gospel narratives before he wrote his account. The Gospel of John was written so much later (a.d. 85-90) than the other Gospel accounts (a.d. 50-60) that everyone agrees that the writer must have been familiar with the contents of the Synoptics. That being the case, this should be the ideal book on which to test the whole theory that the Gospels arose out of a process of interdependence, through copying from one another or from common sources. No one can absolutely prove that either Matthew, Mark, or Luke, who wrote in the same period, was familiar with the work of the other two. Now no one denies that the author of the Fourth Gospel knew the three narratives that had already been written. The test question then is, Does the Gospel of John bear evidence of the author's having copied his narrative from the other three? Kent affirms that this is true, as indicated by the lines on his sketch. But there is not the slightest evidence to sustain his declaration. A cursory reading of the four books will immediately show that any effect which the preceding narratives had upon John was purely negative. Instead of copying from the others, he deliberately avoided repeating what they had recorded and devoted himself to writing down events and sermons which had not been mentioned. In the whole ministry of Jesus, he only records one miracle which the other three record (excepting, of course, the resurrection of Jesus): the feeding of the five thousand. And in this miracle he gives an entirely fresh and original presentation of setting, details, and results. A. T. Robertson claims that the Two-source Theory must be true because "the processes and results can be tested." But here we see that the theory fails under the most elementary and indubitable test which can possibly be made. In the one case where the test is clear-cut and inescapable, the answer is plainly in the negative: John did not copy from the other three. Modernists attempt to break the force of this by a continuous attack upon the historical merit of John and by insisting that the Synoptic problem must be kept in an entirely different compartment from the problem of the Fourth Gospel. But here are the four narratives in our New Testament. If Matthew copied from Mark, and Luke from Mark and Matthew, if that is the way in which the accounts grew up, then why did not John copy from all three? According to the logic of the theory, Professor Kent had to affirm that John copied from the others. But the facts in the case prove exactly the opposite.

Declaration of Purpose and Method by Luke

Two of the narratives contain direct assertions as to the purpose and methods which directed the writing: Luke and John. The prologue of Luke's Gospel has been frequently quoted as evidence for the Two-source Theory. But a close examination of its contents will show that it offers absolutely no support to the supposition that he copied his narratives from preceding ones. He affirms exactly the opposite. "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us, even as they delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed" (Luke 1:1-4). It was natural and inevitable that immediately after Pentecost, Christians in Jerusalem would be moved to write to their relatives and friends in Joppa, Caesarea or elsewhere, and explain to them the wonderful things which had transpired. Such brief accounts would naturally be passed about. Luke refers to such efforts and does not condemn them. Martin Luther translated "many have presumed" to draw up a narrative, but Luke does not condemn the

efforts of those who had written as presumptuous. The universal command had been to preach the Word. Luke does imply that the “many” were not eyewitnesses or had not had his opportunities for knowledge, or had not gone back to the beginning; had not been entirely accurate or orderly in their narratives or at least had been inadequate and incomplete. Luke evidently does not refer to the works of Matthew and Mark. These were authoritative narratives, the one by an eyewitness and apostle; the other, written under the guidance of the apostle Peter. The following free paraphrase will assist in gathering the full meaning of Luke as added phrases give the shading of the Greek words and syntax and the implications of the context: “Since many have been attempting to write an account of the life of Christ as enacted in the midst of those of us who are now Christians, using the information which the apostles and other eyewitnesses who were with Jesus from the beginning and who also have been ministers of the word and fully tested its power and their devotion to the divine message, have been delivering in sermons and interviews unto us, who are not eyewitnesses, it seemed entirely proper for me also, since I have interviewed the available witnesses with the greatest care and traced the course of events to the very start, to write unto you a narrative drawn up in orderly fashion, so that you, most excellent Theophilus, might be absolutely assured of the exact facts concerning Christ which you have already learned by oral instruction.” Now instead of this passage giving even the slightest ground for saying that Luke used the writings of those who had preceded him, exactly the opposite is true. He pushes aside the efforts to write a narrative about Christ which he refers to as utterly inadequate, and places his own work in the sharpest contrast with them. If he knew of the narratives of Matthew and Mark, he certainly does not include them in his reference, but he also did not use them in his writing for he deliberately declares that his document is based upon firsthand interviews with the eyewitnesses. Instead of copying from other writings, he investigated for himself.

Declaration of John

John is the other narrator who frankly states his plan of writing. He solemnly claims to have been an eye-witness of the events he records: “And he that hath seen hath borne witness, and his witness is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye also may believe” (John 19:35). He claims to have had at his command an almost inexhaustible amount of information as to events and sermons of Jesus which he does not record: “Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name” (John 20:30, John 20:31). “This is the disciple that beareth witness of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his witness is true. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written” (John 21:24, John 21:25). This collides squarely with the fundamental assumption of the modernists that the Gospel writers copied from one another because they had only very scanty information available and that they wrote everything they knew.
A Collection of Suppositions

W. B. Hill in his Introduction to the Life of Christ gives an interesting review of the history of speculation concerning the relation of the Gospel narratives and offers a series of arguments to sustain the Two-source Theory. The reader will discover, where he is describing the process by which the Gospels arose as writers copied from one another, that he uses such words as “perhaps,” “doubtless,” “very probable,” “may explain,” “more likely,” “supposing,” “supposes,”

“apparently,” “many think,” about twenty-two times in the compass of two pages. This is characteristic of the foundation of sand on which the theory rests. William Jennings Bryan once counted such words on the pages of a so-called scientific book advocating evolution and after reciting the hundreds of times that such words were used, uttered one of the greatest epigrams of modern times.” ‘We may well suppose’ is not a sufficient substitute for ‘Thus saith the Lord.’

Similarities to Be Expected The argument is advanced by Professor Hill that if the Gospels were written independently we should expect them to be “made up of different selections and have little in common” since all three Synoptics are very brief and give only a few of the deeds and sayings of Jesus out of a great mass. A sufficient rejoinder to this is found in the fundamental assumption of Professor Hill which is exactly the opposite of what should be affirmed. If the Gospels were written independently, we should expect them to be similar and to record many of the same great scenes, miracles, and sayings: to have much in common. Even if one follows the purely rationalistic basis for explanation of the relation of the narratives and disregards completely their inspiration, it still follows that the sermons and events which had impressed most profoundly one witness would also impress another and would appear in these narratives. This becomes especially clear when we remember that the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus are the very center of the gospel as it was the great purpose of His coming into the world. About one-half of the Gospels is devoted to the events of the last week, especially the trial, death, burial, and resurrection. Thus it is to be expected and was absolutely necessary that they should tell the same things much of the time.

Differences Are Unexplained A further statement of this argument from Professor Hill is as follows: “Mark has comparatively few of the teachings of Jesus, but gives various important incidents in His life, from the imprisonment of John the Baptist down to the resurrection. Now these same incidents, often arranged in the same order and told sometimes in almost identical words, form the main part of the narrative in Matthew and Luke” (Introduction to the Life of Christ, p 104). Notice the words “often,” “sometimes,” “almost.” In contrast with this, the reader will find that Matthew and Luke are very different from Mark in the early sections. And in the latter half of their narratives, where they describe the tragic climax of Jesus’ ministry, each continually introduces new facts and sayings which the others do not record. This is true of the whole record. This also is to be expected. The same great events and sermons would appeal to various witnesses, but different details and angles would at times impress different men. The differences in the Gospel accounts are so startling that one hundred and fifty years ago the skeptics were directing their whole attack to the proposition that the Gospel narratives contradict one another hopelessly. Now they have swung to the other extreme and argue that they are so much alike that the writers must have copied from one another or from common sources! As a matter of fact, both positions are false and the arguments advanced for each help to destroy the other. Professor Hill admits the weakness and inadequate character of Synoptic criticism when he admits the distinct character of the Gospels. “If we add John, and thus make a harmony of the four Gospels, the peculiarity of the Synoptics becomes still more evident, for John has very little in common with the other three; and parallel columns are usually impossible. In fact, there is nowhere else in biographical literature an instance of three books so similar and yet distinct. Each relates or omits certain incidents and sayings not related or not omitted by one or both of the other two; and in a passage common to two or to all three the phraseology may be identical for a little ways, and then vary without any

apparent reason. Each book has its individual character, its own way of treating a topic, and its special purpose; there is no possibility of identifying one with another" (Introduction to the Life of Christ, p. 105). "When we seek to determine which Gospel was first, and which was second or third, serious difficulties arise. For example, Matthew is much longer than Mark: then evidently — according to this theory — (that each succeeding Gospel was copied from the preceding) if it was written later, it is an enlargement of Mark: or if it was written earlier, it is condensed in Mark. But if it is an enlargement, why does it omit some important portions of Mark? Or, if Mark is a condensation, why does Mark give some of the common facts in much fuller form? And in either case, why should the copying be in one place very exact and in another place full of alterations? There may be a measure of truth in this theory of mutual dependence; but it does not fully solve the Synoptic problem. This is shown by the fact that scholars who adopt it can not agree as to the order of writing of the Gospels, or their relation to one another. Each of the three Gospels has been given a first or second or third place in time, and each has been supposed to be dependent upon one or both of the other two; and yet none of these arrangements has fully solved the problem" (Introduction to the Life of Christ, pp 107, 108). Could any more damaging admissions be imagined? Radical scholars using exactly the same data in the Gospel narratives come to exactly opposite conclusions as to which Gospel was written first and who copied from whom!

Bewildering Array of Theories

A. B. Bruce, the great Scotch scholar, points out this weakness in the whole theory of interdependence: "Theoretic critics tell, each one in turn, their own story very plausibly, but it helps to deliver simple readers from the spell of their enchantment, to compare the results at which they respectively arrive. Such a comparison does not inspire confidence in the methods and verdicts of Tendenz-Kritik as practiced by the experts. This may be illustrated by placing side by side the views of Baur and Pfleiderer respecting the Synoptical Gospels. Take first the order in which these Gospels were written. Baur arranges them thus: Matthew, Luke, Mark; Pfleiderer simply reverses the order, so that it runs: Mark, Luke, Matthew. With reference to the historic value of the Gospels the two masters are equally divergent in opinion. In the esteem of the earlier critic, Matthew is entitled to the highest measure of credit; for the latter he possesses the least" (Apologetics, pp. 450, 451). It is most surprising to hear Bruce, after such a statement as this, agree with the present critical conclusion that Mark was used by Matthew and Luke. After warning others that the whole method was without rational foundation, he had to fall into the pit from which he warned others. Some idea of the contradictory views advanced on the question as to which Gospel came first and which was used as a source by the others can be gained from the following array of theories which have been advanced by various scholars: (1) Matthew wrote first; Luke and Mark used Matthew (Luke also used Mark). (2) Mark, Matthew and Luke: from Mark came the Hebrew edition of Matthew and also Luke; the Greek edition of Matthew made use of both. (3) Mark, Luke, Matthew (written in this order, the latter two copying from Mark and the last from the second). (4) Luke, Matthew, Mark. (5) Luke, Mark, Matthew. The fact that the Two-source Theory, which is the popular radical view at the present time, places Mark first and affirms Matthew copied from Mark, and Luke from both, is not based upon any new facts. It is simply the prevailing view. World-famous scholars using the same facts have arrived at all the various views indicated above.

Single-source Theory A variation of the theory is seen in the view that all the Synoptics sprang from a single source — a Gospel which has been lost. Professor Hill points out that the critics who

have advanced this view disagree as to whether this lost document was written in Greek or in Hebrew. Some argue it must have been written in Greek (in order to explain the similarities of the Synoptics); others hold it was in Aramaic or Hebrew (in order to explain their differences). Both fail to explain the facts for these theorists have been compelled to suppose the lost Gospel appeared in various editions and that each evangelist used a different edition! But how could such a book have existed for so long a time as to have appeared in a variety of widely different editions and to have exercised such a profound influence upon the church and the history of the world, and have been lost without trace, never to be mentioned or heard of except in the imagination of modern skeptics? Moreover, the early date of the Gospels is absolutely fatal to the whole theory of a long development of a source document which is supposed to have passed from one edition to another and ruled the conviction of the church for decades and then suddenly disappeared without leaving the slightest trace or direct quotation in all early Christian literature. The Gospels and the Eyewitnesses The admission that Luke, the physician, wrote our Gospel of Luke is as fatal to the radical theory of development as the citations from Papias. Both the Gospel of Luke and Acts have been the center of furious controversy, but the extended discussion has brought forth repeated admissions from radical scholars, such as Harnack, that these books are the work of Luke, the companion of Paul. The opening sentences of Acts show clearly that the same person wrote both books and directed them both to the same destination; and that the Gospel had been written sometime previous to the Book of Acts. “The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began to do and to teach . . “ (Acts 1:1; cf. Luke 1:3). The manner in which the Book of Acts closes with the reader in breathless suspense as to what became of Paul imprisoned at Rome and without the slightest indication as to whether he was released or beheaded can only be explained by the publication of the book at the close of Paul’s two years in prison there. This settles the date of Acts at about a.d. 63. It immediately forces the date of Luke earlier by some years. Matthew and Mark were evidently written still earlier. And if these Gospels were written in the period between a.d. 50 and 60, there was only a short space of about twenty-five years separating the writers from the events. Matthew was an eyewitness. Other eyewitnesses abounded with whom Mark and Luke would be in immediate contact. What necessity would these writers have for written sources? The testimony of the early Christian writers forms a sort of unbreakable chain joining our present text of the New Testament which dates at least back into the middle of the fourth century, to the original documents written by Matthew, Mark and Luke. This living chain of witnesses includes Polycarp, who lived from about a.d. 50 to 155; Papias, who was born about a.d. 70; Clement of Rome, who died in a.d. 101 after having written his famous Epistle about six years earlier; Justin Martyr, who was at his prime in a.d. 140; Irenaeus, who flourished in a.d. 180 and whose experience reached back to join the later first century Christians. The chain broadens with a wider stretch of links as we come to the close of the second century. The whole weight of this evidence sustains the documents which we possess in the New Testament as the original and the actual work of the apostles or those associated with them. The radical theory of development rests upon the presupposition of a late date for the Gospel narratives which now must be abandoned.

Theory of Stereotyped Oral Tradition A further development of the theory is that this lost Gospel, which the radicals presuppose, was never written, but was merely an oral Gospel. This comes very near to yielding the whole theory of common sources for the narratives, because the Christian who believes the Gospel writers were divinely inspired also believes that Peter and the other

apostles who preached the first sermons established the faith of the early Christians and exercised a profound influence on the things which were preached and emphasized in the early church. The statement of Papias that Peter was the source from whom Mark secured his information fits entirely with the view that the preaching of Peter had a great influence upon the things believed and proclaimed about Christ in the early church. But if Mark had heard Peter preach and talked with him or even written under his immediate direction, what need would he have had of a written source such as Ur-Mark? The same principle applies that Matthew himself would have had a great influence by his preaching upon the faith of the early church. Guided by the same Spirit, he would have emphasized the same things. But what need would he have had to copy from Mark? The critics who hold that there was a stereotyped oral tradition which served as a definite source of the Synoptics are compelled to face the same dilemma as their comrades in supposing a late date for our Gospel narratives, such a date as the radicals themselves have had to surrender. Moreover, other critics object to the “oral Gospel” theory on the ground that such an early Gospel must have been in Aramaic and thus fails to explain the similarities of the Greek texts of the Synoptics. And if the Gospel was so fixed by oral tradition, how account for the many differences? For instance, why does Mark fail to record so many incidents found in Matthew or Luke or both, or vice versa?

Divine Inspiration of the Writers

There can be no doubt but that in the early preaching of the apostles and other eyewitnesses certain facts and teachings received universal and powerful emphasis. This is to be expected since they were all guided by the Holy Spirit. This same choice and emphasis would reveal itself in the spoken and in the written word. But it is not so much a matter of influence by an “oral Gospel” as it is influence by the Holy Spirit who guided both the speech and the writing. Do the critics respond that such a statement does not explain the close similarities in our Gospel narratives? That all depends upon the power of the Holy Spirit to guide the writers and whether one believes in such a being as God and in such a thing as a miracle. The whole radical school absolutely discards and denies such a thing as the unique inspiration of the Scriptures. They are purely human books. This makes all the more impossible the situation of a conservative scholar who attempts to combine his belief in a supernatural religion such as the New Testament proclaims, with a purely naturalistic theory of the origin of the biographies of Jesus. Moreover, have the radicals been able by all their theorizing to explain in any fashion the facts which they face in the Gospels? Read again their “mortifying” admissions that after one hundred years of prodigious effort they still find themselves unable to offer a rational explanation of the similarities and differences of the Gospels. The Christian views the documents as inspired by the Holy Spirit. What a confirmation of his faith is found in the futile efforts of the skeptics to explain them on a purely natural basis! Verily the wisdom of God still exceeds that of men and both His Word and His deeds furnish the unbeliever with problems he can not explain. If the Gospel narratives are inspired of God, we should expect them to be unique. Such is the case even in the matter of their similarities and differences. Hear again the confession of Professor Hill: “In fact, there is nowhere else in biographical literature an instance of three books so similar and yet distinct.” There are many other ways and much more important ways in which these books are unlike any others in biographical literature. The individuality of the human writer is evident in each of these narratives, but the superhuman guidance of the Spirit of God — mysterious and inscrutable — is also apparent.

013. Chapter 11 - Form Criticism

Chapter 11 - Form Criticism Origin of Theory The preceding chapter on the Two-source Theory was written in 1936. Now, in revising the book thirty years later, this chapter on Form Criticism is added to give a survey of developments in the field during the recent decades. In his posthumous book, The Synoptic Gospels (1934), James Hardy Ropes expressed profound concern lest the entire critical effort to dissect the Gospel narratives be brought into general disrepute because of the "enormous proportions" and "the bewildering perplexity" of the towering structure of speculations being built up. In his strong protests against the weird, irresponsible speculations that were being heaped up in utter abandon, he was discussing Form Criticism. In 1919 M. Dibelius had published his study of what he considered the history of the forms in which the Gospel narratives had arisen (Die Form geschichte des Evangeliums). In 1921 R. Bultmann had followed a different method, but the objective to carve up the Gospel narratives into tiny segments had been the same. Dibelius had sought to identify the segments by showing how they had arisen out of "quite definite conditions and wants of life." Instead of proceeding from the background, Bultmann had sought to analyze "the particular elements of the tradition operating on the text rather than the background." Bultmann makes a devastating admission in his recent work, History of the Synoptic Tradition (1962), when he says that this entire vast maze of speculations has to move in a circle. "The forms of the literary tradition must be used to establish the influences operating in the life of the community, and the life of the community must be used to render the forms intelligible" (History of the Synoptic Tradition, p 5).

Nature The notorious "shell game" of the days of "the wild west" seems to have proceeded in some such dizzy fashion as this: The mysterious unseen object was moved so swiftly from one hidden location to another that the eye was not able to detect the deceitful maneuvers. Thus the Gospel narratives are arbitrarily cut up into tiny fragments which are then used to affirm "certain influences operating in the life of the community" and these imaginary influences are then introduced as solid ground for establishing the original use of violence on the historical narratives "to render the forms themselves intelligible."

Albright says of Form Criticism, "Only modern scholars who lack both historical method and perspective can spin such a web of speculation as that with which form-critics have surrounded the Gospel tradition." "The leading exponents of the school disagree completely in their theories as to the relation of the principal categories of form-criticism to the life of the early church and vicious circles are evident throughout their work" (From the Stone Age to Christianity, pp 298, 293f.).

Early Exponents

Earlier writers, Holtzmann, Wrede, Johannes Weiss, Wellhausen, H. Gunkel, and K. L. Schmidt, had. all added their particular contributions to dissecting the Gospel narratives and finding at least a few grains of historical wheat amid what they considered the chaff of "secondary material" added to the "oral tradition" by "editorial review." In all this random procedure of adding theory to theory one is reminded again of the sarcastic remark of C. S. Lewis that the entire range of human

speculation concerning the historical documents is covered by the critics with the exception of the one proposition that these documents might be precisely what they claim to be — faithful firsthand history of actual events recorded by eyewitnesses or by men who had immediate access to the eyewitnesses. The general design of the infinite ramifications of Form Criticism as it starts out to create imaginary forms in which imagined segments of the historical accounts were supposed to have arisen can be seen from the following illustrations.

Dibelius' Analysis

It will be seen that the outline of Dibelius' theory which Grobel offers gives only five "pericopes" or "forms," while Thiessen gives six, the "passion story" being the one which Thiessen adds. Donald Guthrie also gives only five forms, in agreement with Grobel's analysis (New Testament Introduction to the Gospels and Acts, 1965, p 282). A study of Dibelius' own statements of his theory confirms Thiessen's analysis. Dibelius declares, "Even in the earliest period. there existed a fixed model of the Passion story, which could be expanded, but not departed from, because it had been handed down from the beginning" (Jesus, p. 33). "Hence, we may presuppose that before our Gospel there had already been a Passion story which was the earliest connected narrative of the life of Christ" (A Fresh Approach to the New Testament and Early Christian Literature, p. 49). But this still leaves Dibelius with five "forms" out of six that do not present the gospel of redemption in Christ through His death and resurrection. It will be seen that the outlines given by Bultmann and Grant have no "forms" which proclaim this gospel of redemption in Christ. The extreme importance of this fact will be examined later in considering an article written by Lewis Foster.

Bultmann explains what he means by the term "apothegms" by pointing out the Greek origin of the word: "a thing uttered"; hence, a short, pithy, instructive saying. He attempts to distinguish apothegms from "the sayings of Jesus that are not placed in a particular framework." This entire procedure reminds one of the swiftly changing fancies and tastes of little children cutting Out paper dolls without any let or hindrance to the undertaking. The segments into which the Gospels are cut are supposed to follow certain principles, but the principles are arbitrarily created by the critic out of his imagination as to what the background was. We are told that these "forms" arose out of "the quite definite conditions and wants of life" in the early church. But it never seems to have dawned upon these critics that the most elemental and omnipresent need was for simple, plain, historical accounts by eyewitnesses that would give the church a solid historical foundation for its faith and for the proclamation of the gospel. The colossal assumption of this entire Tower-of-Babel Form Criticism is that the first Christians did not have enough native intelligence to observe and ascertain with assurance historic events and actual instruction and to write down plain, historical events and teaching of what had been seen and heard. And yet these four Gospel narratives are so unique, so majestic, so unassailable in their historic verity that two thousand years of attacks have been unable to destroy them. The attacks have not even been able to draw the concentrated attention of the world away from these narratives. Just as the radicals resolutely refuse to consider the possibility that this may be actual history in the Gospel narratives, so they refuse to consider it possible that we have honest, faithful, firsthand testimony. And yet they contradict and overturn their whole laborious effort of intricate analysis by spending their entire lives on the study of these narratives! If they are collections of myths, why bother?

It is obvious that the fatal weakness of Form Criticism is the same weakness which destroys the Two-source Theory — it has no foundation. To make their case the more hopeless, its proponents are only interested in building the vast, intricate superstructure higher and higher. This was the tendency which Professor Ropes deplored. He feared it would bring ridicule upon their whole speculative system.

How Prove “Myths”?

Before any attempt can be justly made to “demythologize” the Gospel narratives, it must be proved that there are myths in these accounts to be “demythologized.” Before the Gospel narratives can be cut up into all sorts of odd fragments, it must be proved that these are myths, legends, miracle tales, etc. Just how does a radical critic decide with such ease and assurance that this is a myth, that is a legend, and this next paragraph is a mere “tale” about a miracle; and that none of them is part of straightforward, plain, dependable, historical record written by an eyewitness or one in immediate contact with the eyewitnesses? In Book Four, in the chapter on Mythical Interpretation and Form Criticism,” I attempted to consider this problem. Just what proof can the radical critics offer to prove that these accounts are myths and legends? I attempted to analyze and expose the utter failure of some of the characteristic efforts to derive the Gospel accounts from Greek, Egyptian, Persian, and Buddhist sources. One reviewer of this chapter offered the criticism that these efforts to derive the Gospel accounts from these pagan sources are out of date and are no longer attempted. But here is R. Bultmann in his recent work, History of the Synoptic Tradition (1962), attempting to argue that parallels with these pagan myths give him ground for declaring the Gospel accounts mythical (pp. 6, 7). He contents himself with vague generalization and offers no specific examples to prove that the Gospel writers were copying down pagan; myths. But it is the third and most important of his arguments to substantiate his myth-legend charge.

Bultmann’s Cosmology

Bultmann discusses this proposition of proving the New Testament is a collection of myths in his book Kerygma and Myth. He says that he can prove the presence of myths in the New Testament from the fact it declares heaven is up and hell is down. Bultmann declares, “The cosmology of the New Testament is essentially mythical in character. The world is viewed as a three-storied structure, with the earth in the center, the heaven above, and the underworld beneath. Heaven is the abode of God and of celestial beings — the angels. The underworld is hell, the place of torment” (p. 11). Bultmann absolutely falsifies the facts when he declares that the New Testament undertakes to locate heaven and hell. The New Testament does not state that heaven is one hundred thousand miles east of the sun and west of the moon. Jesus said, “I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there ye may be also.” He does not state where this place is. That is God’s business, and not ours. When Jesus ascended, He went up into the sky and a cloud received Him out of their sight. He declared He would return in like manner. In our own space age these are still the directions in which astronauts launch out into space and return. Jesus declared of the rich man, “In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom” (Luke 16:23). But Jesus did not state where Hades and Paradise are located. He declared that “In all these regions, a great gulf is fixed..,” but still no affirmation is made of their location. There is to be a new heaven and a new earth so that it would seem this earth, after it is renovated by fire, is to have some part in the divine

arrangements, but what these are God has not revealed to us.

Karl Barth's Attack

Further attempts to prove the existence of myths in the New Testament by charging that the process was one of borrowing from pagan religions, as I point out in the chapter "Mythical Interpretation and Form Criticism," are found in the writings of Karl Barth. At two points the Neo-radicalism of Karl Barth can be approached in a practical manner so that the conclusions will not be obscured by his abstruse, confused, contradictory, philosophical speculations. These points are baptism and the resurrection of Jesus. Many people were so elated that Barth had declared that baptism is immersion and cannot be sprinkling or pouring, they failed to see that in his treatment of baptism Barth had denied the inspiration and truth of the New Testament accounts and, by the test which Jesus Himself applies, had assailed the deity of Christ.Barth declared that baptism was a pagan ritual by which novitiates were initiated into the Greek mystery religions and that this pagan ritual was taken over by the Christians. The immediate question is, Who perpetrated this fraud? Was it John the Baptist? Was it Jesus of Nazareth? or the apostles? Or are our New Testament accounts so far removed from history that we cannot tell anything about anything? On pages 192, 193 of his Commentary on Romans he cites the pagan deities, Mithras, or Isis, or Cybel of the Greek mystery religions. He says,

What we have been saying throughout and wish to drive home here also, is supported by the fact that baptism as a rite of initiation, is no original creation of Christianity, but was taken over from "Hellenism." There is a good reason for this. The Gospel of Christ was not concerned with inventing new rites and dogmas and institutions. Everywhere it can be seen quite naively borrowing religious material already in existence. That word "naively" is heavy with meaning. It is a compound of dishonesty and deceit amalgamated with stupid ignorance. Someone is supposed to have sneaked the ordinance of baptism from a pagan religion in Greece and then got up in public and solemnly affirmed that the baptism of John was not from men, but had been miraculously and directly revealed by God. He is supposed to have been of such low mentality that he did not realize this was lying. Furthermore, the myriads of enemies of Christianity in Judaea, Greece, and Rome are supposed to have been of such low intelligence that none of them detected and exposed the hoax. The critical question is, Who perpetrated this fraud? Not only does this radical theory utterly destroy the historical declarations of the New Testament and the claims of Jesus, but there is not the slightest evidence to prove any connection between the pagan mystery religions of Greece and the baptism of John or Christian baptism. The same sort of arguments are used to substantiate the theory of evolution that man descended from lower forms of animal life. It is argued that an animal such as a monkey has eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and other organs which man has; therefore….The differences are entirely ignored, but these make a vast chasm separating man from all animals.

Attack on the Resurrection

Form Criticism is fundamentally an attack upon the historical verity of the New Testament accounts. It would change history into folklore. Barth is not so radical as Bultmann is; they have often crossed swords. But the same deadly attack upon the historical truth of the Gospel accounts is seen in Barth. He has a shell game of his own particular variety. He changes historic facts over into philosophical concepts and then affirms the ideas as true, while denying that they are historic

facts. His assertions concerning the resurrection of Jesus illustrate this: “We have already seen that the raising of Jesus from the dead is not an event in history elongated so as to remain an event in the midst of other events. The resurrection of Jesus is the unhistorical relating of the whole historical life of Jesus to its origin in God” (Commentary on Romans, p. 195). “The resurrection is not an event in history at all” (Commentary on Romans, p. 30). Yet some Christian leaders have tried to be popular by endorsing Karl Barth’s declarations that the resurrection of Jesus is true as an idea; they close their eyes to his denial that it is a fact of history. The natural destination of such thinking is the current humanism which denies there is any such person as God, but affirms that god is a useful idea which should be kept in man’s mental furnishings. In the same way many Christian people have persuaded themselves that they are popular by adopting Form Criticism while closing their eyes to the facts of its elemental denial of the historic truth of the New Testament account. Bultmann, holding that legend and historical narrative are the same, declared himself a complete skeptic. In his books Jesus and the Word and New Testament Theology, however, he declares that he can find some kernels of historical facts amid the legendary material.

“Q” and Ur-Mark

Form Criticism not only cannot furnish any basis for its charge that the Gospel accounts contain myths and legends, it cannot furnish any proof of the existence of the ultimate basis for its numberless segments. That ultimate basis is the existence of “Q” and Ur-Mark. Here is the same stone wall against which the Two-source Theory went to pieces. We have seen in the preceding chapter the utter failure of all efforts to prove the existence of these basic “sources.” If these two cannot be proved, what becomes of the hundreds of tiny sources which are presumed to rest upon these two imaginary documents? For confirmation of the fact that Form Criticism rests upon the Two-source Theory the defense of “Q” by Dibelius is enlightening (Jesus, pp. 21, 22). In late December of 1946 the annual meeting of scholars associated together in The Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis was held in Union Theological Seminary, New York City. A young scholar read what was evidently a summation of a recent Ph.D. thesis on The Priority of Mark. Here is another Irresponsible Speculation basic element of the theory, Form Criticism, which must be proved and which cannot be proved. A spirited discussion among the scholars followed. Morton S. Enslin of Crozier Theological Seminary and Henry J. Cadbury of Harvard Divinity School were the chief antagonists. Enslin, following the lead of Professor Ropes, was denying the existence of “Q.” He said, “Let us kill ‘Q’ right here. I will preach the funeral.” Cadbury was reluctant to abandon these basic elements of their whole scheme of speculation. He said, “We have been enjoying a holiday in Form Criticism. Now we need to go back for serious study to see whether we can establish the existence of ‘Q’ and the priority of Mark.” It would be hard to coin a more revealing description of flimsy, fantastic Form Criticism than the words of Professor Cadbury, “We have been enjoying a holiday in Form Criticism.” What a wild holiday of irresponsible speculation it has been! Professor Ropes had pointed out that the net result of the one hundred years of speculation in the field has been limited almost entirely to “Q.” And then he proceeded to smash “Q.” He tried to turn back the tide of speculation to the theory that Matthew copied from Mark and Luke from Mark and Matthew. We have seen in the last chapter how Plummer made very plain that this theory is impossible. But the succession of failures does not seem to have daunted the theorists who rush on to new fields of speculation. The Time Element The third element which stands

squarely in the path of Form Criticism theorists is time. This was one of the fatal weaknesses of the Two-source Theory. It is much more deadly for Form Criticism, which supposes much more detailed growth of formless tradition over a much longer period into gradual forms of imagined accounts. This sort of process simply could not take place in the lifetime of eyewitnesses or those who had been in contact with eyewitnesses. When we read the frank admission of Professor Ropes that the Gospel narratives “were relatively ancient documents in a.d. 125” (The Synoptic Gospels, pp. 102-104), we see how impossible it is to conjecture such a long development of “tradition” which is supposed to have mixed pagan tradition with vague accounts handed down through generations. Even Dibelius admits that the Rylands fragment of John’s Gospel is from the period a.d. 100-140 and points out it “does not differ by a single word from our printed Greek texts” (Dibelius, Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums, p. 13). If we take the earliest date Dibelius admits (a.d. 100), then we have in our possession a fragment of a copy of the Gospel of John which was made within about a decade of the time the apostle John wrote the book. Dibelius admits that the Gospel of John was written about a.d. 100 (Jesus., p. 22). The date a.d. 125, which Ropes names for the Rylands manuscript, only allows some twenty-five years to have elapsed since the writing of the Gospel of John and some seventy-five years to have separated the writing of the Synoptics from this period of their universal circulation among the churches. Form Criticism acts on two false premises: (1) the supposition that there is no historical testimony upon which the Gospel narratives rest; (2) the supposition that there is no limit to the amount of time they have for their elongated theory of tradition-development.

Schmidt’s Fragmentation

There were three publications in 1919-1921 which made these years explosive in the development of the Form Criticism. K. L. Schmidt, a student of Dibelius who was using ideas he had secured from Dibelius, not yet published by him, held that the order of “pericopes” of Mark is “casual and arbitrary.” In other words he was cutting up the Gospel of Mark into fragments to suit his theories and announcing that these segments or pericopes were not arranged in chronological order by Mark or in any other discernible order. This left Schmidt free to rearrange or separate at his personal convenience.

Dibelius’ Form Criticism

Dibelius’ own exposition of his theory appeared the same year (1919) in Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums (The Form History of the Gospels).This title gave the name “Form Criticism” to the development which the Two-source Theory had now taken. It was still the Two-source Theory, for it was the same basic method and objective. They still faced the dilemma that they had not yet even proved the existence of “Q” and Ur-Mark. But they rushed on from this unfinished task to a new and wider field of speculation. The hostile critics, who were seeking to carve up the Gospel narratives and prove they were not history but myth, are described by K. Grobel as being in a “stalemate” at the close of the last century (Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible, “Form Criticism,” p. 320). Now “stalemate” finds two opposing armies or forces in collision where neither can gain a decisive victory. The radical scholars were indeed in a variety of opposing camps, and none was able to convince the others of the truth of his own particular theory. Unable to prove even the existence of “Q” and Ur-Mark, they now proceeded to take a holiday from serious theorizing by multiplying at liberty all sorts of fantastic views of an incredible number of sources. Dibelius divided

his pericopes (cutout sections or “forms”) Paradigms into five forms — paradigms, novelle, legend, paranesis, and myth. Of these he considered the paradigm the most important: “those concise, self-contained and edifying (not worldly) stories concentrated about a striking saying or deed of Jesus.” These stories which centered in a deed or saying of Jesus, since they were used in Christian teaching, are our surest source of information about Jesus, according to Dibelius (Jesus, pp. 31, 32).

Paranesis

He considered paranesis the next in importance. These consisted of exhortatory words of practical guidance in personal ethics and community self-discipline. Dibelius held that these may have been created by the church because they were needed and may or may not have come from Christ. In other words the first Christians falsely attributed to Jesus all sorts of sayings and teachings which they felt they needed. The low state of morals which is everywhere assumed by this theory illustrates how carefully slander may be created by a theorist. The only other alternative is to imagine that the first Christians were so stupid that they did not know it was wrong to lie. And these Christians have given to the world the noblest exaltation of truth in the New Testament and in their lives which the world has ever known!

Novelle

Novelle is the French word for novel. With this title Dibelius hurls his charge of fiction-writers at the authors of the Gospel narratives. He held that they were relating some “wonder” and giving details to satisfy worldly curiosity. He calls these “floating stories” about Jesus — some examples — might contain some kernel of historical data which has been exaggerated. He cites the account of the Gerasene demoniac and that of Jairus’ daughter as examples of a floating story. He calls them “tales.” Dibelius undertook to introduce geographical sources into his theories and to separate Palestinian from Hellenistic. When he talks about Hellenistic stories, even though ever so vague, he is implying Greek myths have entered into the creation of the fanciful account found in the Gospels.

Legend A further “pericope” or “form” was called “legend.” “By this term is meant a narrative written in an edifying style and telling of extraordinary things about a holy man or a holy place” (Dibelius, A Fresh Approach to the New Testament and Early Christian Literature, pp. 43ff.). He cites as an example of a “legend” Jesus as a boy of twelve in the temple. He holds that this is a fabrication brought forth to create a religious hero. He says that even myths may have some kernel of history which has been inflated, but he insists that its interest is in the theological idea advanced (A Fresh Approach to the New Testament and Early Christian Literature, pp. 40-42; Jesus, pp. 32, 33).

Myth Deity The mythological interpretation imputing deity to Christ, Dibelius says, arose partly from false interpretations which Christians forced upon Old Testament Scriptures (A Fresh Approach to the New Testament and Early Christian Literature, pp. 46ff.). He attempts to maintain that this mythological interpretation is found particularly in John’s Gospel (A Fresh Approach to the New Testament and Early Christian Literature, pp. 95ff.).

Bultmann’s Analysis In 1921 R. Bultmann published his Geschichte der Synoptischen Tradition (History of the Synoptic Tradition). As Dibelius had divided up the Gospel text into various odd

fragments to suit his imagination, so Bultmann attempted to put the material in the Synoptic Gospels into various forms. He used the term “apothegm” as parallel to Dibelius’ “paradigm.” He used the term “miracle tale” as a variation of “novelle.” The Palestinian and Hellenistic division of tradition became the basic idea in Bultmann’s analysis. His extreme skepticism led him practically to identify legend and historical narrative, although he admits there may be some historical facts in the legendary material. He held that the connected account of the life of Christ had already been lost before Mark was ever written; hence, the Form Criticism theorist maintains that no one can now properly write on the “life and teaching of Jesus” concerning which we have fragmentary, exaggerated, and uncertain remains. Bultmann’s constant call to remove the myths from the Gospel accounts he called “demythologizing the New Testament.” The Greek word kerygma means “preaching.” He attempted to separate the preaching about Christ in Acts and the Epistles (in other words, the faith of the early church) from the actuality of the historical material recorded in the Gospel accounts. The Eyewitnesses

It is immediately evident that the fatal weakness of the lack of time in the Two-source Theory becomes even more desperate for Form Criticism. It is plain that this entire scheme is built upon the untenable theory of the nineteenth century skeptics that the Gospel narratives were written late in the second century. Sir Frederic Kenyon expressed the conviction that the Rylands fragment would have produced a sensation in the middle of the nineteenth century if it had been found and identified at that time because it would immediately have forced the abandonment of the prevailing theory of the late date of the Gospel narratives. But not even all the quotations by early Christian writers of passages from the Gospel narratives and manuscripts such as the Rylands fragment have been able to bring the Form Criticism theorists down from the balloon ascension of their imaginations to the hard earth of historical facts. Bultmann says that by the time the Gospel of Mark was written (which he holds was written first, instead of Matthew) any connected account of the life of Christ had been lost. But the writing of Mark was in the fifties, or at the latest, sixties. Even the radicals admit it must have been written in the seventies. Now this last date is only forty years after the crucifixion. Persons twenty years old at the time of Jesus’ ministry would now be sixty; those forty years old would now be eighty. How could the connected account of Jesus’ life, its basic purpose and achievement, possibly be lost in so short a time with thou. sands of eyewitnesses still alive and testifying to what they saw and heard? Bultmann lives in a dream world of his own creation.

Herman Gunkel (1862-1932) is generally held to be the first scholar to apply Form Criticism to the Bible. Herder, Wellhausen, and Norden had done preliminary work in this field before the time of Gunkel. From about 1830 forward the literary criticism of the Synoptic Gospels had been developing the Two-source Theory. Lachmann (1835), C. H. Weisse, and C. G. Welke (1838), H. J. Holtzmann (1836) and B. Weisse (1886) are some of the key names and dates. Since 1900 German scholars have led the way in assuming a gradual development of “gospel tradition” before the writing of the Gospel accounts. Streeter, Grant, and Parker have had a large part in theories of multiple sources of material common to Matthew and Luke, and not in Mark. If the Gospel writers were not eyewitnesses or did not have immediate access to eyewitness testimony so that they could record history (not to mention the solemn promises of Jesus that they would be miraculously inspired to recall what He had said to them and to proclaim the assured facts to the world), if some unknown and uninformed persons were left to collect what scattered bits of information were

floating around, then it would have been comparatively easy for the theorists to move from two sources to many. If Matthew wrote his account of the birth and infancy of Christ after he had been in direct contact with Mary, the mother of Jesus, and if he had been guided by the Holy Spirit in what he wrote, then there is solid basis for Christian faith. The same conclusion is inescapable in regard to Luke's account. The differences in the accounts are the results of their different interests and plan, and of divine guidance. But if these are late writings by persons so far removed from history that they can only scrape together little bits of popular tradition, then it is plain the theorists can assume different "sources" for the infancy accounts in the two narratives. But observe this monstrous inconsistency in the theorists. Most of the radicals will admit that Luke wrote Acts and the Gospel of Luke. This instantly places Luke in contact with eyewitnesses. How, then, can they talk about "tradition" and "sources"? Instead of Luke's declaring that he had copied from written "sources," he affirms exactly the opposite; he had carried on his own direct investigation by interviewing the eyewitnesses (Luke 1:1-4). In spite of this inconsistency, however, the critics built up their ever-mounting theory. A third cycle of "tradition" was imagined and called "L"; Moffatt, Bussmann, and Crum held that Luke used this "source." Streeter held that Luke had combined "Q" and "L" into a Proto-Luke before it was combined with Mark. V. Taylor, W. Manson, and Parker agreed with this theory, but the idea of a framework from Proto-Luke instead of from Mark was rejected by many.

Geographical Imaginations A wild debate ensued among the theorists as to whether Matthew had a Judaistic source such as "Q" and "L." Some scholars still held to (Easton, Bacon, Scott). Others sought to split "Q" up into different sources. We have already given much space to the effort of Ropes to call his colleagues back from their fantastic imaginings to a more simple effort to say the Gospel writers copied from one another instead of creating such an incredible melee of imagined sources. Having created such a vortex of different cycles of tradition, the originators of the confusion undertook to suppose geographical localities or conditions as the motifs of these various "sources" they had imagined. To name a city or a section as the place where a "source" grew up is supposed to add an aura of geographical verity to a "source" which has been created out of thin air. It was this turn given to the theorizing that led to the general division of Palestinian and Hellenistic as the two great backgrounds. This was a familiar division which was readily adapted when no let or hindrance attached to their fancy.

Theory vs. History

K. Grobel, writing in the Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (Article, "Form Criticism"), describes the consensus among the theorists as they start with the dictum that "folk memory operates with small units." Hence, the separation of these units is the first task of the analyst. The units which are floating around at about the same time and are similar "in structure, length, tendency, rather than content," make up the "forms" or "categories." "Tradition is never preserved for its own sake with conscious antiquarian intent, but only because some need or interest of the community presses it into service. In such service it stays alive as oral tradition as long as that practical interest remains alive." "The forms themselves, apart from their content, have a history which in broad outline can be discerned — a pre-literary history. This is justification for speaking of 'form history." The first question that arises is, who says that the Gospel narratives are "folklore" and on what basis? Is there nothing but folk memory to be had in the recording of the affairs of mankind? Is there no such thing as history? Did such a person as Xenophon never live? Did he not

accompany Cyrus on his great military campaign against Artaxerxes and record the things he saw, heard, experienced in his Anabasis? Did Thucydides not carry on his careful, systematic research and record actual history of the thirty years' war between Sparta and Athens? Why should Matthew and John have had to pick up floating scraps of folklore and publish these instead of writing directly of the things they had themselves seen and heard? Why should Mark and Luke, in constant association with the eyewitnesses, depend on anonymous bits of writing that were in circulation?

Denial of Divine Plan The second fundamental assumption which is in complete contradiction to the facts is that there was no leadership, no definite plan, no guiding hand. The folk memory simply operated in haphazard fashion, gradually collecting all sorts of popular rumors. The accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John grew up like Topsy and hence are to be turned turvy. The Gospel accounts, we are asked to believe, grew like a snowball that rolled down the hill of its own weight (?) and in the end was a shapeless mass which reflected merely the terrain over which it had travelled. There was no person who had the guiding purpose and plan that produced the New Testament.

Denial of God This is an unwarranted denial of all that we read in the Scripture. Jesus selected and trained twelve leaders who were carefully instructed so they could deliver His message and program to the world. He promised them miraculous inspiration which would enable them to recall what He had said to them, which would lead them into all necessary truth, and which would empower them to speak infallibly for Him. In the Book of Acts and the rest of the New Testament we have the history of how these very promises were fulfilled. These were the leaders, together with Paul, whom God selected and Christ commissioned, and other leaders trained by the apostles, who preached the gospel far and wide in that very generation and wrote down the first three Gospel narratives in that very generation. As if to seal the case, the apostle John was spared to the next generation and wrote his books toward the close of the century. Instead of there being no leadership, here was the chosen trained leadership God had prepared. Instead of God's divine plan for man's redemption being left to folklore which "is never preserved for its own sake with conscious antiquarian intent," John seals the case by declaring, "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31). The elemental assumption of Form Criticism is really a denial of God Himself. He is the One who provided the leadership, the plan, the divine guidance. We come again to atheistic evolution, which is the presumptuous and absurd effort to explain the universe and its contents and inhabitants without God. Matter and motion are all that are admitted, and even this cannot be explained. The evolutionist begins with an unintelligent beginning. In like fashion Form Criticism, the child of the theory of evolution, insists that we have only folklore growing up without any guiding personality or plan.

Attack on Miracles

Why is it that Form Criticism theorists such as Dibelius and Bultmann insist that the Gospel narratives are to be considered folklore? It is because they contain the accounts of miracles. Look at their charts. See how the attack upon the miracles stands out in their "forms": "myths," "legends," "miracle tales." What lies back of this attack? The assumption that a miracle is an impossibility. But why an impossibility? There is but one answer — because there is no such

person as God. All there is which must be admitted is matter, motion, and laws of nature. This is not to say that all of these men are conscious atheists. It is rather that they live in a contradictory dream world where in their confusion they refuse to face the facts of history and of their own logic. The absurd “God is dead” movement, which is their latest fad, bears witness to the increasing boldness with which many of these Form Criticism theorists now boast of their atheism. Even when they cannot explain their own existence, they refuse to take into account the existence of God. He is the Leadership, the Divine Planner, the Guiding Intelligence. But could not God have willed that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John use written sources of all varieties arising out of unknown The Divine Plan origin? If that had been the divine plan, it would have contravened intelligence itself. Jesus clearly declares that the leadership of the church is to be of His own choice and training and empowered with miraculous ability to prove by miracles their divine appointment and authority. What stupidity must be assumed in back of keeping the chosen qualified witnesses silent while anonymous nonentities started vague rumors which gradually exaggerated into accounts of miracles? It was the chosen plan that every person saved by the grace of God should be on fire to tell everyone the wondrous news; and in pursuing this commanded course it was natural that many would seek to write to relatives and friends and give to them the good news of man’s redemption. But Luke 1:1-4 shows clearly that such written accounts were in a different category from the divinely inspired accounts of the apostles and their chosen associates.

Natural Elements This does not mean that the Gospel narratives were written in a vacuum. Let any college professor who will, try this experiment. Choose some memorable occasion — even such an ordinary affair as a college picnic, when professors and students join in turning aside from the steady grind of hard study. Give no intimation of what you plan, but after some days suddenly ask the students in a given class to write an account of that picnic. See that the students are so placed that there is no possibility of consultation or copying. There will be a very great similarity in the accounts, and there will be some surprising differences in subject matter and emphasis. The weather, whether glorious or miserable or so uncertain as to have kept everybody on edge, the beautiful world of nature that always invites the cloistered soul, the jolly fellowship of college students in “the golden days of our happy youth,” the athletic contests, the hearty meals, and similar subjects will be discussed over and over. This is natural for these are persons with similar background, ideals, objectives, and reactions. Moreover, even though the students were without any intimation that such an essay would be required, they would have exchanged comments and ideas about the affair many times during the day itself and the days that immediately followed.

Tradition vs. History This is exactly what happened when the church was established at Pentecost following the ascension and in the days that followed. The other apostles heard Peter preach at Pentecost. They must have heard one another proclaim the gospel countless times in private conversation and in public proclamation. Their unity of faith, purpose, and experience would alike guide them to recall and emphasize many of the same things in the same way. This is not an appeal to “oral tradition.” It merely is the recognition that the Gospel narratives were not written in a vacuum. What right does anyone have to apply that word “tradition” to what an eyewitness records out of his own personal experience or what the associates of eyewitnesses record out of their immediate testimony? That word “tradition” is only a sly way of moving the Gospel accounts over into the late second century. The word implies something handed down from one generation

to another over a long period of time which has rendered obscure and uncertain what the source really was and what the facts are.

Divine Inspiration The similarities and differences which arise naturally out of the same background and occasion as focused by different personalities are seen in the Gospel narratives. But there is more than this. There is the divine inspiration of the writers through which God Himself guides and directs the writers. The protest is raised, “If God and divine inspiration are introduced into the discussion, then there is no problem.” What a confession! And must God be ruled out so that there will be a problem? If so, we can be sure it will remain an insoluble problem. This view cannot be brushed aside with the caricature-epithet “dictation theory of inspiration.” Christ promised His divinely appointed leaders miraculous inspiration for the proclamation of the good news to the world. Certainly the very words could have been given, when God so willed. That the human personalities also express themselves in differences in style is constantly manifest. R. H. Lightfoot thinks clearly when he says that a choice must be made between verbal inspiration of the Gospel narratives and the critical theories of “sources” such as “Q” and Ur-Mark or Form Criticism (History and Interpretation ofthe Gospels, pp. 10, 12). Those who think they can adopt these rationalistic theories and still believe the promises Jesus made to His apostles that they would be divinely directed in their proclamation are like the evolutionists who talk such nonsense as “theistic evolution.” What sort of theism is compatible with the theory of evolution? Pantheism!

Theory of Evolution and Form Criticism The space age with its explosive efforts to secure a nearer approach to the moon and other planets has confronted the atheistic scientists again with the enigma of life. How can they explain the fact that this small planet on which we live has atmosphere, moisture, and the other elements necessary to life and also immense numbers of varieties of life crowned by the existence of man? How is it that the sun, moon, and stars serve so admirably the necessities of our life here on this earth? Having denied the existence of an intelligent Creator, all that they can conjure up is “the million to one chance” combination of matter and force that produced on our planet the essentials for life and the existence of life itself. And where did they even get this matter and force? In my book The Everlasting Gospel there is a chapter entitled “Whence the Church — by Evolution or by Revelation?” This is the same issue faced in Form Criticism. As we consider the mysterious majesty, the unique authority, the sublime contents, and the profound influence of these books written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, whence the Gospel narratives — by Evolution or Revelation? “God has spoken unto us in his Son” (Hebrews 1:1-4).

Streeter’s Four Document Hypothesis The “stalemate” which developed at the turn of the century in the struggle of contrary theories as to two “sources” proceeded to bring forth Form Criticism. Instead of either Dibelius or Bultmann being able to win unanimous support among the radical theorists, a variety of other fanciful arrangements has been proposed. Notable among these is Streeter’s Four Document Theory. The chart illustrates its nature. Streeter held that there was a document he calls Proto-Luke, which Luke himself made out of a combination of “Q” and the new material now found in Luke’s Gospel (The Four Gospels, A Study of Origins, pp. 201ff.). Luke is supposed to have made a second effort, revising his early work, when he had secured a further source of the Infancy stories and had Mark’s Gospel in hand to guide his rearrangements (The Four Gospels, A Study of Origins, pp. 217ff.).

While Ropes, Enslin, Chapman, and others deny the existence of “Q,” Streeter denies the existence of Ur-Mark and affirms “Q.” The four sources he affirms for Matthew and Luke are these: (1) Mark and “Q” were used by both Matthew and Luke; (2) Streeter then imagines a source for Matthew associated with Jerusalem; he calls this “M”; (3) The Proto-Luke Streeter associates with Caesarea, as well as a source he calls “L”; (4) Matthew is supposed to have had some sort of a source which Streeter associates with Antioch, and Luke had a written source of Infancy stories. But is this not five or six sources, instead of four? Streeter claims simplicity as the particular strength of his theory. Presumably to have advanced a five document hypothesis would have been embarrassingly similar to the five “forms” or “categories” of Dibelius and Bultmann with their infinite fragments of documents under each category. But what sort of simplicity can Streeter claim for his theory? He supposes that Luke chanced upon a defective copy of Mark in which by accident a scribe had omitted all the sections from the feeding of the five thousand to the confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi. Hence, although Luke is supposed to have copied Mark’s account, he does not have all these sections. Plummer denounced as “a desperate expedient” this weird theory which Reuss invented. It did not suddenly change from an act of desperation to simplicity when Streeter adopted Reuss’ theory. The Babel of Confusion

Streeter’s theory has gained no significant support from other scholars. Nor did the extreme imaginations of Dibelius and Bultmann acquire any general acceptance. The stalemate which descended at the close of the last century upon the Two-source Theory combatants with their contradictory versions has now overtaken more than half a century later the Form Criticism advocates. The last two decades have brought forth no new theories of any consequence. The radical scholars still wrestle with one another over the very existence of Ur-Mark and “Q.” This same fantastic theory that Luke, the master historian, did not even investigate enough before he copied it to know that he had secured a defective manuscript of Mark has been adopted also by Wendling (1905), Bacon, Moffatt, Goguel, Bussmann, and Crum. Their desperate efforts to save the source theories reveal the spectacle of a drowning man grasping at a straw.

Streeter’s Prologue to Luke

If Streeter’s Four Document Theory is inserted into the magnificent preface to the Gospel of Luke, what comes forth? “Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning these matters which have been fulfilled among us, it seemed good to me to copy down long sections of these written accounts and to combine them with certain other written works, but my first effort at producing a satisfactory account of the life of Christ was very unsatisfactory and I have had to make a second attempt. I was especially moved to do this when I came across some stories someone had written about the birth of Christ and when I read the Gospel which Mark had published and which I immediately copied.” The brusque manner in which Luke brushes aside the written efforts which many had been making to tell their relatives and friends about Christ is most impressive. He rests upon his own independent investigation of the eyewitnesses, tracing the historic events to the very beginning and securing absolute assurance of the firsthand, indubitable quality of the testimony. He records the promises of Jesus that His chosen witnesses were to have miraculous guidance, and he testifies to the actual fulfillment of these promises. The Elemental Issues

Besides the choice which Lightfoot affirms, there is actually one that is more elemental. It is not only a choice between miraculously inspired apostles and their associates on the one side and imaginary theories of copied mythical documents on the other. It is a choice between the honesty, veracity, and intelligence of eyewitnesses and of those who had immediate contact with eyewitnesses, and nondescript editors collecting written fragments of anonymous origin and inflating mere natural events into miracles via myths, legends, and miracle tales. What honesty is left for the New Testament writers who copied from written documents produced by others before them to whom they gave no mention, and instead pretended to write with unique authority on the basis of their personal knowledge and research directed by miraculous assistance of the Holy Spirit? What veracity can still be credited to them if they shamelessly inflated into prodigious miracles what had been ordinary occurrences? What intelligence is left to the writers who could not write down what they themselves saw, beard, and experienced, but had to copy the written work of some nonentities? What intelligence is left to the early Christian leaders who were in touch with apostles but copied from composite works of unknown authorship? H. C. Thiessen says concerning the theory that Matthew and Luke used Mark and "Q," "That theory degrades the evangelists Matthew and Luke to the position of slavish and yet arbitrary compilers, not to say plagiarists" (Introduction to the New Testament, p. 127). Form Criticism is an even more complete denial and degradation. Thiessen quotes Kerr as saying the same thing: "Matthew and Luke are charged with plagiarism" (Introduction to the New Testament, p. 127). Alford says:

It is inconceivable that one writer borrowing from another matter confessedly of the very first importance, in good faith and with approval, should alter the diction so singularly and capriciously as, on this hypothesis, we find the text of the parallel sections of our Gospels changed. Let the question be answered by ordinary considerations of probability, and let any passage common to the three evangelists be put to the test. The phenomena presented will be much as follows: First, we shall have three, five or more words identical; then as many wholly distinct; then two clauses or more, expressed in the same words but differing order; then a clause contained in one or two, and not in the third; then several words identical; then a clause not only distinct, but apparently inconsistent; and so forth, with recurrences of the same arbitrary and anomalous alterations, coincidents, and transpositions. Nor does this description apply to verbal and sentential arrangements only; but also, with slight modification, to that of the larger portions of the narratives, Equally capricious would be the disposition of the subject matter. Can an instance be anywhere cited of undoubted borrowing and adaption from another, presenting similar phenomena? (Greek Testament, pp. 1, 5, 6).

It is no defense of the Gospel writers to say that they lived in a primitive time, when, morals being low and undeveloped, it was not realized that it was wrong to publish someone else's work as your own, or to pretend to possess firsthand information or miraculous power, or to attach some famous person's name to your book in the hope of increasing its circulation and influence. These men knew so much more about honesty, veracity, and noble ideas, having studied under the Divine Teacher, that all the world has sat at their feet in the study of these four narratives during two thousand years seeking guidance and inspiration in the pursuit of noble living. The "Q" Myth

Lewis Foster, writing in the Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society of January, 1965, in an article entitled "The 'Q' Myth in Synoptic Studies," has pointed out that the entire concentration of the ministry of Jesus was upon the future proclamation by the apostles of the good news of the

death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God. This was the essence of Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost and of every other sermon recorded in Acts or reflected in the Epistles. The hypothesis that such a document as "Q" existed in the early decades of the church and exercised such a profound influence and yet had no content concentrated on the gospel itself which was the passionate proclamation of every Christian on every occasion, is itself such a monstrous contradiction of all that the New Testament declares, it falls of its own weight. The radical scholars have given the most precise definition of the content of "Q"; it is the similar sections of Matthew and Luke which are not found in Mark. They cannot find in these verses any presentation of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ, the Son of God. And yet they claim that here is the early and decisive document which preceded the Gospel narratives. The New Testament, on the contrary, declares that this message of salvation was the constant and universal proclamation of the early Christians.

Applied to Form Criticism This argument falls with deadly force upon Form Criticism. Here is Dibelius' outline of the "categories" or "forms": (1) Passion story; (2) Paradigm; (3) Novelle; (4) Legend; (5) Paranesis; (6) Myth. In five out of these six forms where is there any place given to the original proclamation of the gospel which proceeded from Pentecost? Here is Grant's outline: (1) Myths; (2) Legends; (3) Miracle Tales; (4) Paradigms; (5) Apothegms (F. G. Grant, The Gospels: Their Origin and Their Growth). This also is silent on the dramatic good news of redemption from sin by the death of the Son of God to which the Christians called the attention of all. The theory muzzles the passionate proclamation of the first Christians.

Dibelius makes public admission of this fatal weakness in his theory when he includes "passion story"; in this he underscores the fact that he had not been able to remedy the weakness, for he lists five out of six forms which do not contain this message of salvation. It stands out that while many eyewitnesses were still living who had been present when Jesus had claimed to be the Son of God and the Jewish leaders had charged Him with blasphemy and attempted to kill Him for this claim on many occasions, it is not a matter of mythical interpretation imputing deity to Christ. It is a historical fact backed by firsthand testimony. While many witnesses were still living who had seen the Jews compel Pilate to pass the death sentence upon Jesus, as they blurted out their real charge that He claimed to be the Son of God, it is not possible to talk about written sources which developed a mythical interpretation imputing deity to Christ. It is historic fact and the eyewitnesses were still available when the Gospel narratives were written. The resurrection appearances had included five hundred at one time who were made eyewitnesses. While dependable eyewitnesses still remain, mythical interpretation cannot be assumed. It is proved historic fact.

It is plain concerning Dibelius' outline of Form Criticism that he still has five "forms" which are silent concerning this heart of the gospel message. Luke declares that the written documents which had preceded his writing had been written concerning "those things which are most surely believed among us" (a.v.); "those matters which have been fulfilled among us" (a.s.v.). These matters were the redemption achieved by the divine Son of God in His death and resurrection. This is the soul and body of what they had to tell. These five unchanged "forms" in Dibelius' theory contravene all the facts. They still leave the theory with a deadly malady. All it can do is limp off the stage.

Streeter's Dilemna

Streeter's Two-source Theory — Form Criticism hypothesis is also dealt a devastating blow by this same argument. The heart of his theory is "Q." He has to suppose that such a document was written at a very early period, a document which ignored the death, burial, and resurrection of the Son of God. Since the content of "Q" is so definitely affirmed, there is no escape. Where is the central theme of the gospel which was the concentrated proclamation of those early years? How could any written document arise from Christians in this period who were on fire with evangelism and not be concentrated on this central proposition? Form Criticism is a passing fancy arising in a perverse dream world in which the dreamers stubbornly close their eyes to the facts and the evidence of history.

Thiessen's Position

It was in 1943 Thiessen's excellent work Introduction to the New Testament came from the press. The eleventh printing of the book was published in 1960. He devotes a chapter of twenty-nine pages to the Synoptic Problem. It gives a splendid summary of the history of the Two-source Theory and of Form Criticism. He rejects both theories and affirms his faith in the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. But he presents as his own view that "oral tradition is the base for the Synoptic accounts and he is willing to admit that the Gospel writers may have used some written accounts so far as they were reliable (pp. 126, 127). In this last admission he is like a general on the battlefield who allows his line to give ground in certain sections, fearful that he may not be able to hold the entire terrain. His position on page 127 is contradictory, for after having admitted that Luke may have used some of the written documents to which he refers in his prologue and that "although Matthew and Mark did not say anything about 'sources,' — we may yet suppose that, to some extent, they too used them" (Introduction to the New Testament, pp. 126, 127, 155), he then proceeds to charge that such a use of Mark and "Q" by Matthew and Luke would have been plagiarism. This leaves Thiessen's position deplorably weak. He is willing to admit use of little "sources," but not a big one.

Since Matthew was an eyewitness and was inspired by the Holy Spirit, why should he need to copy into his book what someone else had written? Such an assumption denies his intelligence and assails his inspiration. If Luke copied from some of the written documents to which he refers in his prologue (while he does not openly charge them with inaccuracy, he certainly intimates they are inadequate), then why did not Luke acknowledge this fact? How much honesty does this allow Luke? What else but plagiarism? Why should Luke place in such sharp contrast his own personal Investigation of the witnesses as against these inadequate written documents, if he used any of them at all? Why should he give such profound emphasis to the exactitude and assured accuracy of his own personal investigation and of his recording of the facts if he copied the written work of these others? Earlier in his discussion Thiessen argues that Luke would not have spoken in such derogatory fashion of the Gospel of Mark as to include it in the documents which "many have taken in hand to draw up." He says, "He does not seem to include our canonical Mark in these earlier narratives. This is implied in his statement that he attempts to present an accurate account of the events of the Life of Christ. It does not seem possible that Luke would imply that Mark's account was inaccurate" (Introduction to the New Testament, p. 116). And yet Thiessen turns right about face and at the close of his discussion says that it was possible for Luke to have copied some of these documents! It would be an intolerable affront to Mark to classify his Gospel with documents which Luke sees fit to copy! Thiessen's book is so full of faith and valuable information

that it is a great pity that he yields thus to the source theorists and leaves himself in hopeless contradiction.

Matthew's Eyewitness Testimony

Although Thiessen rejects the source theories in bulk, he is willing to buy some of them in parcels. He says of the apostle Matthew:

Since he was an apostle, and since all that is in his Gospel, save chapters 1-4, the story of the cleansing of the leper (Matthew 8:1-4), the account of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (Matthew 8:14-17), and the incident of the paralytic borne of four (Matthew 9:1-8), occurred after his conversion and call, we think it strange to suppose that he should have to resort to "sources" for the information that he had received firsthand (Introduction to the New Testament, p. 116). But on page 121 he says: As contrasted with these other views, the true view gives primary consideration to the divine aspect in the composition of the Synoptics. It grants that the authors may have used "sources" for some of the materials in the Gospels but holds that they used them under the guidance and control of the Holy Spirit. This means that sometimes they used materials that had come to them from the immediate apostles of our Lord, and in the case of Matthew, materials that had come from his own observation and experience; that at other times they probably adopted parts of the oral tradition concerning the life and work of Christ that had come to their notice; that at still other times they appropriated a part or all of an account that was already in circulation in writing; but that over and above all the Holy Spirit quickened their memories as to the things they had heard and seen and guided them in the selections they made and in the editing and arranging of the materials.

Now this is the very position which he rejects on page 127 as reducing Matthew and Luke to the role of plagiarists, if it is done in bulk.

Just what would "oral tradition" know about the life of Christ which an inspired apostle did not know — an apostle who was directly inspired as was Matthew to write his Gospel? Why should he have to "appropriate a part or all of an account that was already in circulation in writing," when he himself was an eyewitness and miraculously inspired of God to write this record he has given to the world? And who says that Matthew was "converted" at the time that he was called to leave all and give Jesus all his service? When the four fishermen were called by the Sea of Galilee to leave all and give Jesus all their time and energy, they had already believed on Christ and had been helping Him in His Judaean ministry for nearly a year. Instead of supposing that Matthew was not an eyewitness to anything that Jesus had said and done before he was called to give up his tax-collecting work, the opposite is implied in his ready acceptance of this revolutionary change. Matthew certainly was not an eyewitness of the scenes during the early Judaean ministry, but he does not record any of these. Nor was he a witness of the scenes surrounding the birth of Jesus or the transfiguration and some of the resurrection appearances, but he had immediate access to the chief persons involved in these scenes. Why should he have to copy from the written account of someone else who was trying to produce a life of Christ? He was not a witness of what took place in the wilderness when Jesus was tempted of the devil, nor of the secret prayers of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. He could have learned from the three — Peter, James, and John — of their experiences in the garden, and he could have learned from Jesus of the secret experiences in the wilderness and in the garden, but it seems highly probable that Jesus' experiences in these

two secret events were made known to Matthew and the other apostles by direct inspiration. It hardly seems probable that Jesus would have discussed His prayers in the garden with them. The supposition that Matthew copied from other written accounts already in circulation is not compatible with his honesty, his intelligence, or his divine inspiration. In addition to “The ‘Q’ Myth in Synoptic Studies” three other recent essays are significant. Two of these are by British scholars: “Synoptic Criticism Since Streeter” by O. E. Evans of Manchester College,. The Expository Times, July, 1964; and “Agreements between Matthew and Luke,” A. W. Argyle of Oxford, The Expository Times, October, 1963. The last of the four articles is “A ‘Skeleton in the Closet’ of Gospel Research,” W. A. Farmer, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Biblical Research, VI. The following conclusions are offered on the basis of these articles: The Stalemate

(1) The “stalemate” that K. Grobel describes as prevailing at the turn of the century still prevails. Among the theorists every man’s hand is raised against his neighbor. The words since Streeter suggest that here is the beginning of an epoch which still continues. This is the gist of the position of the two British scholars: Evans, endorsing Streeter’s theory; Argyle, offering hostile criticism of it. No new theory or theorist of significance has arisen in the last three decades. Dr. Vincent Taylor is selected by Evans as the leading exponent of Streeter’s theory, the main defender of Proto-Luke. Any reader who felt that my sarcastic rewriting of the preface of Luke’s Gospel (page 109) so as to include Proto-Luke was exaggerated should consider the following description of Proto-Luke by Evans: “only a preliminary draft which Luke did not consider fit for publication until it was later supplemented from Mark” (“Synoptic Criticism Since Streeter” by O. E. Evans of Manchester College,. The Expository Times, July, 1964, p. 299). Evans finishes his survey of the present state of the confused conflict with this quotation from Taylor: “It may well be that the theory with a future is a Three-Document Hypothesis which posits the use of Mark, ‘Q’ and ‘M,’ supplemented by oral sources in the ‘L’ tradition, the birth stories of Luke, and the narratives peculiar to Matthew.” Evans remarks that this is nothing more than a minor modification of Streeter’s position. (2) A second conclusion is the manifest passing of Form Criticism. Having enjoyed its little day of glory, it is bowing off the stage. None of these recent writers on the present state of the conflict give Form Criticism any place in their discussion. All four concentrate on the questions of the priority of Mark and the existence of “Q.”

End of Form Criticism This confirms the judgment of J. H. Ropes in his book The Synoptic Gospels that Form Criticism is too fantastic to deserve serious consideration; and the estimate and prediction of J. H. Cadbury in 1946 that the critics had merely been “enjoying a holiday” in Form Criticism and should now return to a serious effort to see whether they can prove the priority of Mark and the existence of “Q.” This is the very course which the discussions have actually followed. Form Criticism was an escape from the responsibility of trying to prove the twofold basis for the Two-source Theory. Now they face the original obligation. The skeleton in the closet of Gospel research which W. R. Farmer exposes and puts on exhibition is the fact that the priority of Mark has never been proved. It has never been proved that the early Christian scholars were in error in affirming that Matthew wrote first, followed by Mark and then Luke; finally toward the close of the century in the reign of Domitian, John wrote his Gospel. The theorists have never proved that Matthew copied from Mark. It is curious to see a succession of radical scholars dodge the responsibility of proving the priority of Mark by the uniform stereotyped declaration that it is not necessary to prove it. Why not? Who has ever proved it? Evans cites it as a fact that since

Streeter's time the priority of Mark has been regarded as virtually closed. He quotes Vincent Taylor's commentary on Mark (1952): "Significant of the stability of critical opinion is the fact that, in a modern commentary, it is no longer necessary to prove the priority of Mark" (Taylor, Commentary on Mark (1952), p. 11). But this is the same declaration which Ropes had made two decades earlier that he was assuming the priority of Mark which it was not necessary to prove. Farmer in dragging out this skeleton from the closet shows that one radical scholar after another had been affirming this same thing through this century. F. C. Burkitt in 1906 had declared the priority of Mark was an axiom; there was no need to prove it. This was repeated by H. L. Jackson in 1909 and by Moffatt in 1911.

Martin Noth, a German theologian, affirms, "In New Testament studies in Germany — at least in West Germany — the 'Bultmann School' everywhere stands in the foreground" (Developing Lines of Theological Thought in Germany, translated by John Bright, Fourth Annual Bibliographical Lecture, Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, 1963, page 10). But the cessation of discussion of Form Criticism in other countries reveals the lack of interest and the demise of the theory. An exception to this decrease of interest in Bultmann is the assembly of scholars who met in New York in 1964 for several days of discussion concentrated exclusively on Bultmann.

(3) Foremost in the reflections on these four survey articles is the fact that such vigorous challenges are now being offered both of these "assured results," the priority of Mark and the existence of "Q." Ropes was the pioneer among the recent radical writers in challenging the existence of "Q." Enslin and many others have followed his lead. Farmer cites the following writers, all of them radical, who have recently assailed the priority of Mark: Butler in England in 1951; Parker in America in 1953; Vagany in France in 1954; Ludlum in America in 1958.

Priority of Mark

These have vigorously denied that Mark was used by Matthew. Evans declares that Dom. B. C. Butler's book, The Originality of St. Matthew, marks the significant reopening of questions regarded as closed since Streeter's time. "The 'Q' Myth in Synoptic Studies" assembles a devastating array of evidence against the existence of "Q." Argyle argues for the position which Ropes had urged — that Luke used Matthew. Argyle objects to Streeter's "Q" hypothesis because "a further hypothesis had to be invented for its support." He argues that "the further hypothesis introduces confusion; it raises doubt whether 'Q' could have been a single document." He cites Bussmann's theory of "two 'Q's' one of which he calls 'T." Argyle ends his article by assailing "Q." He says that Streeter's consideration was "prejudiced from the outset, and that his arguments were vitiated by occasional exaggerations and inaccuracy and that some of the evidence was not considered at all.

Roman Catholic Scholars

(4) The manner in which radical Roman Catholic scholars have entered into the wild discussion in recent years is noteworthy. This change is given special mention by these four writers. It has been general knowledge that for the last fifty years the younger priests coming forth from the Roman Catholic seminaries have been filled with the theory of evolution and have been standing up in combat with the older and more conservative priests. The elections of the last two popes have witnessed a fierce struggle between the radicals and conservatives, in which the radicals

prevailed. But Pope Paul has recently issued warnings against too rapid a discarding of their "traditions" lest an actual schism take place in the Catholic Church. The sessions of the Ecumenical Council have been devoted generally to matters of Roman Catholic tradition. A person must read the books written by Roman Catholic scholars to discern how the Catholic Church has become infiltrated by unbelief and how many Catholic scholars have abandoned the inspiration of the Scriptures. It was natural for Catholic scholars who had adopted the theory of evolution to proceed to accept the Two-source Theory. Farmer cites the fact that the president of the Roman Catholic Biblical Commission in 1959 endorsed the Two-source Theory. Evans speaks of the part a Dominican scholar, B. C. Butler, has played in assailing the priority of Mark, but he asserts that no non-Catholic scholar has followed his lead in this. He remarks that Dr. Austin Farrer rejoiced in Butler's demolition of the "Q" hypothesis, but defended the priority of Mark, But let no one imagine that this Roman Catholic scholar, B. C. Butler, is taking a conservative position and defending the inspiration of the Scriptures. He is merely shifting from one radical position to another. Here is the position which Butler presents in rejecting Streeter on the priority of Mark: He accepts the testimony of Papias that Mark wrote at the direction of Peter, but he holds that Peter was using Matthew's Gospel as an aid to his memory! Now compare this for a moment with the solemn promises of Jesus that He would send the Holy Spirit upon them to guide them to all truth and to bring to their remembrance all He had said to them. That Peter could not even recall the events he had witnessed and had to direct Mark to copy what Matthew had written reduces these promises of Jesus to a ridiculous travesty.

Further illustration of how unbelief has infiltrated the Roman Catholic Church is seen in the work New Testament Introduction (1958) by A. Wikenhauser. This author adopts the current fad of cutting up the Gospel narratives into sources, and he does the same thing in the Book of Acts. He says of Luke, "But there can hardly be any doubt that he also used other people's writings in the first third of Acts, though it is impossible to determine with certainty their extent or form" (p. 329).

He follows closely Bultmann's analysis of Form Criticism. He accepts the theory that Matthew and Luke used Mark and "Q" (pp. 263ff.). He strongly affirms that Matthew and Luke copied from Mark. He praises Form Criticism as a "useful means of illuminating the dark period when the gospel material was transmitted orally" (p. 271). He affirms that the first and most important premise of Form Criticism is fundamentally correct — the Synoptic Gospels are compilations (p. 272). He does not accept Form Criticism's rejection of the Gospel accounts as historically false or that the miracles are merely stories borrowed from Judaism and Hellenism. But he accepts the process of cutting up the Gospel accounts into sources. The first twenty-five years of the history of the church bring us into the period when the Gospel narratives were being written. To call this "the dark period when the gospel material was transmitted orally" is utterly perverse. This quarter of a century was the light period when the historic facts of the gospel were being presented by eyewitnesses, led by the miraculously inspired apostles and their associates. These inspired leaders themselves worked miracles to prove the truth of their testimony. And one of the foremost of these witnesses, the apostle Matthew, wrote the first of these inspired accounts. What justification is there for calling this "a dark period" which has to be "illuminated" by cutting the Gospel narratives into imaginary sources?

Unanswered Questions

(5) The radical scholars have still been unable to offer any reasonable explanation of why Luke, if he copied from Mark, omitted all the entire account from the feeding of the five thousand to the good confession of Peter. Plummer's challenge on the basis of this piece of evidence is still very powerful. Furthermore, the deadly attack on "Q," that it imagines a document such as this with no presentation of redemption through the death and resurrection of Jesus, remains unanswered. "The 'Q' Myth in Synoptic Studies" cites the "feeble" attempt of Streeter to say that there are two reasons for this: (1) The gospel of redemption by the death of Christ was not so important as Paul made it. But on the contrary, the Gospel accounts also make it just as central. Among the other books of the New Testament this emphasis is universal, with the sole exception of the Book of James, whose references to redemption in Christ through His death and resurrection are basic throughout but not stated in specific detail. But James was not writing an account of the ministry of Jesus, such as "Q" is supposed to be. James was merely sending out a sermon on practical Christian living. (2) Streeter's second argument was that the cross could be taught orally and hence could be omitted from a written record. But why should it be omitted from a record of the life of Christ? One half of the accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are devoted to that fateful final week.

Crank

Three of these four surveys of recent critical research and discussion quote the biting estimate of Streeter that if Luke copied from Matthew, then the changes he made are so odd and erratic that Luke "must have been a crank." Now this means that Streeter is hurling this charge of mental derangement at fellow theorists, for they all make the Gospel writers mere puppets on the ends of the strings that they attempt to manipulate. Was this not a surprising breach of courtesy for a sedate scholar? Should he not have said "lacking in intelligence" instead of insinuating mentally deranged? The dictionary defines "crank" as a "person with a crotchet or a mental twist; one given to fantastic or impracticable projects; one possessed by a hobby; one over-enthusiastic or of perverted judgment in respect to a particular matter; a monomaniac." Lost in the darkness of their own making and wandering around in circles, the radical scholars strike out wildly at anyone who confronts them. The Skeleton

Farmer's article, which gave bold promise in its title of the skeleton in the closet, is a distinct disappointment in the failure of the writer to take any decisive position. He denies the priority of Mark and asserts clearly that this theory has never been proved, but he is very timid and cautious in stating the evidence or in making known his own position. Occasionally he gives forth some staunch declaration as "a new concept of oral tradition as being like logs flowing along in a stream or river, from the banks of which each evangelist could drag to shore whatever he needed to build his gospel." Again he says that the Two-source Theory "works like a dream, and that is what it largely is, dreaming. In the world of dreams, one is conditioned but not limited by the realities of existence (as in the case of the existing gospels)." Toward the close of his article he strikes a glancing blow at the critical issue of the time element. He points out that the radicals hold "Matthew was written after the eyewitness period." But he does not pursue this argument to show that the claim is absolutely false. The eyewitness period lasted at least until the close of the first century. John's Gospel seals this all-important fact. Even the radical scholars admit that the Synoptics were written nearly three decades before this. Dibelius' admission that John's Gospel was written at the close of the first century has been cited in this present discussion (p. 98).

Farmer gives a sarcastic jab at the radical theorists in his closing sentences when he says, “In those days (the days of Hilgenfeld versus Holtzmann) the date of the composition of a gospel was decisive in determining the authenticity of the whole of its contents. With the advent of Form Criticism the situation changed.” It is typical of a halfhearted position that he does not drive home the time-element argument. An Epitaph

If the reader will turn back to page 110 and read again Alford’s analysis of the amazingly intricate and mysterious similarities and differences in the Gospel accounts, it will be seen that while Alford is much too courteous and reserved to resort to such a blunt epithet as “crank,” this is practically what he is saying: If a person argues that the complex problem of the similarities and differences of the Gospel accounts can be solved by any theory which supposes the writers copied from one another or from common sources, then that person is advocating a theory which is not intelligent. Reflecting upon this hard epithet, “crank,” which Streeter has hurled by implication at his colleagues who argue that Luke copied from Matthew (the leading exponent of this theory is James Hardy Ropes), one is inclined to feel that with this epithet Streeter himself has written the permanent epitaph of all the Two-source, Three-source, Four-source, Form Criticism theorists The New Approach

Some years ago a cartoonist published in the daily newspaper a cartoon which excited much interest and amusement. The cartoon had the caption “The professor enjoys his neighbor’s flowers.” This was the only explanation the author gave, but it was sufficient. It was very plain what had happened and what was happening. Here was a gorgeous flower garden with its wonderful riot of color and its symmetry of form and fashion. It extended along a considerable part of a city block and was immediately adjacent to the sidewalk. The only obstacle which separated the passer-by from the flower garden was a stout iron fence. The iron fence was not ponderous and the pickets were far apart. Any person could thrill to the amazing beauty of the garden every step of the way. But had the learned professor availed himself of this plain view? Oh, no! He had disdained such a vulgar procedure. He had kept his head stiffly turned aside and his eyes fixed in the other direction until finally he had come to the end of the block where there was a great iron gate. It was solid and offered no view of the flowers except through the tiny keyhole. Stooping here in laborious effort, could be seen the professor, bowed over, sighting with one eye through the keyhole: “The professor enjoys his neighbor’s flowers.” This was “The New Approach” to the flower garden. The Two-source Theory and Form Criticism are far worse than such pedantic folly. They make malicious attacks upon the deity of Christ. They charge the Gospel writers with deliberate falsification. This is “The New Approach to the New Testament” that the Two-source and the Form Criticism theorists present. “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools...for that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie” (Romans 1:22, Romans 1:25). “Those of the Pharisees who were with him heard these things, and said unto him, Are we also blind? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye would have no sin; but ye say, We see; your sin remaineth….For judgment came I into this world, that they that see not may see; and that they that see may become blind” (John 9:40, John 9:41, John 9:39).

014. Chapter 12 - The Inspiration of the Gospel Narratives

Chapter 12 - The Inspiration of the Gospel Narratives The Issue

“God has spoken unto us” (Hebrews 1:1, Hebrews 1:2). This is the fundamental proposition of Christianity. Everything which it offers to the world is based squarely upon this foundation. The Bible affirms repeatedly that it is the record of God’s revelation to men and offers the testimony of eyewitnesses as to the miraculous evidence accompanying these revelations. The modernists, on the contrary, offer two fundamental propositions: one, the position of the extreme skeptic; the other, that of his less radical comrade. The propositions are: (1) there is no God; (2) there is a God, but He has not spoken to man; the Bible is not the Word of God. No one has ever improved upon the Biblical analysis of the folly of the extreme radical position; both in brevity and in power it remains unexcelled: “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.” The atheist is utterly helpless to explain the universe or even his own personal existence; he remains helpless in the presence of death. But could anything be any more absurd than the second modernistic position that there is a God, but that He has not spoken to us? They admit the necessity of theism. They admit that the merest intelligence requires belief in the existence of God. They admit the need of man for a revelation. With great pathos and tearful anxiety, they proclaim their longing to find out something about God and the life after death. They blow out the light of revelation and then spend their days mumbling and fumbling around in the dark, trying to feel after God if haply they may find Him. The Alternatives

If there is a God, what kind of God is He, that He should not communicate with man? Does He lack the intelligence, or the power, or the love to communicate with man? What sort of God does the modernist worship? It is not surprising that he usually spells the word with a little “g”: “god”; his god is nothing more than a superman, powerless in the midst of the laws of nature. It is not surprising that there is a continual drift among modernists to the ultimate denial of the existence of God as a personal being. For who would be interested in a God who did not possess the power to speak to us, to reveal to us His Person and will and the way of life? Or a God who did not have the wisdom and knowledge to make known to us that which we could never discover for ourselves and which is so necessary to life here and hereafter? Or a God who, though He had all power and wisdom, was yet so lacking in love that He would not exert Himself to make known to man his possibilities, his obligations, his perils, and his destiny? The Fundamental Claim of the Bible The Bible reveals the existence and the will of God. It affirms that God knows; He loves; He is all-powerful; He has spoken to us; He has wrought our redemption, if we but obey Him. The New Testament declares itself to be the perfect, complete, and final revelation of God. The Gospel narratives form the essential foundation of the New Testament, for they give the historical records of the incarnation, and of the life, the teaching, and the will of Jesus, the Son of God. What is the evidence that these narratives are uniquely inspired, that they are the Word of God given to us by men who were guided in their writing by the Holy Spirit?

Implicit Claims of Gospel Writers The authors of the biographies of Jesus do the not make specific declaration of such inspiration. But a study of the narratives will show that such an implicit claim to miraculous guidance everywhere underlies the accounts. Two of the writers were apostles and the accounts themselves describe when and how they were endowed with miraculous information and power and how they gave proof of this gift. Moreover, the New Testament accounts affirm that leaders of the second generation were endowed with this same miraculous power by the laying on of the apostles' hands. Thus, while the Gospels do not begin or end with the explicit declaration of the authors that they were directly inspired of God, they reveal the life of Jesus and in the course of this narrative declare that His apostles and other chosen leaders were so endowed. Such a manner of claiming inspiration is the most powerful that could be imagined, for it is anchored securely in the actual facts of history, instead of resting upon the declaration of the author.

Matthew was a tax collector of Galilee whom Jesus called to be one of His apostles. John, the son of Zebedee, was a young fisherman who had become a disciple of John the Baptist and became associated with Jesus in the early Judaean ministry, was called to be a disciple by the Sea of Galilee, and ordained an apostle later in Jesus' ministry. We know but little concerning the character and activities of Matthew, but a strong and clear delineation of the character of John appears in the Gospel narratives and in the Book of Acts. Mark was a zealous young member of the Jerusalem church which often met in his mother's home. He was associated with Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary tour. His desertion of the company caused Paul and Barnabas to part. That he later redeemed himself in the eyes of Paul is shown by his later association with Paul in Rome (Colossians 4:10; Philemon 1:24; 2 Timothy 4:11). Luke was a Gentile, a physician of Greek descent, the companion of Paul on his second missionary journey from Troas onward, and the faithful associate and helper of Paul even during the years of his imprisonment at Caesarea and at Rome. The four books which these men have written to record the life of Jesus all bear distinctive traits of style. It is evident that the Holy Spirit permitted the personality of the human author to express itself when it was in harmony with the purpose of God. The unique inspiration of the authors guided them in the choice of material and, whenever necessary, in the manner of expression. Thus the same Spirit which guided Peter and the other apostles in the early proclamation of the message also guided these writers in the writing of this gospel. It is not surprising that they tell the same things and often in the same way and that they differ, at times, in the most unusual way. Thus did the Holy Spirit furnish unanimous testimony through diversity of personalities and expression. The fact that early Christian writers, in giving their testimony that these four biographies were actually written by the men whose names appear on our earliest manuscripts also testify that Mark wrote under the influence and direction of Peter, and the fact that Luke declares that he consulted the original witnesses (the apostles, Mary, James, the brother of the Lord, and others), solidly base these two documents upon the testimony of apostles and eyewitnesses. Matthew and John wrote of what they themselves saw, heard, and knew. "That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life...that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you" (1 John 1:1-3). The facts were directly known by two of the authors, and easily obtained by the other two; the selection of facts and the manner of expression and arrangement needed the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Supernatural Information Imparted

Certain exceptions to this immediate knowledge are evident in the narratives, and they furnish strong proof of their divine inspiration. The authors do not explicitly declare they are inspired of God, but they calmly assume it. This is clearly seen when they deliberately relate things which no human being could know of himself without superhuman guidance. Mark at the close of his Gospel boldly declares what happened in 'heaven after Jesus disappeared from the sight of the apostles as they stood on the Mount of Ascension. "So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken unto them, was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19). How could any mere man know what happened in the unseen world above without miraculous guidance? Mark states this without explanation or defense; he assumes divine inspiration. The Gospel writers tell of what happened in the wilderness when Jesus was tempted. No man was present to see or hear. They relate the intimate prayers of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Three men were only a stone's throw distant, but they were asleep. How could they know what Jesus said to God in the agony of His soul? Did Jesus afterward tell them? Such a supposition does not seem to match the character of Jesus. The amazing thing about such accounts is that the authors boldly state such facts as these, without defending their statements, declaring their source of information, or even intimating any possibility of error. There is nothing in the literature of the world to parallel this. They did not need to state the source of their information or affirm and defend their miraculous information. They had stated in their narratives, in the mere course of unveiling the divine Person and ministry of Jesus, the fact that He miraculously endowed His immediate, chosen followers. This was enough. They did not need to add personal affirmations. They did not need to prove their inspiration to a church which had already received innumerable, indubitable evidences in the working of miracles by these same men who here write down for the ages the record of the life of Christ. The evidence which was sufficient for the early church must be sufficient for all the ages.

Supernatural Evidence Added

Professor Ropes admits that the early church in the second century had come to the conclusion that the New Testament was an infallible and divinely inspired document. But he holds that this belief grew up in the course of a century. This is short time indeed for such a development. Does anyone today declare Abraham Lincoln or George Washington to be a divine being, who worked miracles? Moreover, it is a gratuitous denial, without proof, of the explicit testimony of the New Testament writers. These men worked miracles in the presence of the church and the world. The early Christians accepted their writings as inspired of God, not as a growing conclusion of the second century, but as an immediate conviction the moment they were written and delivered to the churches. When Peter or Paul or any other of the inspired leaders preached, his word was accepted as inspired of God because he accompanied his proclamation with the miraculous evidence which could not be rejected. When they wrote down their messages for the churches, the written Word was received in exactly the same manner.

Conflict of Theory and Scripture The whole proposition of supposing that the Gospel writers copied from one another and searched around among "sources," copying here and there a scrap of information or incorporating whole sections from earlier "sources," is a flat denial of their own direct information or their native intelligence. They either had not seen and heard, or even talked with the original eyewitnesses, or they did not possess enough mother wit to write down what they had learned. How much more is it evident that the whole Two-source Theory denies absolutely the divine inspiration of the narratives! It is a most amazing thing how so many supposedly

conservative scholars who claim to believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures have swallowed the entire Two-source Theory. Consider, for example, the description by Professor Hill of the process by which the earliest source ("Q") arose: "We have already noted that the first things to be written concerning Jesus would be His sayings — both because they are not so easily remembered as His deeds, and because it is important to preserve their exact form. Matthew's early training as a tax collector would accustom him to make memoranda: and it is very possible that, either when he was with Jesus or afterward, he made such a collection of sayings and naturally they would be in Hebrew — i.e., Aramaic, the language in which they were spoken" (Introduction to the Life of Christ., p. 112). This is a very moderate statement from a modernist who is not at all extreme. Now compare this picture of Matthew who was accustomed to jot down notes in his tax collecting business, following Jesus around with a papyrus roll taking down notes on His speeches and sermons, with the declaration of Jesus Himself as to how His words were to be preserved for the future ages: "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" (John 14:26). "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, he shall bear witness of me: and ye also bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning" (John 15:26, John 15:27). "How be it when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that were to come" (John 16:13). Could anything be clearer or more powerful and impressive than these promises of Jesus that they are to be directly inspired to recall and perpetuate His words and will? Does someone suggest that all these quotations are from the Gospel of John? John's testimony is entirely sufficient; but hear the testimony of Matthew: "Before governors and kings shall ye be brought for my sake, for a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, be not anxious how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you" (Matthew 10:18-20). These promises of Jesus declare that His apostles should be divinely inspired not merely to recall the past, but to unveil the future. The more one studies the Two-source Theory in contrast with the solemn promises of Jesus, the more he is compelled to conclude that it can not possibly be harmonized with faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and in the New Testament as the inspired revelation of God. A plain choice is demanded between a theory which has as its objective the denial of the fundamental claims of Christianity and which has as its foundation a heap of assumptions, and a faith which stands firm upon the promises and proof which Christ offers. The Testimony of Acts The Book of Acts furnishes the clinching evidence for the inspiration of the Gospel narratives, for it records how the promises of Jesus as to the inspiration of the apostles were fulfilled and bears testimony to the miraculous proof which accompanied the fulfillment. Luke opens his history of the founding of the church by recording the final promise which Jesus gave that His apostles should be miraculously inspired by the Holy Spirit: "But ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence" (Acts 1:5); "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Luke then proceeds to record the fulfillment of this promise on the day of Pentecost and the prodigious miracles by which God proved its fulfillment. Every page of this great book offers cumulative evidence of the inspiration of the apostles and the leaders who were associated with them after having been miraculously endowed by the laying on

of the apostles' hands. Citations characteristic of the whole book are the statements concerning Paul at Iconium and at Ephesus: "Long time therefore they tarried there speaking boldly in the Lord, who bare witness unto the words of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands" (Acts 14:3); "All they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul" (Acts 19:10, Acts 19:11). The evidence from the Book of Acts reacts directly upon Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, for two of these were apostles and the other two, associated leaders chosen by apostles. The insistent emphasis of Acts upon the divine inspiration of the Christian messengers makes the proving of this fact one of the major objectives of the book.

Affirmations of Revelation and Hebrews

Although the Gospels do not contain direct affirmations by the writers of their inspiration, they are a part of the New Testament and the affirmations of other writers constitute indirect affirmation by these who record the life of Christ. John signed the Book of Revelation and in it makes the most explicit claims to a direct revelation from God which he is recording. That the force of this should reflect upon the Gospel which he wrote is inescapable. "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show unto his servants, even the things which must shortly come to pass: and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John; who bare witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, even of all things that he saw" (Revelation 1:1, Revelation 1:2). The affirmation with which the Epistle to the Hebrews opens, places profound emphasis upon this great fact of the inspiration of both the old revelation and the new. With ponderous, resounding strokes, the author drives home the proof of this solid foundation of the whole Christian religion: "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds; who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high….How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? Which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will" (Hebrews 1:1-3; Hebrews 2:3, Hebrews 2:4). There is in the passage a most impressive declaration of the fact that God has spoken to man, both in the prophets and in His Son, who is His supreme messenger, and that the eyewitnesses were divinely inspired to proclaim the life and will of Jesus. Here, again, is the emphasis placed upon the fact that the miracles which the apostles worked proved the truth of their message and its divine origin.

Declarations of Paul

Paul repeatedly declared that he was writing by divine inspiration. "For I make known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:11, Galatians 1:12). Modernists are accustomed to cite 1 Corinthians 7:25 as proof that Paul did not claim miraculous inspiration: "Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: but I give my judgment as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be trustworthy." But instead of proving that Paul does not claim to write by divine inspiration, this proves exactly the

opposite. It is not clear whether Paul's meaning here is that Jesus did not give any specific teaching upon this point during His ministry, and thus he was unable to quote Jesus directly, but had to speak as he was guided of the Lord; or that on this point he had no revelation from the Lord, but was giving the judgment of an inspired man; in either case the direct conclusion is that in everything else that he writes he has divine guidance. In the preceding context he makes evident reference to the teaching of Jesus upon divorce: "But unto the married I give charge, yea not I, but the Lord, that the wife depart not from her husband" (1 Corinthians 7:10). This seems to make his meaning in 1 Corinthians 7:25 that he has no such statement from the teaching of Jesus upon the phase of marriage he is now discussing. Even if the contention of the modernist were granted that Paul admits on this particular point he does not have a direct revelation from God, such a contention immediately makes of this passage the exception which proves the rule, for the inevitable conclusion is that in everything else Paul has written, he does claim such miraculous guidance. The difference between the Authorized and the American Standard Versions of the famous passage in 2 Timothy has caused many to be confused as to whether this is an assertion of the inspiration of the Scriptures, but a study of the original and of the two translations shows that this is the fundamental meaning of the passage. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof"...(a.v.). The Greek noun (graphe) translated "scripture" in both versions means either any "writing" or the "scripture" (the specific group of writings held to be inspired). The American Standard Version takes the general sense and says that "Every writing which is inspired of God" (i.e., the Old Testament and such books of the New Testament as had been written at this time). The Authorized Version takes the specific sense and says "every scripture" (i.e., the Bible) "is inspired." The verb must be supplied and the conjunction (kai) may be translated "and" (a.v.) or "also" (a.s.v.). Both versions affirm that the Bible is inspired of God: the Authorized Version by direct assertion, the American Standard Version by implication. The American Standard Version certainly does not improve on the translation of the Authorized Version in this particular passage, although the ultimate meaning is the same in both translations.

Testimony of Peter The declaration of Peter on the day of Pentecost that the apostles were directly inspired by the Holy Spirit in accordance with the prediction of the prophet Joel (Acts 2:17-21) is repeated by him continually by direct statement or by implication both in the Book of Acts and in the rest of the New Testament. Peter gives a particularly strong declaration in his Second Epistle: "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there was borne such a voice to him by the Majestic Glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: and this voice we ourselves heard borne out of heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount. And we have the word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:16-21). Such are the claims which the New Testament makes for itself. Even the quotations which are not taken from the Gospel narratives argue immediately for the inspiration of these books, for they are an inseparable part of the unit, the New Testament, and that which is true of one of the books is true of the others. Furthermore, the declarations of the Epistles establish the inspiration of the apostles and their chosen companions whom they miraculously endowed by the laying on of their hands. The authors of the

Gospels are apostles or their immediate companions. Thus from the viewpoint of both the writer and his product, the evidence is conclusive. The Modernistic Position

What has the modernist to say concerning this evidence, the explicit declarations of the New Testament? They make the attempt to laugh it out of court. Their manner may be subtle or boisterous, but their general reply is ridicule. Professor Hill caricatures this position as “the dictation theory of inspiration” and frankly admits that if it be true, there is no Synoptic problem and the books differ and agree in accord with their divine Author. He adds, however, that “the dictation theory is held by few, if any, thoughtful men today.” Since when did a majority vote become an absolute criterion of truth? Especially when the vote is limited to a single generation and to a hand-picked group out of that generation? It is a rather delicate question to raise, but men have been known to differ as to who might qualify as “thoughtful men.” It was freely admitted at the outset that the present “trend” among those who are exercising intellectual leadership over this generation is against the inspiration of the Scriptures. But how many times in history have a majority of the scholars in any given generation been committed to a false position? If God guided the Gospel writers, allowing their human personalities to express themselves in differences of viewpoint and style when in harmony with the divine purpose, and restraining them when out of harmony with the divine will, and giving even the words that were used when necessary, then “there is no Synoptic problem.” This is a most significant admission. It is also of primary importance that Professor Hill admits that those who deny such inspiration have been unable to offer any satisfactory, naturalistic explanation of the relationship of the Gospels: if God is ruled out of the explanation, man finds himself unable to explain. The intelligentsia may agree that the Gospels are not inspired of God, but they are certainly in the fiercest disagreement and in general confusion as to what is the proper explanation of the similarities and differences of the narratives. Professor Ropes also finds it “mortifying” to scholars to have to admit that one hundred years of prodigious effort, while producing theories of “enormous proportions” and “bewildering perplexity,” have utterly failed in producing any general or final solution of a rationalistic nature. It is to be expected that those who deny and try to explain away the miracles of the Bible would also attempt to deny its divine inspiration. But the elemental weakness of a purely negative position, which says, “I do not believe it,” is self-evident. Therefore the modernists have struggled desperately for more than a century to prove that the Gospels were written late. If they can prove they were written in a time too late for them to have been the work of the apostles and their immediate associates, then they can break the claims which the New Testament makes for divine inspiration and can weaken the historical merit of the testimony itself. They can argue that these books are forgeries written at a later date, to which the unknown authors attached the names of apostles or famous early Christians in order to gain authority for the book. If they can dissect the books, in the same fashion that they undertake to dissect the Pentateuch or the Book of Isaiah, affirming that not one, but a large number of authors collaborated in producing it; if they can show that the Gospel narratives arose from “sources” by gradual development and hence are but nebulous, evolutionary products, instead of the clear-cut testimony of the original eyewitnesses and their companions; then they hope to break down the whole structure of testimony upon which Christianity rests. Not all who have adopted the radical conclusions have been consciously moved by such intent. But the objective of the atheists who started the movement and first advanced the positions is all too evident. This whole radical position stands or falls upon the proposition of the assumed late date of the Gospels. Now that this assumption is thoroughly discredited, their

contentions fall of their own weight.

Evidence from the Character of the Narratives

If the Gospels are inspired of God, we should expect them to give evidence of this, not merely in the claims and miraculous proof offered to sustain these claims, but also in the essential contents of the books themselves. This is exactly what we find when we compare these documents with the literature of the world. They stand absolutely unique. Consider the simplicity and brevity of the narratives. Compare these four brief narratives with the biographies of great men such as Napoleon, Washington, or Lincoln. Instead of writing a vast library, the writers gave only the briefest and most condensed records. What held them back from recording a multitude of miracles and sermons instead of the few which they relate? John declares in a magnificent hyperbole with which he ends his narrative: “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written” (John 21:25). There was a divine restraint which controlled the writers so that the entire New Testament is but a brief, compact volume instead of being an endless collection of material. Who could have restrained himself to two verses, three verses, or five verses, as Luke, Mark, and Matthew do in recording the baptism of Jesus with the amazing supernatural event which accompanied it? Who could have passed over the long years of Jesus’ youth at Nazareth, without pausing to tell more of the incidents the apostles must have known? Contrast the writings of the New Testament with the Apocryphal Gospels of the second and third centuries with their endless efforts to fill in from their imagination the gaps in the inspired narrative. Heap together the enormous collection of writings which is the result of man’s effort through the centuries to explain what is contained in these four short narratives. And yet behold how these brief records still outweigh all the vast bulk of what man has written about them! Where can there be found in biographical literature another example of the complete omission of any description of the personal appearance of the hero? Take any biography you choose and see the painstaking effort to transmit as exact an impression as possible of the physical appearance. We are left without the slightest information as to the stature, the features, the appearance of Jesus. We marvel at the efforts of distinguished artists to paint the portrait of Jesus. Their efforts stir profound reflections within us, but they leave us unsatisfied. We turn away with the inevitable comment: “Wonderful! But I do not think Jesus looked just like that.” Here, again, is the evidence of a divine restraint which guided the inspired authors of the New Testament. Image worship was to be discouraged; it was God’s will that no description of the physical appearance of Jesus should be recorded. The modernist would explain the unparalleled brevity of the Gospels upon the basis of the utter lack of any further information on the part of the authors. This rests upon a dogmatic denial of the genuineness of the documents and contradicts flatly the declaration of John and the actual evidence he offers in the wealth of new material which he records in his Gospel. The modernist is at an utter loss to explain why Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John did not draw upon their imagination and fill in the details, if they actually were ignorant of further facts. A comparison of the Apocryphal Gospels with the New Testament furnishes indubitable proof that the New Testament is fact, not fiction. No explanation of the brevity of our Gospel accounts can be found short of that which appears on the face of the narratives — that the writers were guided and restrained by the Holy Spirit in their presentation of the facts.

Inherent Claims of the Authors This restraint is seen in the amazing absence of any epithets or other evidence of malice on the part of the authors toward Judas, Pilate, Herod Antipas, or the Pharisees and Sadducees. The facts are told in an impersonal manner which reflects sublimely the prayer of Jesus for His enemies as He died on the cross. Can this be paralleled in the biographical literature of the world? The word “unique” is written across the Gospels, regardless of what phase the comparison may follow. The humble confessions which the authors record of their own unbelief and failures stand out with a distinctness that is startling. But when these confessions of personal unworthiness are placed alongside their refusal to admit even the possibility of the slightest error in the facts they recorded, there emerges a clear picture of the unprecedented authority with which they wrote. You can not find in any of these books ordinary historical statements that they have searched diligently for the facts, but have been unable to ascertain them; that they can not be sure, but their personal opinion is that this or that happened; or that this or that motive may have caused the conduct described; or that this or that person is variously appraised by his fellows, but their own estimate of him is as follows. Select any historical work you will. Lay it alongside the New Testament with this thought in mind. The contrast stands out like the skyline of heaven against the fogs and mists of earth. The authors declare their facts; calmly they declare the motives and unveil the characters of the persons who enter the account. They offer no defense of their manner. They admit no question of their infallibility. The clinching evidence here is that the bitterest foes of Christianity have been unable to challenge successfully the absolute accuracy of detail — historical or geographical. Each new generation of critics comes up with a new wave of citations of historical inaccuracy on the part of the New Testament writers and thereby furnishes the convenient testimony that all the criticisms of preceding generations have been futile. The assumption of infallibility on the part of the New Testament writers would be set aside as brazen fraud if the critics could disprove the facts they relate. But every time they come up with some line of comparison to show that the silence of Josephus or Roman historians proves that the historical data of the New Testament is in error, some archaeologist’s spade turns up a coin or an inscription which confirms that which the New Testament had stated without the slightest attempt at explanation or defense. The geographical accuracy of the Gospels is so minute that even a skeptic like Renan found himself forced to confess when he visited Palestine that the whole New Testament account began to take on a new historical vividness. The Personality of Jesus and the Inspiration of the Gospels The claims to supernatural guidance and infallible statement of truth by the writers which are so plainly implied in the Gospel accounts take on new proportions in the light of the person and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. These books have been the source of moral regeneration of a sinful world throughout the centuries. Were they the products of perjured witnesses? The imagination of foolish fanatics? Frauds forged by nonentities who were so conscienceless that they falsely tried to leave the impression of miraculous guidance and infallibility? If so, then a lie works better than the truth; a stream can rise higher than its source; and water can run uphill. Henry Van Dyke says of Jesus: “He is such a person as men could not have imagined if they would, and would not have imagined if they could.” G. Campbell Morgan remarks that if Jesus is the mere creation of His biographers, then we should be compelled to worship the ones who conceived and created Him. Now it follows inevitably upon such unshaken conclusions concerning the character of Jesus, that the men whom He chose to make Him known to the world did not combine His matchless character and teaching with the most flagrant falsehood imaginable in their implied and stated claims to supernatural guidance in the

recording of His life. They freely admitted their moral imperfections. But they declare with an absolute authority their record of the facts about Jesus. They sealed their testimony with the resolute endurance of toil, poverty, persecution, and death. The sublime documents which they have given to the world, record toward the close of the last of these, the glorious beatitude of faith which Jesus pronounced upon those who accept their testimony: “Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. Many other signs did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name” (John 20:28-31).

015. Chapter 13 - The Text of the Gospels

Chapter 13 - The Text of the Gospels The Renaissance When the world finally awoke from the long sleep of a thousand years and leaped into the blazing glory of the Renaissance, the Bible was one of the chief factors in this rebirth of civilization. The rediscovery of the ancient learning through the long-lost manuscripts, which had been brought into the Western world by scholars fleeing from Constantinople to escape the Turks, enlightened the minds of men. The thrilling discovery of the new world by Columbus kindled the imagination of men and set the nations on fire with activity. But when Martin Luther stood up with his Bible in his hand and defied the pope, the souls of men were touched and the Dark Ages were no more. The Attitude toward the Bible For long centuries the Bible had been practically lost to the world. Ridden away in churches and monasteries, the precious manuscripts were covered with dust and little known or used. The Reformation discounted the authority of the pope and caused the Bible to be exalted as the true source of authority in religion, since it is the Word of God; and to be studied eagerly by all, since it is directed to the whole of mankind. The invention of printing opened the gates of knowledge to the common people and placed the Bible in every man’s hands. William Tyndale, who suffered endless persecution and finally died a martyr to his work of translating the Bible into English for his fellow countrymen, expressed the spirit of the age when he declared with impassioned utterance that he intended that the common plowboy should know more about the Bible than the ignorant priest with whom he was debating.

Recovery of the Manuscripts When the scholars began to rescue the precious manuscripts of the Bible from their obscure hiding places, they discovered to their dismay that the manuscripts did not agree. The very text of the sacred Book had been corrupted by the errors of the scribes who had copied it and passed it down through the centuries. After recovering from the first shock, scholars began with patient and tireless effort to collect and compare every available copy of the Scriptures, that by the most painstaking study of all, the original might be restored. This gave rise to two great branches of science: Lower Criticism which undertakes to study the most minute differences in the text, and by such a microscopic study to find the true reading in each passage; Higher Criticism which seeks to supplement the conclusions based upon different readings of manuscripts by a study of the meaning of the passages, and to help correct the text by weighing the probabilities of the meaning.

Methods of Writing

Man’s first efforts at writing appear to have been cut in stone or scratched on pottery. A board covered with wax or sand was used for temporary writing. The effort to produce records both permanent and convenient led to the invention of a kind of paper made from papyrus which grew in the Nile Valley (and the Plain of Huleh in Palestine). Thin sections of this pithy weed were cut and pressed together with the grain arranged in cross sections like the ply furniture which is so common today. This material was too fragile to stand much turning as leaves in a book, and the papyrus was usually made into a long roll by pasting sections together. Such a manuscript was

rolled on two rods which reduced the wear and tear on the papyrus as it was unrolled for reading. Manuscripts in the form of a book with leaves were made from the skins of animals, very skillfully prepared. These were very costly. The skins of sheep and goats were used to produce “parchments,” and the skins of very young calves and antelopes, “vellum,” which was much finer and more durable. The ink which was used was made’ from lampblack, boneblack, or some sort of vegetable compound; red, purple, or yellow inks were also made. For pens they used split reeds and later, bronze pens. The Oldest Manuscripts The autograph copy of each Gospel was undoubtedly made of the most precious and durable material — parchment or vellum. Many subsequent copies were made of papyrus. The immensely important find of a papyrus fragment of the Gospel of John which dates from the first part of the second century has already been discussed in the section “The Synoptics and John’s Gospel.” The autograph copies doubtless perished in the early centuries, and there is slight chance that any of them will ever be recovered. Until the recent discovery of this fragment of the Gospel of John in Egypt, the oldest manuscripts in our possession were papyrus fragments found at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt. Concerning the famous Rylands fragment of the Gospel of John, Sir Frederic Kenyon, one of the world’s greatest textual critics, writes: In the middle years of the nineteenth century if this scrap could have been produced and its date established, it would have created a profound sensation; for it would have convincingly refuted those who contended that the Fourth Gospel was not written until the second century was far advanced. Now we see that it was not only written, but had spread to a provincial town in Egypt, by the middle of the second century, which goes far toward confirming the traditional date of composition in the last years of the first century (Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts, pp. 127, 128). The diligent search for even small fragments of copies of the Scriptures continues.

It is often said that one of the most important discoveries of recent decades has been the Chester Beatty Papyri. These consist of two leaves of a codex of Jeremiah, twenty-nine leaves of a codex of Ezekiel, and of Daniel and Esther. Chester Beatty Papyrus I has thirty leaves of a codex which originally had 220 leaves and contained all four Gospels and Acts. The papyri discovered consist of two leaves from Matthew, six from Mark, seven from Luke, two from John, and thirteen from Acts. The leaves from Luke and John were more complete and legible. They cannot be assigned to any of the groups or families of texts known to us. Mark seems nearer to the Caesarean type of text than to the Neutral or Western; Luke and John appear to be between Neutral and Western. The oldest extant uncials date from the middle of the fourth century. Scholars are able to date manuscripts with a great degree of accuracy by a study of the materials used, the style of handwriting, the use of punctuation, the adornment of manuscripts by fancy letters or little pictures, and the relation of the text of one manuscript to others. The oldest manuscripts were written in capital letters without punctuation or spaces between words; they are called uncials or majuscules. About the ninth century a smooth, flowing, longhand style began to be used, and the manuscripts from this date forward were written in this manner; these are called cursives or minuscules. We possess more than 160 uncials and more than three thousand cursives which contain various books or sections of Scripture from the Old and New Testaments.

Kenyon says that in 1941 there were 2,429 cursives officially listed, and that there were many more not so listed. Others give an estimate of more than 3,000. There were only forty-six complete copies of the New Testament in minuscule form in 1926, according to Kenyon. The cursives are

later than the uncials and as a rule less dependable. They date from the ninth century to the sixteenth. But some cursives are more scholarly and important than some uncials. Cursive 1 and cursive 33 are usually named as the most important. The Ferrar group of cursives are so called because W. H. Ferrar of Dublin first investigated them and proved they were of one family (Family 13:13, 69, 124, 346). Eight other minuscules are now included in this family. Minuscule I is now declared to be a group, minuscule 1 having been joined with 118, 131, and 209. More recently minuscule 1582 has been added to this group. This last minuscule has a marginal note to Mark 16:9-20 stating: “Irenaeus, who was near to the apostles, in the third book against heresies quotes this saying as found in Mark” (Streeter, The Four Gospels, p. 224). This is important evidence that in the second century the close of the Gospel of Mark was as we now have it. Thus a minuscule carries evidence that reaches back two centuries earlier than any extant uncial of Mark. Cursives 157 and 565 are also important for the study of the Gospel narratives. The most important uncials are: (1) Vaticanus (B) at Rome, made of vellum, containing 1,518 pages (10 1/2 inches by 10) with the Old Testament in Greek (Septuagint Translation). It lacks the first forty-six chapters of Genesis and Psalm 105-135, and the closing pages of the New Testament from Hebrews 9:14 to the end. (2) Sinaiticus) found by Tischendorf in the Monastery of St. Catherine at the foot of Mount Sinai in 1859, and secured by the Russian government; sold by the Soviets to England, and now in the British Museum, London. It is the only uncial which contains all the New Testament, and also has a large part of the Old Testament (Septuagint). It also appends at the close, The Epistle of Barnabas and The Shepherd of Hermas. It has 790 (out of an original 1,460) pages, and is made of vellum. (3) Alexandrinus (A), presented to Charles I of England by the patriarch of Constantinople in 1628. It contains nearly all of the Old Testament (Septuagint), all the New Testament except Matthew 1-24; Matthew 25:1-6; John 6:50-71; John 7:1-53; John 8:1-52; 1 Corinthians 4:13-21; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 1 Corinthians 6:1-20; 1 Corinthians 7:1-40; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; 1 Corinthians 9:1-27; 1 Corinthians 10:1-33; 1 Corinthians 11:1-34; 1 Corinthians 12:1-6. It appends I Clement and part of II Clement, and has 793 pages. It is now in the London Museum. (4) Ephraemi (C) at Paris. It contains some of the Old Testament and about two-thirds of the New Testament. It is a palimpsest and the original writing had to be recovered by removing with chemicals the accumulated blur (copy of a work of Ephraim of Cyrus was written over the original about the twelfth century). This uncial is also made of vellum. (5) Bezae (D), given by the French theologian, Theodore Beza, to the University of Cambridge, England. It contains the Gospels and Acts with some pages missing, and carries the Greek text with the Latin translation opposite. It comes from the early sixth century. (6) Washington (W), discovered in Egypt in 1906 and presented to America by Mr. Freer of Detroit. It contains the Gospels in the following order: Matthew, John, Luke, Mark. It belongs to the “Western Text.” In the newer arrangement of groups of manuscripts, it is now called Byzantine, with some sections called Alexandrian, and some, Caesarean. W has only the four Gospels; it contains 187 leaves. It is generally held to be from the fourth or fifth century. (See Kenyon, Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts, p 251.) Errors in the Manuscripts The extant manuscripts show various errors in transmission, both accidental and intentional, but the latter are very few and unimportant. Scrivener estimated that there are more than 120,000 variant readings in the manuscripts. The discovery of these variations at first alarmed the Christian world, but a closer study of them showed that the vast majority were insignificant matters of spelling, transposition of words or differences represented in English by “the,” “and,” “of,” or such words in places where they had no importance. The best proof available

to the untrained student of the Bible that the manuscript differences are nearly all unimportant is obtained from a comparison of the King James and the American Standard Versions. The King James or Authorized Version was made from the Textus Receptus (Erasmus had made the text from a few late Greek manuscripts of about the fourteenth century). The American Standard Version was made from a painstaking comparison of all the available Greek manuscripts and versions with the greatest weight given to the great uncials, especially Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. In spite of this, the comparison of the text of the Authorized Version and the American Standard Version (the marginal notes assist greatly in pointing out the important manuscript differences) will show that the text of the late manuscripts and that of the earliest are practically identical. The omission of Acts 8:37 is one of the most important of the differences, and it remains to be seen whether the revisers acted in too great haste in removing this verse. Most of the differences seen in the Authorized Version and the American Standard Version are matters of translation and not of textual variations. The Greek manuscripts which Erasmus used were based on the “Syrian Text” of which Alexandrinus is the most valuable example. The textual critic Gregory declares that “this text is the worst text in existence.” If this judgment is correct, we have between the Authorized Version and the American Standard Version the widest variation which the groups of manuscripts afford. The Authorized Version is declared to be based on the worst text (Syrian); the American Standard Version is based on the best text, with a painstaking comparison of all existing texts, and yet the resulting differences are no more than can be seen readily in the comparison of these two versions — Authorized Version and American Standard Version. The differences are rarely of any vital importance. Truly we can be grateful to the devoted scribes who copied the sacred text with such care through the centuries.

Origen The first and one of the greatest of all the textual critics was Origen (a.d. 185-254). A sketch of his career and an example of his work give a view of the entire field of textual criticism. Origen was such a brilliant student that he was made head of the famous Catechetical School in Alexandria in Egypt at the age of eighteen, when persecution drove the regular members of the faculty into hiding. Persecution forced Origen to leave Alexandria a.d. 215. Most of his life was spent at Caesarea working in the great library there. Day and night with the most incessant and meticulous collation of manuscripts he labored for years to recover as nearly as he could the original Hebrew text and the Septuagint text. His Hexapla is one of the most extraordinary documents in the history of textual criticism. Origen had studied Greek and Hebrew from childhood and was a mighty master of both languages. The chart on the Hexapla illustrates the immense amount of minute, detailed work which is required in the field of textual criticism. The chart appears on pages 62 and 63 of Swete’s Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek. It was constructed from a fragment of the Hexapla found in Milan, Italy, in 1896. The fragment did not have the column of the Hebrew text; this had to be supplied in the chart. Previous to this discovery, and that of a similar fragment from Cairo (both of them fragments of the Psalms), the Hexapla had no longer been extant, although a number of quotations from it, including readings from Aquila, had been found in the form of marginal notes in various manuscripts of the Septuagint or in the writings of early Christian scholars. The Hexapla From Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek by H.B. Swete, pp. 62-63, copyright, 1900, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, England. Used by permission.

Hebrew ■■■■■

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Hebrew Transliterated λαμανασση

λαβνκορ

αλ■αλμω■θ

σιρ

ελωειμ■λανου* μασε■ονο■ζ

εζρ

βσαρω■θ

νεμσα μωδ

αλ■χεν■

λω■νιρα

βααμιρ

ααρς

ονβαμωτ

αριμ

βλεβ

ιαμιμ

* In the MSS. λανου appears in the third column, where it has displaced Aquila's rendering

Aquila τω■■ νικοποιω

τω■ν υι■ω■ν Κο■ρε

ε■πι■ νεανιοτη■των

α■σμα.

ο■ θεο■ς η■μι■ν ■■■

ε■λπι■ς και■ κρα■τος, βοη■θεια

ε■ν θλι■ψεσιν

ευ■ρε■θη* σφο■δρα

ε■πι■ τοντω■

■ου■ φοβηθησο■μεθα

ε■ν τω■■ α■νταλλα■ σσεσθαι

γη■ν,

και■ ε■ν τω■■ σφα■λλεσθαι

ο■■ρη

ε■ν καρδι■α■

θαλασσω■ν.

* MS. ευ■ρε■θης.

Symmachus ε■πινι■κιος

τω■ν υι■ω■ν Κο■ρε

υ■πε■ρ των αι■ωνι■ων

ω■■δη■.

ο■ θεο■ς η■μι■ν

πεποι■θησις και■ ι■σχυ■ς, βοη■θεια

ε■ν θλι■ψεσιν

ευ■ρισκο■μενος σφο■δρα.

δια■ του■το

ου■ φοβηθησο■μεθα

ε■ν τω■■* συγχει■σθαι

γη■ν

και■ κλι■νεσθαι

ο■■ρη

ε■ν καρδι■α■

θαλασσω■ν.

* MS. ται■ς.

lxx ει■ς το■ τε■λος■

υ■πε■ρ τω■ν υι■ω■ν* Ko■ρε

υ■πε■ρ τω■ν κρυφι■ων

ψαλμο■ς.

ο■ θεο■ς η■μω■ν katafugh_ kai du&namij, bohqo_j e)n qli&yesi tai~j eu(rou&saij h(ma~j σφο■δρα.

■ου■ φοβηθησο■μεθα

ε■ν τω■■ ταρα■σσεσθαι

τη■ν γη■ν

και■ μετατι■θεσθαι

ο■■ρη

ε■ν καρδι■α

θαλασσω■ν.

* With interlinear variant τοι■ς υι■οι■ς.

MS. η■μι■ν. With interlinear variant

ευ■ρεθη■σεται η■μι■ν.

Theodotion τω■■ νικοποιω■■*■

τοι■ς υι■οι■ς Ko■ρε

υ■πε■ρ τω■ν κρυφι■ων

ω■■δη■*■

ο■ θεο■ς κρυφι■ων

καταφυγη■ και δυ■ναμις, βοηθο■ς

ε■ν θλι■ψεσιν

ευ■ρε■θη σφο■δρα

δια■ του■το

ου■ φοβηθησο■μεθαι

τη■ν γη■ν

και■ σαλευ■εσθαι

ο■■ρη

ε■ν καρδι■α

θαλασσω■ν.

* With marginal variants, το■ τε■λος, ψαλμο■ς. With interlinear variant ταιˉ■ς ε υ■ρου■σαις η■μα■ς. With interlinear variant μετατι■θεσθαι.

It will be seen that Origen first copied the Hebrew text with no more than two Hebrew words to a line in order to leave abundant space for his critical apparatus. In the next column he transliterated the Hebrew words into the parallel of the Greek alphabet. This may seem like a strange process, since the Greek letters did not form words or make sense. But his column has been of interest in showing the correct pronunciation of the Hebrew consonants and the vowel pointing which developed. Origen's Hebrew text was different in many places from the Masoretic text. In the third and fourth columns Origen placed the Jewish translations by Aquila and Symmachus, both of whom were translating the Hebrew text. In the fifth column Origen placed the Septuagint, which was four hundred years earlier than the other translations and represents the impartial scholarship of the Jewish nation in 285 b.c. and had been accepted by Jews and Christians alike before furious controversy enveloped them. It is self-evident that Origen regarded the Septuagint as the standard of excellence, since his lifetime objective was to bring this version as near to perfection as possible. We hardly need the explicit declaration of Epiphanius to assure us that Origen regarded the Septuagint as the standard translation of the Old Testament into Greek. Theodotion's translation, since it was a revision of the Septuagint, was naturally placed in the sixth column.

Notice the careful markings that Origen used (asterisk, obelus, and metobelus) to indicate differences in the Hebrew and Septuagint texts. The Hexapla was probably finished about a.d. 240. Dr. Swete figures that if written in one massive codex, it would have contained 3,250 leaves or 6,500 pages. He conjectures that it would have been on papyrus, since the cost of such volumes in parchment (sheep or goat skin) or vellum (calf or antelope skin) would have been prohibitive. But it is hard to imagine that Origen would have spent a lifetime on such a work and not been able to put it on permanent material. Origen left this great critical product in the library of Pamphilus at Caesarea. We profit today by this prodigious work of Origen's, particularly in the use which Jerome made of the Hexapla in producing the Vulgate translation. The original — and the

accompanying Tetrapla, Quinta, and Sexta — probably never were copied, except only in part. They seem to have perished in the Saracen conquest of Palestine in the seventh century. A study of this sample of Origen's great work to which he gave his life should increase our appreciation of the devoted labors of the textual critics, most of whom died from brain fever brought on by their incredible labors.

Thiessen gives a good summary of the materials and the methods of textual criticism in his Introduction to the New Testament. Sir Frederic Kenyon offers a great amount of technical information in readable form (Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts).

Palimpsest

See photo, Palimpsest fragments bearing portions of Aquila's Greek version of the Old Testament. The large Greek uncial letters are from the Aquila text. The small Hebrew lettering was superimposed by a later writer. A palimpsest is a manuscript, either parchment or vellum, on which a second author wrote his work after the original manuscript had become so old that the first writing had become illegible. Sometimes centuries elapsed between the first and second writings on the same material. The cost of leather manuscripts was so great and their durability so remarkable that writers in the middle ages frequently resorted to this use of ancient manuscripts in their libraries. Both of the fragments of Origen's Hexapla, found at Milan and Cairo respectively, are palimpsests. The scientists long ago discovered means of removing the dust and dirt of centuries so that the original writing could be read. The English scholar, Dr. F. C. Burkitt, discovered in 1897 some fragments of Aquila's Greek translation of the Old Testament. Dr. Schechter and Dr. C. Taylor had secured from the old storage room of the famous synagogue of Cairo a great mass of loose leaves which contained parts of two codices (vellum) of Aquila's translation. Three leaves were from a codex of 1 Kings and 2 Kings; three leaves from a codex of the Psalms. The former contain 1 Kings 20:7-17 and 2 Kings 23:11-27; the latter, Psalms 90:17; Psalms 91:1-16; Psalms 92:1-15; Psalms 93:1-5; Psalms 94:1-23; Psalms 95:1-11; Psalms 96:1-13; Psalms 97:1-12; Psalms 98:1-9; Psalms 99:1-9; Psalms 100:1-5; Psalms 101:1-8; Psalms 102:1-28; Psalms 103:1-17, with some breaks.

Fragments of Aquila The fragments do not bear the name of Aquila, but the style was so peculiar because of its Hebraisms that it was possible to identify it. Jerome said that Aquila's translation read like a Hebrew dictionary. The pages are about twice the length and width of an ordinary modern book. The handwriting is of a Greek uncial of the sixth century. Two photographs of these fragments accompany this discussion. The reader will immediately observe the two documents that have been written on the same material: the first, Aquila's version, is in the large Greek uncial writing; the second is the smaller Hebrew lettering of a later writer. It will be apparent how difficult is the task of the textual critic trying to decipher such a maze of double writing. These pages that are herewith published were two pages where the original Greek uncial was the clearest. It will be seen that the scientists' chemical did not remove the second writing, but only removed the dirt so that both writings are clearer. On some of the pages the writing was so faded and only visible in such a small fragment that it was just possible for the textual expert to be sure it was originally a part of the same manuscript. A study of these photographs will show why so few scholars in any given generation ever attain the enormous learning and technical skill to be considered textual critics.

See photo, Fragments of I and 2 Kings According to Aquila The Dead Sea Scrolls The oldest manuscripts now in our possession are the Dead Sea Scrolls. Dr. Miller Burrows of Yale Divinity School, with the assistance of Dr. Trever and Dr. Brownlee, published in 1950 The Dead Sea Scrolls of St. Mark's Monastery with beautifully photographed pages of the Isaiah Scroll. The author declared that the text of the Isaiah Scroll is substantially that of the Masoretic text. They do not seem to rate the scholarship of the scribe who copied this manuscript too highly, but point Out that he did observe and correct a number of his own errors. A study of the photographs readily corroborates this analysis of the manner in which the scribe wrote in his corrections — usually in the space just above the line.

See photograph of Isaiah Scroll and restored jars from the caves of Qumran. The jars are like those in which the Dead Sea Scrolls were preserved.

Observe how clear and even the lines are written in the manuscript, and note the bulk of the document which would make it a laborious task to handle such a book or to turn to the proper place in it by unrolling patiently until the place could be found. The Isaiah Scroll B was purchased from the Arabs by Professor Sukenik of the University of Jerusalem. "When it was acquired in November, 1947, by Professor Sukenik, the leather pages were so dried up that it was practically impossible to unroll it. It was therefore necessary to submit it to a special preparation, and it was only during the summer of 1949 that it could at length be unrolled. The pages were covered with an opaque deposit caused by the disintegration of the leather; thanks to the infra red photography, however, there is hope that even the most illegible lines will be successfully revealed" (A. Dupont-Sommer, The Dead Sea Scrolls, 1952, p. 19). Since this time the scroll has been successfully photographed. The Jars The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has furnished a vivid illustration of the entire process by which textual criticism has sought to recover as many manuscripts as possible and to regain as nearly as possible the original text. Even tiny fragments of pages have been kept and minutely examined to see whether any item of information can be obtained. The pictures of jars found in the cave at Ain Feska, which overlooks the Dead Sea from the northwest corner, show the care with which the manuscripts were originally deposited in the cave and the care with which modern scholars have sought to restore them to their original condition. The picture of the jar now in the museum of the University of Chicago shows the lines revealing the broken fragments that were patiently and skillfully pieced together by the scientists. A. Dupont-Sommer, after telling how the scrolls were found by Bedouin Arabs and purchased by the scholars through a Bethlehem merchant who acted as go-between, describes further exploration and excavation in the cave by Mr. L. Harding and Father de Vaux: The excavators found many remains of the greatest interest. In the first place they found some pieces of linen which had been used to wrap the scrolls. These pieces of linen, of a very closely woven texture, were coated with wax or pitch or asphalt, which proves the scrolls were hidden in the cave for safe preservation, to be recovered and used again later. In the second place there were a great number of fragments of earthware….The pottery fragments which have been gathered up make it clear that the cave housed at least fifty jars, as we have already pointed out. As each jar could hold an average of four or five scrolls, it would seem that the hiding place originally concealed a minimum of 200 or 250 scrolls…. In the third place about 600 manuscript fragments broken off the leather scrolls were found.

Small Fragments For the most part, they are extremely small, bearing only a few letters or a few words in the square Hebrew script. Nevertheless they are of great interest; indeed, by examining them it has been possible to recognize that certain of these small fragments definitely belonged to the scrolls which were already known, that is, to those which the Bedouins said they had discovered in the cave. This, then, is definite proof of the authenticity of these manuscripts (A. Dupont-Sommer, The Dead Sea Scrolls, 1952, pp. 14-17).

Future Discoveries The intensity of the search for so many years and the fact that for the last fifty years so little new material has been found to throw further light on the text of the Gospels would seem to indicate the probable limits of our future advances in this direction. When it is said that the Chester Beatty papyri are exceedingly important in the recent discoveries and when it is seen how few are the pages of the Gospel narratives that are contained in these papyri and how slight any textual evidence on any matters of importance, then the degree of probability is increased that we can hardly expect further sensational discoveries of very ancient manuscripts of the Gospel accounts.

Size of the Scrolls The size of the scrolls in use by the ancients is a matter of interest. Obviously it would be very difficult to handle a scroll of too great bulk. Therefore separate books of any considerable length were recorded in separate scrolls. Small books were put together in the same scroll or included in a scroll with a large book. Very extraordinary was the copper roll found in another cave near Ain Feska; it had the Hebrew letters stamped or engraved upon it. The roll was from twelve to fourteen inches wide and ninety-four and a half inches long (The Biblical Archaeologist, May, 1952). Some papyri discovered in Egypt were forty centimeters in height. Dr. Kraeling suggests that the Dead Sea jars were designed to preserve manuscripts of about thirty-four centimeters, which is an average height (Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, February, 1952). There is extant a copy of the entire Pentateuch in one scroll (the Hebrew Pentateuch of Brussels, ninth century, on fifty-seven skins, forty yards in length). Imagine trying to manage such an immense bulk and to turn clear through this long scroll to get to a passage in Deuteronomy. It is not known the exact time when the ancient scribes ceased using a scroll and began to use pages of a book such as we have. When Jesus read from the Book of Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth, it was a scroll which was brought to Him by the attendant in charge of these most precious possessions of each synagogue. In rendering Luke 4:17 : “And when he had opened the book he found the place...,” the American Standard Version has a footnote reading “roll” instead of “book.” A. Dupont-Sommer translates: “And unrolling the book, he found...then he rolled up the book” (The Dead Sea Scrolls, 1952, p. 18). The Dead Sea Scrolls help us to understand just what the books of the Scripture were like in Palestine in the first century.

Manuscript Groups

Scholars have undertaken to divide the manuscripts into groups or great families. Omissions, additions, or changes of any kind which are similar, show a common origin for many manuscripts. (1) The Syrian or Antiochian text was so named from the opinion that it originated in Syria. It is sometimes called “The Official Text.” Alexandrinus and Ephraemi belong to this group. Westcott and Hort claim that it shows evidence of effort on the part of scribes to smooth out difficult places in the text for the ordinary reader and to combine instructive matter found in various texts. The Syrian text was that generally accepted and used in the line of manuscripts from which the Greek

Bibles were made, when the invention of printing made the transmission more exact, and from which the Authorized Version was made. (2) The Alexandrian text is supposed to have arisen at Alexandria in Egypt, where extraordinary Christian scholarship was concentrated early in the third century. Gregory calls this “The Polished Text,” and it is sometimes called “the literary revision of the text.” Westcott and Hort say that the changes introduced into this text were more of language than of matter, seeking correction of phraseology. (3) The Western text was so called from the mistaken idea that it was used only in the West (Italy and the North African coast opposite Italy, etc.). Critics have decided, however, that it was used as much in the East as the West. Gregory calls this “The Rewrought Text”; Westcott and Hort say that it is characterized by a free rendering of the text. Codex Bezae (D) and the Washington manuscript (W) are two great uncials considered to be examples of this text. When Beza presented D to the University of Cambridge, he requested that it be preserved but not published because of many differences which it contained from the Syrian text (A C). Most of these variations, however, are very slight. A study of the marginal references in the American Standard Version will find statements concerning some important variations — the omission of Luke 22:19, Luke 22:20 and several passages in Luke 24:1-53 from some ancient manuscripts; these refer to the Western text. Hill remarks that the Western text throws no new light of any importance upon the life of Christ, but that Ramsay holds it has considerable importance for the study of the life of Paul. (4) The Neutral text was so named by Westcott and Hort because it was their opinion that it was more free from deliberate changes and that it seems to have been copied directly or from a more careful line of manuscripts than any other group. This text is represented by Vaticanus (B) and Sinaiticus ()). Westcott and Hort tended to follow this group: whenever they found B and) in agreement on a disputed reading, they felt they had the strongest sort of support for adopting this “Neutral” reading. Hort estimated that all four of the great uncials (B,), A, C) were in agreement seven-eighths of the time, and there was no question or dispute as to what should be the reading. They declare that substantial variations in the New Testament text “can hardly form more than a thousandth part of the entire text.”

Validity of This Grouping

Griesbach first attempted a grouping of manuscripts in something of this fashion: Alexandrian, Western, Byzantine. J. W. McGarvey has furnished as fine a popular summary of facts and problems of the text in his Evidences of Christianity, pp. 1-56, as can be found. He devotes but five lines to the above grouping of manuscripts, but since his day there has been an immense amount of discussion concerning them. He remarks concerning Griesbach’s grouping: “This was the most distinctive feature of his critical theory, and it is one which has received the greatest amount of adverse criticism from more recent critics.” More than a half century has passed since McGarvey wrote this summary, and it has been true during these years that it is still the most discussed feature of lower criticism. The most decided differences of opinion still exist among the textual critics as to the validity of the grouping or the value of the groups. Many would not admit that the Alexandrian is really a separate group or family of manuscripts. Many textual critics tend to give less value to the Syrian text than was formerly done and more value to the Western text than Westcott and Hort did. Whether this is merely an evidence of a more radical trend in the theological background of the critics or is solidly based on manuscript evidence remains to be seen.

Kenyon and Streeter have argued for a Caesarean text which they hold is midway between the Alexandrian and the Western texts. It is held that the Caesarean text is found in W from Mark 6:1-56 to the end of that book and in the uncial Theta and in various minuscules and some of the Chester Beatty papyri. The family of manuscripts, which Westcott and Hort called Syrian, has been called Byzantine. Griesbach used this title. Kenyon and Streeter prefer it. Griesbach's Alexandrian text is another name for Westcott and Hort's Neutral family. It is now thought that this text originated in Alexandria. Origen was familiar with all the various families of manuscripts known to us. In his earlier writings he used the Alexandrian family. Kenyon and Streeter think that he used the Caesarean text in his later writing. The Western text is found in D, some African Old Latin manuscripts, and quotations from Cyprian and other early Christian writers.

Later Arrangements As has been mentioned before, D has some erratic differences from the Neutral or Alexandrian family. Since evidence of use of the Western text has also been found in the East, the effort has been made to limit the term "Western" to a text known to have been used in the West. Kenyon argues for a Syrian family which is divided off from what was formerly called Western. The Syriac text is held to be the text used in the Old Syriac version and in various quotations. The method of Tregelles in basing the text only on the uncials or such cursives as give evidence of extraordinary value (Cursives 1, 33, 69 in the Gospels and 61 in Acts) was sharply criticized by Scrivener as making entirely too narrow a basis for decision as to text. The method of Tregelles was largely followed by Westcott who exercised the deciding influence in the committee which produced the American Standard Version, and it is subject to the same criticism today: Did Westcott and his colleagues give too narrow a basis for their textual criticism when they practically excluded so many hundreds of manuscripts by their emphasis upon a few uncials and especially upon B and)? For instance, was their omission of Acts 8:37 justified? J W. McGarvey has been criticized by radicals as having simply accepted the American Standard Version as final, but a reading of Evidences of Christianity would hardly support this conclusion. After all has been said, the flood of modern versions which has come forth in recent years has been futile, exotic, radical, or utterly lacking in dignity and in no sense a rival for the American Standard Version. The Authorized Version has a sublime beauty of diction which probably never will be excelled, for something of the spirit of the martyrs, like William Tyndale, who died to give their translation to the world, has indelibly imprinted itself in the choice of words and expressions. The American Standard Version, however, has the advantage of the larger textual background, and of a more accurate rendering of the Greek.

Modern Translations A good example of the flimsy character of much of the modern translations is seen in Moffatt's rendering of certain passages in the first chapter of Matthew, where he rests upon practically a single manuscript of an early version against all the hundreds of Greek manuscripts in order to support his hostility to the virgin birth. The early versions are of considerable importance in determining the text and have been diligently compared with the Greek manuscripts in the production of the American Standard Version. The more important early versions are: (1) The Old Latin, of which we have about forty manuscripts including the Latin portion of D. The Old Latin is Western text; in fact, this group was called Western largely because the use of it in the Old Latin led to the belief that it was exclusively used in the West. (2) The Vulgate, which was made by Jerome in 382-385 on the basis of what he called "ancient Greek manuscripts," is the Latin version which is the basis for all subsequent translations used by the

Roman Catholic Church. (3) The Egyptian-Bohairic and Sahidic; the former, the more important, represents the Neutral and Alexandrian texts. (4) The Syriac was formerly called the “Queen of Versions” and its great antiquity used to prove the value of the Syrian group of Greek manuscripts, but this is much disputed today. Some very interesting manuscripts of this version have been found: the Curetonian, found by Dr. Cureton about one hundred years ago; the Lewis or Sinaitic-Syriac, found by Mrs. Lewis and Mrs. Gibson in St. Catherine’s Monastery at the foot of Mt. Sinai (where Tischendorf found)); the Hardean; and the Palestinian. The text of the Curetonian, and of the Sinaitic-Syriac is declared to be Western. The Lewis manuscript was the one used by Moffatt to discredit the virgin birth. This manuscript reads in Matthew 1:16 : “Joseph, to whom was espoused the virgin Mary, begat Jesus who is called the Christ.” Matthew 1:21 reads: “She shall bear thee a son.” Matthew 1:25 : “She bare him a son, and he called his name Jesus.” This manuscript is self-contradictory since it left unchanged the remainder of the account which flatly declares the conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit. It looks as if this was a deliberate change by someone of heretical tendency who dared to change some of the text but lacked the courage to rewrite the whole passage. A cursive of the twelfth century (346), a few other late cursives, and the Diatessaron (two manuscripts in Arabic) read like the Sinaitic-Syriac; but the whole evidence is very flimsy when compared to the great Greek uncials and the thousands of Greek cursives. Moffatt followed his prejudice instead of the evidence.

Guiding Principles

Textual critics attribute the manuscript errors to the following causes: (1) Momentary inattention of the scribe; (2) Diversion of attention from the words to the subject matter; (3) Writing from dictation; (4) Homoioteleuton (similar ending of sentences or lines); (5) Change of pronunciation; (6) Trusting to memory; (7) Absence of spaces and punctuation — these all accidental; (8) To correct a supposed mistake; (9) To secure fullness of expression; (10) To support a doctrine — these are intentional (cf. McGarvey, Evidences of Christianity, pp. 19-24). In undertaking to restore the exact original, the reading given in the largest number of manuscripts is not necessarily taken, for a large number of extant manuscripts may have been copied from one single original, and hence are entitled to but one vote. The reading of the oldest manuscripts is not necessarily followed, because the oldest we have are copies, and a manuscript not so old might have come more directly from the original or from a more accurate scribe or line of copyists. The higher critics who give more emphasis to a restoration of the text by a study of its meaning have two principles which they especially emphasize: (1) The shorter reading is to be preferred over the longer; (2) The more difficult is to be preferred over the easier. They reason that it is more likely that a passage should be lengthened by explanation, paraphrase or addition than that it should be shortened; and that it is more likely that a scribe tried to simplify and make easier a difficult Greek construction or a profoundly difficult content in a passage than that he should have made an easy one into a hard one. Few scholars in any generation ever attain to the highly specialized knowledge which would make them authorities in this field, but it is quite clear to even the untrained student that both of the above principles place a profound emphasis on intentional rather than accidental mistakes. The underlying assumption of both principles, wherever they are applied, is that the differences arose from intentional mistakes, for a passage might as readily be shortened by accidental omission as being lengthened by intent to explain, and it might as easily be made more difficult by accidental omission of an important word or clause as made easier by

an intentional change. The radical theology of many critics who have been constantly urging these two principles naturally leads one to examine with greater care the actual facts and the validity of their conclusions. McGarvey well says concerning the manuscript errors in our present text of the Bible: “Nothing short of a miracle could have prevented their existence, and nothing short of reverence for divine things can have so limited their number and character.”

Conclusions

God inspired His messengers to reveal and record His will; once delivered, the understanding, preservation, and transmission of the message rested upon the devotion and fidelity of those who chose to do His will. Where men failed of accurate preservation, or of intelligent interpretation, or of faithful proclamation to all men, God did not intervene by a miracle; else every time a translation of the Scripture was made to another language, every time a sermon was preached, immediate miraculous guidance would have been necessary. God delivered the divine truth to man; the responsibility is man’s for the fulfillment of its purpose. We owe a profound debt of gratitude to the long line of martyrs and scholars who have preserved and transmitted the sacred text. The more one studies in the field of textual criticism, the stronger the conviction that the church was moved from the beginning by a profound devotion to the Word of God, and that the written Word has been preserved for us intact in every important phase of the gospel.

016. Chapter 14 - The Canon of the Gospels

Chapter 14 - The Canon of the Gospels The Problem

One of the most important questions concerning the life of Christ is that of the canon of the Gospels. It is also one of the most controversial, as might be expected in the light of the sharply divergent views prevalent as to the truth or falsity of the claims of Jesus as presented in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Are these books entirely authentic? Are they the only books which are authoritative? How does it happen that we have four books in our Bible that tell of the life of Christ and just four? “Canon” means rule or standard of measurement. Hence the term means, when applied to the Bible, “The collection or list of books which are received as genuine and inspired holy Scriptures, called the sacred canon, that is, the general rule of moral and religious duty; the canonical books.” We are accustomed to quote the books of the Bible as final authority on pertinent questions, but by what authority did the books come to be in the Bible — this one sacred collection of works which is known as “The Book”? It is not the purpose of this chapter to consider the entire canon of sacred Scripture, but only the four books which furnish the almost exclusive basis for our knowledge of the life of Christ. It is not purposed to quote the voluminous evidence from early catalogues, early Christian writers, and councils upon the canon of the Gospels. This material is already available in many textbooks. McGarvey’s excellent summary of this evidence covers 119 pages of his Evidences of Christianity (pp. 59-177), and is entirely satisfactory as a statement of the basis of discussion. It is rather the purpose of this chapter to weigh the arguments and conclusions which are based upon these quotations from the early Christian centuries, with especial attention to the lines of discussion which have arisen in recent decades. The New Battlefield The general difference which is apparent in the focus of the controversy during the nineteenth century and that which obtains today is that the attack formerly was concentrated upon certain books to prove that they were not originally in the canon. This was the direction in which Schleiermacher led off, and he was followed in it by Baur and the whole Tubingen school. A student of McGarvey’s very able defense of the canon in his Evidences of Christianity (the title of the first edition was The Text and Canon of the New Testament) will immediately see that his whole discussion is built to meet this line of attack. A change has come over the battlefield, for instead of a continued effort to break through certain salients which were considered vulnerable, the effort to throw specific books (like 2 Peter) out of the canon has about been abandoned by the critics, and instead of this plan of campaign, they have evolved a theory of the origin of the canon which constitutes an attack on the whole battle line at once — an effort to prove that in the beginning none of the books were considered inspired and that no canon existed until late in the second century.

Importance of the Date of the Gospels

It is apparent at a glance that the question of the date of writing of the Gospels is an exceedingly important one in regard to the canon. This has already been discussed at some length in chapters on the Two-source Theory and the inspiration of the Gospel narratives. There is a curious conflict

in the desire of radicals to place the date of the Gospels as late as possible in order to weaken the historical value of the testimony to the miracles and the claims of Jesus to deity, for the later they try to date the Gospels, the less time they have in which to place their theory of development of the canon. Thus they must sail between Scylla and Charybdis with destruction awaiting one theory or the other. As a matter of fact, the gap of time is too narrow to allow either theory to pass. A careful consideration of both theories — (1) a long development of the Gospels from sources until they were finally written as we have them; (2) a long development of the attitude of the church toward the Gospels after they were written as we have them, until the church finally concluded they were inspired and canonized them — will show that the lack of time is fatal to both theories. A period of only sixty-six years separates the death of Christ from the writing of the last of the Gospel narratives. The testimony of the early Christian writers to the New Testament canon begins immediately, and, hence, the same brief space of time is all that can be allotted to the second theory. More than this, when radicals place the writing of the Synoptics at about a.d. 70, they reduce the time for the development from sources to forty years, and the time for development of the canon is correspondingly reduced. What need of “sources” when eyewitnesses still abound? What possibility of long development of canonization. when the testimony of early Christian writers begins immediately? The accompanying sketch is offered to illustrate the assurance of the Christian that the canon of the Gospels is correct and that the text of the Gospels is accurate — in other words, to sum up the evidence for the text and to introduce the question of the canon. The original autograph copies are represented at the left and our present line of manuscripts, at the right. The intervening two and a half centuries are bridged by evidence which forms a multiple chain of unbreakable character. McGarvey remarks: “It is an axiomatic proposition that every book is as old as its oldest existing copy.” Thus we conclude that Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, and the other early manuscripts place us solidly at a.d. 350, and we have but to trace the books back to the first century from 350. The discovery of the Oxyrhynchus papyri and especially the more recent finding of the fragment of John by Dr. C. H. Roberts bring us evidence which reaches back to the opening of the second century, but inasmuch as 350 is the accepted date from which our present line of uncials begins, the sketch argues from this date. It is most remarkable that the discovery of the fragment should establish so clearly the date of writing at the close of the first century of the one Gospel which the modernists have most desperately assailed and attempted to place late. The effect of these discoveries upon their attacks with reference to the canon and the genuineness of the Gospels is devastating.

An Unbreakable Chain of Evidence The chart suggests the fact that the main assurance of the text and canon of the Gospels is to be found in the copies of the Bible in our hands which run in an unbroken line back to the year 350. The manuscripts offer the most powerful evidence that the line of connection runs back unbroken to the original copies. Added to this are the quotations of early Christian writers from the Gospels, and the declarations which they make as to their authorship, date and place of writing, and their divine inspiration. All these facts and testimony join together in an unbreakable chain reaching across the 250 years from the close of the first century when John wrote the Gospel which bears his name to the actual copies of the Bible which we have from the middle of the fourth century. The question is then: At what time and by what process were these books collected into a New Testament? The question is far simpler than it was in the last century, for the evidence has become so overwhelming as to the early date of the Gospels that even the modernists find themselves compelled to admit the four Gospels were regarded by the church in

a.d. 125 as relatively ancient documents, and as the only Gospels treasured as authentic. This is tantamount to the admission that they were universally held to be in the New Testament canon by this date. This leaves only twenty-five years for the Gospel of John and, at most, not more than seventy-five years for the Synoptics from the date of writing to the date when the evidence is absolutely overwhelming that they were accepted in the church and set apart from all other books. This shortening of the available time is absolutely fatal to a theory of the gradual evolution of books that were at first considered quite ordinary documents into books that were regarded as inspired and a part of the sacred canon. Professor Ropes frankly admits the early date of the Gospels and offers the following important declarations concerning the canon and the procedure by which these books, and these alone, came to be in this sacred collection of Scripture and came to be regarded as inspired.

Crucial Admissions

“This collection of four Gospels contains all the Gospel books in the Greek language that had any wide or long-continued use in the ancient church. Many of the current representations about this matter, even in very good and learned (not at all radical or destructive) books, which some of you have read or heard quoted, are thoroughly misleading. Our New Testament group of Gospels was not created by any process to be designated as ‘selection,’ as if these four had been picked out, for reasons good or bad, from a large number of candidates for this dignity. Rather, the process was one of accumulation; the framers of the canon took all the suitable Greek books there were; and it does not appear that at that time or at any subsequent time any other Greek books ever existed that could be thought of for such use….Probably as early in the second century as the year 125, some one, in some place, or some group of persons, assembled for the use and convenience of the churches the only four Greek books describing the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, which were then believed to be of great antiquity and worthy of a place in such a collection….That to these books (of the whole New Testament), however many there were, the attribute of divine inspiration was at that time ascribed, we need not suppose. However, such inspiration, with the corresponding attribute of infallibility, as containing a revelation from God, became ascribed to the whole collection within about fifty years more, partly perhaps under the stimulus of controversy with the Gnostic heretics, and the books composing it came to be regarded as the New Testament, standing on a level of full equality with the Old Testament, which, as it was the Bible of the Jews, so had from the first been that of the Christians” (Ropes, The Synoptic Gospels, pp. 102-4). This analysis of Professor Ropes admits that much of what was formerly considered “assured results” by a great body of modernists must now be abandoned. Of course, his statement does not go far enough. Having admitted so much, how is it possible to deny any longer that the acceptance of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as inspired was immediate and not the result of a process of development? The Church and the Bible The Second World Conference on Faith and Order held in Edinburgh, Scotland, August, 1937, spent much time discussing the problem of the relation of the church to the Bible. The discussion centered rather in the question as to whether the church had authority to complete the teaching of the Bible by “tradition,” but the question of the canon was at the heart of this problem. The Official Report of the Conference declares: “We are at one in recognizing that the church, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, has been instrumental in the formation of the Bible. But some of us hold that this implies that the church, under the guidance of the Spirit, is entrusted with the authority to explain, interpret and complete (sumpleroun) the

teaching of the Bible, and consider the witness of the church as given in tradition as equally authoritative with the Bible itself. Others, however, believe that the church, having recognized the Bible as the indispensable record of the revealed Word of God, is bound exclusively by the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice, and, while accepting the relative authority of tradition, would consider it authoritative only in so far as it is founded upon the Bible itself" (p. 9). This declaration concerns the canon: How did these books come to be in the Bible? Should any others be regarded as also authoritative and binding? It reflects the lengthy discussions of the Conference as to which came first: the Bible or the church. Which came first? Professor H. W. Nash of the Episcopal Theological School of Cambridge, Massachusetts, has some interesting observations on this subject in his book, The History of the Higher Criticism of the New Testament, published in 1900. "It is, indeed, a common saying that the church came before the Bible. If rightly taken, the saying contains a helpful truth; wrongly taken, an imposing fallacy. The church did not create the Scriptures. She appreciated them and recognized their incomparable value. And her recognition resulted in what we call the 'Canon of Holy Scriptures'" (p. 17). He adds in a footnote to the first sentence: "This was first said in High Church circles, and was meant to be an arraignment of Protestantism. Of late it has been widely used, in order to lessen the strain of criticism." He says further: "So it would be an absurdity to say that, in the pioneer work of building the canon of Holy Scripture, the church came before the Bible….The church set the books of Scripture apart from all other books, making them a class by themselves, because she perceived their eternal value as witnesses to the Christ. She appreciated the New Testament Scriptures, and through her appreciation they canonized themselves….The saying that the church came before the Bible, as it is commonly used, can lead only to mental confusion. So far as clear thought is concerned, it either says nothing at all, or it says something that is worse than an out-and-out error by reason of its specious confusion of error and truth. We can not affirm that the church came before the Scriptures, if thereby it is meant that the action of the church gave them their value and authority. Their authority is theirs by divine right, because they are the record of God's self-revelation" (pp. 18, 19). These are strong statements, especially in the light of the radical character of the book as a whole. (It is one of the University of Chicago Handbook Series, edited by Shailer Matthews.)
Date of Canonization

Professor Nash's statement falls far short of being adequate. There is no statement of time appended to his repeated declarations about the church's building the canon of Holy Scriptures, and this leaves room for the radical theory of a long process of canonization through church councils. As a matter of fact, we know that the church councils did discuss which books should or should not be in the New Testament, but the councils did not put the books in the canon. They were already in before any council assembled. The early councils discussed the validity of the choice, but did not revoke the choice. The Third Council of Carthage (a.d. 397) so definitely approved the canon of the New Testament that it ceased to be a subject of discussion for many centuries, but neither this council nor any other council made the canon of the New Testament. The whole subject was up for furious discussion in the time of the Reformation, and the Council of Trent (a.d. 1546) definitely fixed the Roman Catholic canon of the Old and New Testaments so that it included the books of the Apocrypha. It would be as bad a misstatement of fact to declare that the Council of Carthage or any preceding council made the New Testament canon, because they discussed vigorously the question, as it would be to say that Martin Luther and his colleagues made the New Testament canon. Martin Luther strongly questioned the validity of the canon and

objected strenuously to the Book of James, because its teaching on faith and works seemed to him to contradict the teaching of Paul. But Melanchthon and other reformers refused to follow Luther's lead, and the canon remained unchanged. They did not make the canon. They vigorously discussed its validity. So with the early councils.

Basic Authority of Church and Bible

God established the church and revealed the Scripture which was to be its guide. God spoke through the inspired apostles in the establishment of the church and through these same apostles and their inspired associates He spoke in the recording of the New Testament. The authority of the Scripture is not subsidiary to the church, for both the New Testament and the church alike arose at the direction of the Holy Spirit. The church is divine in origin and constitution, but human and fallible in its membership, and its character has been changed and corrupted through the years. Our absolute assurance of the nature of the church of Christ as it was originally established is to be found in the records of the New Testament and not apart from it; even as our guide for the conduct of the church is to be found therein. A study of the New Testament will show that the books claim to have been written to form and correct the faith of the church, and instead of there being the slightest suggestion that the church is to correct the New Testament, exactly the opposite is true.

Reasons for Canonization The statement of Professor Nash is also inadequate in that he affirms that the church canonized the Scriptures because "She appreciated them and recognized their incomparable value...; she perceived their eternal value as witnesses to the Christ." This is quite true, but it is not even half the truth. The books of the New Testament were accepted as the miraculously inspired Word of God immediately when they were received from the hands of apostles and leaders whom the early Christians knew to be inspired. The proof of this declaration is written large across the pages of the New Testament itself. Just here is the crux of the discussion between the modernistic and the Christian views. The one denies the unique inspiration of the Scriptures and affirms the books of the New Testament were canonized by the church through a long process in which their intrinsic merit prevailed. The other affirms the divine inspiration of these books and that this inspiration was recognized by the first Christians, and hence led to the immediate acceptance of these books by the Christians to whom they were originally written and sent. All later discussions by church and council were of the validity of an acceptance already made. The Facts and the Process When the apostles preached they worked miracles which gave immediate and incontestable proof that they spoke the very revelation of God in the same way that the Old Testament prophets had done. Their hearers, who believed and accepted their message, declared their acceptance of the fact that the apostles were directly inspired of God. The poor heathen of Lystra, when they beheld Paul and Barnabas heal the cripple and heard them preach, started to worship them as gods: Jupiter and Mercury. Paul and Barnabas rent their clothes and protested; Paul suffered stoning as a result of his effort to correct this false conclusion. But when the early Christians believed that the apostles were divinely inspired and accepted their preaching as the very word of God, the apostles did not try to correct them. This faith was rather the direct result of the repeated teaching and claims of the apostles. The modernists hold that the solemn proclamation of the gospel in writing from these apostles was received by the early Christians as mere ordinary books, and that no one at first had any idea of placing them apart as inspired or considered them in the same class with the Old Testament

books. They, therefore, must deny absolutely the truth of the continuous record in the New Testament as to miracles worked by the apostles, or affirm that the early Christians differentiated between the spoken and the written word of these inspired leaders; accepting the spoken word as from God; regarding the written word as merely the ordinary work of men! Moreover, when Paul wrote, he flatly declared his divine inspiration and insisted that his letters should be received as carrying the credentials with which God had sealed his ministry. The same is true of the writing of other books in the New Testament that carry direct claims to inspiration. Furthermore, the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit was conferred by the laying of the apostles' hands upon selected leaders of the second generation so that their preaching and writing also carried the seal of the miracles which they performed. The Church and the Canon The part which the church played in the formation of the canon was twofold: (1) the immediate acceptance by the church or churches or individual Christians of a book as the authentic work of an inspired writer; (2) the gradual transmission through the testimony of this fact to the other churches and individuals which as yet knew nothing concerning this inspired book since it had been received by one section of the church. The first step was instant; the second took time. When Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, he declared his apostleship and reminded them of his inspiration and the proof of his claims. The church at Corinth must have received this written word in the same reverent way they had accepted the spoken word from Paul. When the churches at Berea, Thessalonica, Philippi, and others learned that Paul had written these letters to the church at Corinth, they would seek copies for the correction and consolation of the Christians in these other churches. They knew Paul as well as the Christians at Corinth did; they would revere his written word as inspired of God just as the Corinthians. Any letters they had from Paul would be shared the same way. Thus the canon grew by immediate acceptance and gradual transmission. The letters written by the other apostles and inspired leaders would be accepted and disseminated in the churches in the same fashion. This likewise is true of the Gospels. The prologue to Luke's Gospel gives a definite destination: "Theophilus." Each of the inspired writers sent his document to a definite destination. This individual or church became the first active agent in the work of canonization. Paul insisted that the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit by different members of the churches gave them an absolute means of testing the validity of the teaching and claims that came to them. Thus an inspired leadership in the church was endowed of God with the power to recognize the inspiration of the books of the New Testament as they were written. Discussions would naturally arise among the churches, as they did arise, as to whether a book which had not originally been sent to a certain church or section of the church should be accepted in that church as part of the New Testament Scriptures. The churches in Asia Minor would want definite and indisputable testimony from the church at Rome as to this document which claimed to be written by Paul to the church at Rome. Did he actually write it? Could the church at Rome give authentication to its claims? Such testimony the churches and individuals could give. Such questions the churches and individuals would have a right to ask. The internal evidence of the books, their message and character, united with external testimony of the original recipients. Much discussion resulted from this, but it was a discussion that sought, not to canonize, but to learn beyond a shadow of doubt what books had been definitely accepted as inspired by the churches which received them. A reading of the declarations of the early Christian writers will bear this out. Even when different sections of the church became uncertain and were at variance as to who had written a book, as was the case in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the discussion was an evident effort to learn and verify an earlier

decision as to its place in the canon. The uncertainty as to the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the latter part of the second century and following is a favorite angle of attack upon the proposition of the early formation of the canon. It is therefore very vital to notice that Clement of Rome in the Epistle to the church at Corinth, written in the year a.d. 96, quotes the Epistle to the Hebrews (cf. Westcott's Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 42 of the Introduction). The church at Rome, at the last of the second century, had come into confusion as to the Epistle to the Hebrews, but Clement's quotations show clearly that the church at Rome during the close of the first century suffered no such confusion. Martin Luther and some of the reformers suffered doubt as to the canonicity of the Epistle of James, but this is no proof that the church of the first century had any such trouble.

Tertullian on the Canon A characteristic quotation from one of the early Christian writers will suffice to establish this fundamental proposition. Tertullian (a.d. 160-240), writing in North Africa to combat the heretic Marcion, who rejected Matthew, Mark, and John, and freely changed Luke, replied to the vagaries of Marcion by pointing out that the Gospels had come down "from the very beginning," "from the apostles," and that they had been kept as sacred Scripture in the churches which had been planted in the beginning by the apostles, as well as in the other churches. "On the whole, then, if that is evidently more true which is earlier, if that is earlier which is from the beginning, if that is from the beginning which has the apostles for its authors, then it will certainly be quite as evident that that comes down from the apostles which has been kept as a deposit in the churches of the apostles." Tertullian, then, makes definite reference by name to the writings of Paul, Peter, and John, and affirms, while referring to the Gospel of Luke, that "The same authority of the apostolic churches will afford evidence to the other Gospels also" (Against Marcion, v. 186, 187). Tertullian refers anyone who desires the information, to the various churches which originally received the autograph copies from the hands of the inspired writers as the proof of their canonicity: "Come now, you who would indulge a better curiosity, run over the apostolic churches, in which the very thrones of the apostles are pre-eminent in their places, in which their own authentic writings are read, uttering the voice and representing the face of each of them severally. Achaia is very near you, you find Corinth. Since you are not far from Macedonia, you have Philippi, you have the Thessalonians. Since you are able to cross to Asia, you get Ephesus. Since, moreover, you are close upon Italy, you have Rome." So speaks Tertullian out of the last half of the second century. He is seeking to combat heresies and their attempts to dismember and corrupt the New Testament Scriptures. But he does not seek to form a sacred canon in order to combat these heresies. He calmly points out that the canon has already been in existence from the very days of the apostles and their inspired companions who had first given the sacred documents, and that in the case of each of the New Testament writings their canonicity may be confirmed by conferring with the churches which originally were established or taught by the apostles and received these sacred documents from their hands. The Heretics and the Canon

"The Influence of Heretics in the Formation of the Canon" is a favorite topic for theorizing by the radical critics. The above quotations from Tertullian can be abundantly duplicated from other early Christian writer, but these quoted are quite sufficient to show that when meeting the menacing wave of heresies at the close of the second century, the Christian scholars did not form the canon; they did not just then discover that the Scriptures were inspired. The only conceivable way for the modernists to make out their theory in the face of the entirely contrary assertions of the writers of

the period is to claim that writers like Tertullian were perpetrating a fraud upon the church and upon the heretics with whom they argued, when they claimed that the canon and the absolute assurance of the inspiration of the New Testament books had come down from the apostolic churches which had been taught by the apostles and had received the autograph copies of the books at their hands. Tertullian destroyed the central position of the modernists when he issued his flat challenge of investigation to anyone who doubted that the autograph copies were actually in the hands of the apostolic churches which had originally received them and that they had been treasured from the beginning as a sacred deposit. We are too far removed from the apostolic age to accept his challenge now, but the fact that he issued the challenge and that the investigation could have been easily made then by any doubter, shows beyond all cavil what the position of the church was in regard to the canon in the last quarter of the second century, and what it had been at the close of the first century. The Modernistic Theory

Professor Hill gives the following description of the process by which the canon was formed, which is a typical presentation of the modernistic theory: “By the middle of the second century or a little later, practically all Christians in orthodox circles were accepting the four Gospels now in the New Testament as the only authoritative ones. The others were either quietly discarded, or else were cherished by those only who held views that the church pronounced heretical. As a matter of fact, the church now had a canon of the Gospels, though it did not yet realize this because it had not begun to call these books sacred writings. In the last quarter of the second century a great change came over the church. Circumstances forced the rapid development of creed and church government and the idea of the Christian Scriptures. Enemies appeared in the bosom of the church itself, and their heretical teachings had to be combated. On the one hand were teachers who broke with the past entirely, and claimed that they themselves were the recipients of new and wonderful revelations: these were the Montanists. On the other hand were sects who professed to have esoteric knowledge and mysterious books, handed down from the first century, in which new meanings were given to the teachings of Christ: these were the Gnostics. The church thus confronted and put on its defense, seems to have felt that its present inspiration was not enough. These enemies also claimed to be inspired, and must be met by something stronger than mere counterclaims; so the church emphasized the inspiration that was in the apostles. And because the heretics had their own sacred books, or claimed the right to reject any Christian books which did not agree with their own teachings, the church was compelled to emphasize the sacredness and consequent authority of the writings it had accepted. Almost unconsciously and before they were aware of it, these Christians of a.d. 180-200 had put their treasured volumes on the same level with the Old Testament, and were quoting from them as inspired and authoritative. The canon of the New Testament, which includes the canon of the Gospels, was set forth” (Hill, Introductiion to the Life of Christ pp. 41, 42). The Declarations of the New Testament

It does not need more than a casual reading of the New Testament and of early Christian literature to see that this theory is in direct violation of the facts. Was the presence of heretical teachers in and out of the church a new experience at the close of the second century? Read 1 and 2 Timothy 1:1-18 and 2 Peter, Jude, 1 John, and the first three chapters of Revelation with this in mind. Both Paul and John had to combat the Gnostics in Asia Minor. Instead of the church suddenly realizing in the last quarter of the second century that they had in the sacred books of the New Testament a bulwark against false teaching, this purpose was specifically achieved when the books were first

written and delivered to the churches. A number of the books of the New Testament so declare. What sort of intelligence does this modernistic theory of the formation of the canon attribute to the early Christians? We know that they accepted the spoken word of the apostles and the inspired leaders of the church as the very Word of God. Are we asked to believe that they were so stupid as to receive without thought of reverence the pro-found and tremendous documents which these same leaders wrote for the future guidance of the church? Did the church wait till the New Testament had been in its hands a hundred years — to the close of the second century — to realize the divine inspiration and authority of the New Testament as of the Old Testament? Did they have to be spurred on to canonize the books of the New Testament at the close of the second century by the course pursued by the heretics in bringing forth heretical works which they argued were sacred? Exactly the opposite is true.

Clement of Rome

Let us test the correctness of these declarations from Professor Hill and Professor Ropes by a quotation from the earliest of the Christian writers: Clement of Rome, who was contemporary with the period when the New Testament books were written, and who, as leader of the church at Rome, wrote his Epistle to the church in Corinth in a.d. 96. He says: “Take up the Epistle of the blessed apostle Paul. What did he write to you in the beginning of the Gospel? Truly, under the inspiration of the Spirit he wrote to you concerning himself and Cephas and Apollos, because even then parties had been formed among you.” Notice (1) Paul’s Epistles were treasured in the church at Corinth at the close of the first century; (2) they were read in the public service, even as they had been when first written and delivered, for so Clement implies in this Epistle he has written to the whole church; (3) they were held both by the church at Rome (whence Clement writes), and the church at Corinth as written under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is indubitable proof that the books of the New Testament were accepted as the Word of God in the very time in which they were written. It is most significant that Clement does not quote from the Gospel of John, Revelation, or the Epistles of John. This fits completely with the testimony of early Christian writers that they were written at about the same time that Clement wrote. Evidently they had not yet been published or had not yet come into the hands of Clement. Thus the testimony of Clement overlaps the New Testament itself. Before the last books of the New Testament were published, the first books are quoted by Clement as the inspired Word of God, and their general acceptance by the churches affirmed. What stronger proof could be required that the canonization of the New Testament books was immediate? In a more profound sense than Professor Nash is willing to admit, he spoke the truth when he said of the books of the New Testament, “they canonized themselves.”

Barnabas, Polycarp, Papias, Justin Martyr

It is possible, but it is not necessary, to quote at great length from other writers of the period in question. The Epistle of Barnabas, written in the first quarter of the second century, quotes the Gospel of Matthew with the significant introduction: “It is written.” In this same fashion, Jesus had quoted the Old Testament. Polycarp (50?-155) quotes from various New Testament books in exactly the same way as he quotes from the Old Testament with such added injunctions as: “Let us therefore so serve Him with fear and all reverence, as He Himself gave commandment and the apostles who preached the gospel to us and the prophets who proclaimed beforehand the coming

of our Lord" (To the Philippians, v. 6). Notice how the apostles and the prophets — the Old Testament and the New Testament — are joined. Again, after a further quotation from the New Testament, he says: "And whosoever shall pervert the oracles of the Lord to his own lusts and say that there is neither resurrection nor judgment, that man is the first-born of Satan. Wherefore let us forsake the vain doing of the many and their false teachings, and turn unto the word which was delivered unto us from the beginning" (To the Philippians, v. 7). Again, he joins together a quotation from Psalms 4:4 and Ephesians 4:26 with this introductory statement: "Only as it is said in these Scriptures, Be ye angry and sin not, and Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." In the preceding line, he uses the term "the sacred writings" in introducing this paragraph: "For I am persuaded that ye are well trained in the sacred writings." Papias also refers to the Gospels as the "Oracles of the Lord." He wrote an exposition or commentary on them in five volumes. Justin Martyr, who wrote about a.d. 140 and whose life reached back into the first century, refers to the Gospels 16 times in his First Apology and in his Dialogue with Trypho. He calls them "The Gospel," "The Memoirs of the Apostles," "The Memoirs of the Apostles, which are called Gospels," "The Memoirs which were drawn up by His Apostles and those that followed them." He also declares that in the regular meetings of the Christians: "On the day called Sunday...the memoirs of the apostles, or the writings of the prophets, are read so long as time permits." This places the Gospels as in the New Testament canon and as regularly read in the public services and revered in the same manner as the Old Testament books. The Testimony of Papias The main dependence of the radical theory concerning the formation of the canon is a quotation from Papias in which they claim that he shows the Gospel narratives were not considered inspired and authoritative, this in spite of the fact that the quotation comes from the work in five volumes which he wrote as a commentary upon the Gospels! "But I shall not regret to subjoin to my interpretation also for your benefit, whatsoever I have at any time accurately ascertained and treasured up in my memory as I have received it from the elders, I have received it in order to give additional confirmation to the truth of my testimony. For I have never, like many, delighted to hear those that tell many things, but those that teach the truth; neither those that record foreign precepts, but those that are given from the Lord to our faith, and that come from the truth itself. But if I meet with one who had been a follower of the elders anywhere, I made it a point to inquire what were the declarations of the elders. What was said by Andrew, Peter or Philip. What by Thomas, James, John, Matthew, or any other of the disciples of the Lord; for I do not think I derive so much benefit from books as from the living voice of those that are still surviving" (Eusebius, Eccles. Hist. III. 39). Professor Hill argues on the basis of this last sentence: "Unless we suppose that these oral accounts were deemed inspired and sacred, which is evidently absurd, the books which were acceptable simply as a substitute for them, could not have been esteemed more highly" (Eusebius, Eccles. Hist. III, p. 40). This twists the statement of Papias entirely out of its setting. He was writing a commentary on the Gospels; he was seeking to record in this lengthy work of five volumes, side lights and elucidation of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. His reference, "I do not think I derive so much benefit from books" can not refer to these Gospels, for he is expounding them; he evidently refers to the beginnings of the Apocryphal Gospels, with their endless imaginary tales, which attempt to fill in the gaps in the account of the life of Christ. That this is the correct interpretation is confirmed from his preceding declaration that he was never one of those who "delighted to hear those that tell many things," "that record foreign precepts (apocryphal romancers) in explaining and interpreting the Gospels, but one who insisted on questioning those who had actually seen and heard the

apostles. Moreover, Professor Hill is in great haste to declare that it is “evidently absurd” to hold that these companions of apostles with whom Papias conferred were inspired. Just what is so “absurd” about this? When Papias specifies some of these with whom he conferred in person, he mentions people who are specifically declared to be inspired: “That the apostle Philip continued at Hierapolis with his daughters has already been stated above. But we must show how Papias, coming to them, received a wonderful account from the daughters of Philip” (Eusebius, Eccles. Hist. 111. 39). Acts 21:8, Acts 21:9 tells that the four virgin daughters of Philip the evangelist prophesied. Papias may have applied the title “apostle” to Philip the evangelist in the same sense in which the New Testament applies it to Barnabas. If he means daughters of Philip, the apostle, then we have the authority of Polycrates that they were inspired. The proof that Papias was writing an Exposition of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and that he uses the term “Oracles” to mean the Gospels is to be found in his explicit reference to the Gospel of Matthew under this title: “Matthew composed the Oracles in the Hebrew dialect, and every one translated it as he was able.” Papias uses exactly the same Greek word (logia) in both declarations. A manuscript of the Gospel of John in the Vatican library also carries an appendix which states that Papias, in the last of his five books, describes how John wrote his Gospel and gave it to the churches. This also shows that the five books were an exposition of our four Gospels. It is impossible, then, that Papias can be referring to the very sacred books on which he was writing this work of a lifetime, his Exposition, when he says that he has not derived so much benefit from books as from the living voice. He evidently refers to popular efforts to supply from imagination new details in the life of Christ such as are seen in the Apocryphal Gospels.

Conclusions

It is not surprising, in the light of such overwhelming evidence, that the radical scholars have been compelled to retreat from the last quarter to the first quarter of the second century. But it is certainly surprising that they should still seek to maintain that the Gospels were not immediately received as inspired and thus canonized when they were first published, since they have to admit that within twenty-five years after the publication of the Gospel of John, all four Gospels were alone accepted in the churches. Of course, to yield this would mean to substantiate from the original generation of Christians the whole miraculous account of the life of Jesus, the Son of God. Mere prejudice compels the desperate clinging to the dwindling gap of a few years. The crucial question is this: If the Christians even in the year 175 accepted the Gospels as inspired and held them as a part of the sacred canon, what sort of intelligence did the earlier generation of Christians possess if they did not consider them in exactly the same way, when they saw with their own eyes the miracles wrought by the authors of these books? How could the Christians of the first century have possibly held the New Testament books to be just ordinary books with no thought of their canonization when they read such statements as the following from the hand of the apostle John: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show unto his servants, even the things which must shortly come to pass: and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John; who bare witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, even of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein: for the time is at hand” (Revelation 1:1-3). The verb “readeth” is anagignosko, which means “read aloud.” The Book of Revelation declares its sacred character and origin in its opening verses and pronounces a blessing on those who read it aloud (in the

churches). This implies immediate canonization. It closes with a warning which seals the Book of Revelation from human tampering because it is the Word of God, and, by the same logic, every other book of the New Testament is so sealed. It is most significant that in the assembling of the books, Revelation was placed last: “I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:18, Revelation 22:19).

017. Chapter 15 - The Credibility of John

Chapter 15 - The Credibility of John The Real Choice The relation of the Gospel of John to the other three narratives has already been discussed briefly in the consideration of the Two-source Theory. The problem of credibility of the Fourth Gospel immediately involves the question as to whether it is the genuine work of the apostle John or the product of some later, unknown writer. This also has been discussed. It is the purpose of this chapter to consider the various lines of attack upon the subject matter contained in John's Gospel as related to the other accounts. The bitterness of the assaults made upon the Gospel of John shows how critical the radicals feel that the issue is. John is so very plain and emphatic in affirming the deity of Jesus, that unless John is discredited, there is no chance of denying it and maintaining any semblance of following the New Testament. Therefore, the persistent effort has been made for many decades to show that John contradicts the Synoptics and that both can not be a true delineation of the life of Christ. These radical scholars declare a choice necessary and that they choose to follow Matthew, Mark, and Luke, rather than John. As a matter of fact, it will be seen that they really do not accept the testimony of these three when they collide with the current skeptical views about Jesus. The real choice which they make is not between John and the Synoptics, but between the New Testament and their radical theories with the deciding vote always granted to the latter, the facts to the contrary notwithstanding. The Radical Claims A very clear, succinct summary of the radical contentions is given by Professor Hill together with a fainthearted reply to some of them. He leaves the Johannine problem in general uncertainty, but his summary furnishes a convenient survey of the radical positions. The attacks follow three general lines, each of which is supported by several specifications. They maintain that John and the Synoptics both cannot be true and that John therefore is unhistorical because of: (1) Differences in the Details of Christ's Ministry (a. Its Locality; b. Its Beginning; c. Its Length; d. Its Success; e. Its Characters; f. Seeming Contradictions); (2) Differences in. the Teachings of Christ (a. In Form; b. In Subject Matter); (3) Differences in the Self-revelation of Christ (a. Progress in the Revelation; b. The Means of the Revelation; c. The Fullness of the Revelation) (Hill, Introduction to the Life of Christ, pp. 118-144). The modernists marshal their evidence against the Gospel of John in the following manner: (a) Locality. Matthew, Mark, and Luke describe the ministry of Jesus as devoted almost completely to Galilee, with occasional excursions into outlying sections: Phoenicia, Caesarea Philippi, Decapolis, and Perea. They give no account of Jesus in Jerusalem until the final Passover when He was crucified. John represents repeated visits to Jerusalem and extended ministries there and in Judaea. (b) Beginning. The Synoptics represent Jesus as going from the temptation to Galilee and beginning His great ministry there; John describes a long ministry in Jerusalem and Judaea preceding the Galilean ministry. (c) Length. The Synoptics are held to present the ministry of Jesus as lasting only one year just one Passover feast and that at the conclusion of His Galilean ministry; John mentions numerous Passovers and other feasts and gives the reader to understand that the ministry of Jesus lasted several years (three and a half years is the general view). (d) Success. The Synoptics represent Jesus as stirring marvelous enthusiasm and meeting with immense success until He refused to be king and that then the disappointed people turned against

Him and His death resulted; John represents bitter opposition from the leaders of the nation at the very start, and deadly plots against the life of Jesus in the first few months of His ministry. (e) Characters. The Synoptics and John are held to introduce at many phases of the ministry an entirely different set of characters — people like Nicodemus, Lazarus, and the Samaritan woman are not mentioned in the Synoptics. Thomas plays a very important part in John's account and is scarcely mentioned in the Synoptics. (f) Seeming Contradictions. Various efforts are made to show that the Synoptics and John contradict one another as to time and details; the usual statement is that John went through and attempted to correct the Synoptics; especially on the time of the crucifixion: John representing the last supper as before the Feast of the Passover and the crucifixion at the time of the killing of the lamb; and picturing the trial of Jesus as in progress at the sixth hour, whereas Mark declares He was nailed to the cross at the third hour. The Length of Jesus' Ministry This sounds like a very impressive series of in dictments against the credibility of John, but the moment the character of the narratives and their exact statements are examined, the difficulties disappear. Consider first the question of the length of Jesus' ministry. It is a favorite contention of modernists that the ministry of Jesus lasted but one year. (Professor B. W. Bacon maintains that Jesus was fifty years old when He undertook this year of public ministry: he chooses to affirm the accuracy of the chance guess of the Pharisees which they purposely placed high: "Thou art not yet fifty years old" [John 8:57]; rather than accept the historical statement of Luke 3:23 : "Jesus...was about thirty years of age." John makes it clear that the ministry of Jesus covered several years: he mentions three Passovers by name and most probably refers to a fourth in John 5:1 : (1) John 2:13; (2) John 5:1; (3) John 6:4; (4)John 13:1; he also mentions two other feasts by name that occurred during the last year of Jesus' ministry: the Feast of Tabernacles in September (John 7:2); the Feast of Dedication in December (John 10:22). Thus John gives a very definite series of chronological references which make clear that the ministry of Jesus was probably more than three years and certainly more than two years. Now does this contradict the Synoptic accounts? Only in case one or all declared that they were giving a complete and chronological account, could a contradiction be affirmed. Since all give merely selected events out of a great multitude of sermons and miracles, added details by one witness strengthen the testimony of all, provided there is not an outright contradiction, for it shows independence of the testimony. This clears away the whole list of attacks cited above at one sweep, for it applies equally to them all. The Synoptics do not declare that the ministry of Jesus lasted but one year; the modern skeptics declare that. The Synoptics do riot declare that the Passover which they mention is the only one that occurred in Jesus' ministry; on the contrary, Mark clearly indicates a second Passover when he declares that there was green grass in the desert place where the five thousand were fed (Mark 6:39). This fits perfectly with John's narrative. Count up the days mentioned in the Synoptics and see how few days are specifically mentioned (only twenty-five days can be counted about which John records anything up to the last week) and it will be seen that this leaves room for all sorts of sermons and events which they do not record, for Jesus was constantly busy (John 20:30, John 20:31). Concerning every one of the specifications made against John's narrative, it will be found that he is merely filling in gaps in the Synoptic narratives, omitting events which they have thrice recorded and relating things they have left unrecorded. Thus the beginning of Jesus' ministry in both narratives is very different but harmonious. All four represent Jesus as returning from the Jordan to Galilee. The Synoptics pass over the preliminary phases of Jesus' ministry and plunge immediately into the narration of His climactic Galilean

ministry. John omits the baptism and temptation, describes the winning of some of John's disciples, tells of the wedding feast at Cana, the brief stay at Capernaum, the Passover ministry in Jerusalem, and the months of work that followed in Judaea. If we did not possess this account in John's Gospel, it would be hard to understand how it happened that Jesus walked along the Sea of Galilee, called four men to leave everything to follow Him, and was obeyed without question. John, instead of contradicting this, offers marvelously helpful information about the beginnings of this association when John the Baptist pointed Jesus out to some of his disciples, and about the months of fellowship that followed before the definite call by the sea.

Locality The question of the locality of Jesus' ministry offers no real difficulty when the four narratives are studied closely. These writers were presenting the gospel of Jesus, not a biography of Jesus: hence they do not attempt to give systematic geographical and chronological data. Luke 10:38-42 clearly shows that Jesus was at Bethany in the outskirts of Jerusalem at a time in the midst of His ministry, long before the final Passover. Matthew 23:37 implies frequent visits of Jesus to Jerusalem and efforts to win the inhabitants: "O Jerusalem...how often would I have gathered thy children together...and ye would not." So also Luke 13:34. This casual evidence offers the strongest confirmation of the fact that the Synoptics were not attempting a complete record of Christ's ministry, and that Jesus had often been in Jerusalem as John records. Again John supplements rather than contradicts the Synoptics.

Success The contention that the Synoptics represent the ministry of Jesus as successful and without bitter opposition until the crowd turned against Him for refusing to be king is contrary to the facts. They show that fierce opposition arose from the Pharisees in the early phases of His ministry: controversies over healing on the Sabbath, claiming the power to forgive sins, associating with sinners, the disciples' securing food on the Sabbath, and His refusal to keep the traditions of the Pharisees. Mark relates that at the close of the controversy over Jesus' healing the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath: "The Pharisees went out, and straightway with the Herodians took counsel against him, how they might destroy him" (Mark 3:6). This is in the very early days of His Galilean ministry before the Sermon on the Mount was delivered. Moreover, it is especially unfortunate for this radical theory that John, and not the Synoptics, is the one who tells that the reason the multitudes turned away from Jesus after the feeding of the five thousand was that He refused to be their king. All four narratives represent Jesus as stirring both tremendous enthusiasm and bitter opposition from the very start, and in varying degrees, at different stages of His ministry, and in various localities. Since the opposition centered in the national leaders who had headquarters in Jerusalem, and since John tells more of the Jerusalem ministries, it is natural he should give more details about the growing opposition.

New Characters The criticism that John introduces a new set of characters vanishes at a touch. Thomas appears more clearly, but this is perfectly natural when we have further details of Jesus' ministry. Some new characters are introduced, but this is not surprising. Nicodemus, Lazarus, and the Samaritan woman are the only citations radicals can make, and there was no particular necessity that these should have been introduced into the Synoptics, and hence no evidence against the veracity of John. The argument from silence only has force when an author fails to mention someone or something which would have been essential to his narrative. Sanday calls exaggerated use of the argument from silence "making bricks without straw."

Seeming Contradictions The attempts to argue that John contradicts the Synoptics as to the time of the crucifixion are based on interpretations of John 13:1 and John 18:28. In the first of these "Before the passover introduces a long sentence and most naturally means that Jesus, having loved His own that were in the world, before the Passover, loved them unto the end, that is, unto His death at the Passover. It does not thus affirm that the last supper took place before the Passover. The second passage certainly does not refer to the eating of the Passover lamb, but to one of the feasts following this initial ceremony, for the Passover was after sundown, and the Jews would not have been defiled by entering a Gentile home any later than the end of the day at sunset. The difference as to the hour of the crucifixion quite evidently results from the fact that John uses the Roman method of counting time (similar to our own); the Synoptics use the Jewish (sunrise to sunset) (John 19:14; Mark 15:25, Mark 15:33). A further discussion of this whole problem (as to the relation of the accounts of the death of Jesus) will be given in a later chapter: The Date of the Crucifixion.

Form of Teaching The second line of attack on John represents that his Gospel offers incompatible variations from the Synoptics as to the teaching of Jesus. John is held to represent Jesus as continually making long discourses, whereas the Synoptics picture Him merely as teaching by brief, pointed sayings and matter-of-fact instruction that was open to interruption and question at all times. The modernists like to affirm that Jesus was not a preacher but a teacher. They claim to base this estimate upon the Synoptics and to use it to discredit John. The facts in the case do not bear out their contention, for the longest sermon in the New Testament is the Sermon on the Mount, which is recorded in Matthew. The Sermon in Parables is another famous, extended sermon found in all three of the Synoptics and not in John. His sermon in denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees occupies an entire chapter of Matthew (23). The sermon on the destruction of Jerusalem and the second coming covers two chapters of Matthew (24, 25). John does not represent that all of Jesus' public ministry was by long sermons; in fact, he gives more conversations with single individuals than any other Gospel writer. All four narratives represent Jesus as both teaching and preaching, engaging in patient, informal instruction of one, few, or many, and in tremendous impassioned public appeal to great multitudes. All report Jesus' discourses as full of epigrams, vivid illustrations, and difficult sayings.

Key Words A second specification is that John has built his report of Jesus' sermons around certain key words which belong to his own thinking and not to Jesus. The critics maintain that someone far removed from Jesus wrote this undependable Gospel, or that John wrote it in his extreme old age when he became confused as to what Jesus had said, and mixed it up with his own meditations about Jesus through the years. The key words usually named are: light, darkness, life, death, the world, witness, faith, to know, to believe, love, judgment. It is quite true that these key words throng the sermons and conversations of Jesus recorded in John. But it is also true that they are continually found in the reports of Jesus' teaching and preaching in the Synoptics: "Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14); "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness" (Matthew 6:23); "cast him out into the outer darkness" (Matthew 22:13; Matthew 25:30); "What I tell you in the darkness, speak ye in the light" (Matthew 10:27). A study of each of the above key words will show them to be used by Jesus in each of the four Gospels. It seems like a strong argument when the critic points out that the prologue to John's Gospel and his Epistles carry these same key words that he reports in the speeches of Jesus. But

the moment that one reflects how the mind of John would have been completely filled with the ideas, comparisons and words he had heard Jesus use, the clearer it becomes that we should expect John, when he wrote an introduction to the Gospel or wrote his Epistles, to use these very ideas and words which Jesus had stamped forever on his mind and character. Moreover, when one turns to the Old Testament, the very same key words are repeatedly used. We hear Isaiah storming against false teachers who “put darkness for light, and light for darkness” (Isaiah 5:20). We find him presenting the most beautiful pictures of the coming of the Messiah: “Arise, shine; for thy light is come” (Isaiah 60:1-3). Matthew quotes such a passage from Isaiah referring to Christ: “The people that sat in darkness saw a great light” (Matthew 4:16; Isaiah 9:1, Isaiah 9:2). Thus does the attack of the critics upon John’s truthfulness but bring out in all its God-inspired glory the unity of the whole Bible, for God from the beginning attempted to teach and emphasize certain fundamental conceptions and used certain beautiful comparisons, as He inspired His messengers to deliver His message both in the Old Testament and the New.

Style of John

It is of vital importance to notice that the radicals, in specifying the key words of John’s Gospel, do not mention the most remarkable of these: his startling and profound use of the title “Word” to mean Jesus. The reason they pass over this is self-evident: it is death to their theory. For John uses this extraordinary title in the most dramatic way, both in the prologue to his Gospel and in his first Epistle, but he never quotes Jesus as using this title. More powerful evidence could hardly be conceived in proof of the fact that John is giving an accurate report of Jesus’ sermons and did not merely put his own ideas and catch words into the mouth of Jesus. The modernists point out that it is frequently difficult to tell where the sermon of Jesus ends and the comments by John begin in several chapters. They usually cite the conversation with Nicodemus in chapter 3, but the point to be proved here is the point assumed: that the declarations of Jesus cease and comments by John begin at some point before verse John 3:21. Even if the style of John is closely identical with that of the sermons of Jesus reported in his Gospel, is it logical to affirm that the disciple is above his Lord? In the desperate attempt to reduce the person of the Son of God to mere human stature, the modernists would exalt John to incredible proportions. They would make him an inventive genius of such unparalleled splendor as to create the most exquisite statements of the most profoundly noble and spiritual teaching, and yet represent him as a writer so stupid or so immoral as to offer blandly his own creations as the words of Jesus, and urge their acceptance as such for the salvation of the souls of men! The inevitable logic of such folly is to worship the creature rather than the Creator; to transfer to the human the glories they would deny to the divine.

Subject Matter The modernists offer the following citations as to subject matter against the truthfulness of John’s report of Jesus’ sermons: that John introduces entirely new topics of discussion and lacks the fundamental topics found in the Synoptics; that he makes no mention of demoniacs, fails to mention the kingdom of God except in the conversation with Nicodemus; and that be substitutes the coming of the Comforter for the second coming of Christ. It is true that the Synoptics continually introduce accounts of the healings of demoniacs and that John records no such miracles, but since they had related so many instances, it was not necessary for John to add to their record in this particular. Moreover, since the reality of demon possession and the miraculous character of such cures is one of their major points of attack, it is exceedingly embarrassing to the critics that the manifold accounts of such in the ministry of Jesus comes, not

from John whom they reject, but from the Synoptics whose veracity they are supposed to defend! It is not true, however, that John fails to mention this phenomenon, for three times demon possession enters into the controversy recorded in chapter 8: “Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a demon?” (John 8:48; cf. John 8:49, John 8:52). It is true that the Synoptics continually represent Jesus as discussing the kingdom of God, but the insistent presentation of Jesus as the King is everywhere manifest or implied. John centralizes on reporting discussions which center in the King rather than the kingdom, but the proposition of the kingdom of God is plainly affirmed at climactic points and is everywhere implied. The conversation with Nicodemus occupies a key position in the early part of John’s Gospel, and it thoroughly discusses the kingdom of God. The trial before Pilate is the final climax and here Jesus clearly is reported as discussing His kingdom: “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:33-38). The beautiful declarations of Jesus concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, add immensely to our knowledge of the teaching of Jesus, but any effort to work up a contradiction upon this issue is purely artificial. The Synoptics quite clearly represent Jesus as predicting the coming of the Holy Spirit to direct and empower the apostles (Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:4-8; Mark 13:10-12; Matthew 10:17-20). John just as clearly represents Jesus as predicting His own second coming (John 6:41;John 14:1-31; John 21:21-23). Although the critics claim that John’s Gospel is lacking in emphasis upon the second coming of Christ, it is the only one of the four which closes with emphatic reference to this event, and of all the promises of Jesus that He is to come again, that in John 14:1-31 is one of the most beautiful and satisfying. Again the four accounts supplement each other.

Universality A further contention as to subject matter is that the mission of Christ is limited to the Jews in the Synoptics, but is represented as universal and eternal in John’s Gospel. They cite such passages as “other sheep not of this fold” (John 10:16), “light of the world” (John 8:12), “draw all men” (John 12:32). A study of the narratives with this attack in mind shows that both the Synoptics and John represent the actual ministry of Jesus as almost exclusively limited to the Jews. John tells of a brief ministry among the Samaritans, but the Synoptics tell of a journey and miracle in Phoenicia. John reports the request of some Greeks to see Jesus, but the Synoptics show that Jesus healed the servant of the Roman centurion of Capernaum. Thus the emphasis of all accounts is on the exclusively Jewish character of Jesus’ ministry, with about equal, though different, exceptions. As to the teaching of Jesus concerning His ministry, the Great Commission gives the strongest emphasis to the universal and eternal character of Jesus’ ministry, and Matthew, Mark, and Luke all give a clear and powerful report of this commission. The universal character of the mission of Jesus is indicated throughout the Synoptics. Plummer says of the viewpoint of Luke’s Gospel: “The Saviour had come, and had come to save the whole human race. The work of the Christ and the work of His apostles proved this conclusively. In the Gospel we see the Christ winning salvation for the whole world; in Acts we see His apostles carrying the good tidings of this salvation to the whole world” (Commentary on Luke, Introd., p. 36). The parable of the vineyard is a good illustration of the teaching of Jesus in the Synoptics as to the universality of His mission (Matthew 21:41-43; Mark 12:9; Luke 20:16). Equally clear are such declarations as “Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s shall save it….For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds” (Matthew 16:25, Matthew 16:27; Mark 8:35, Mark 8:38; Luke 9:24, Luke 9:26); “Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her” (Matthew 26:13; Mark 14:9). Thus, the universality

and permanence of the gospel is continually and clearly indicated in the Synoptics as in John's Gospel.

Profound Character of John's Gospel The final specification of Professor Hill's summary is: "The teachings of Jesus in the Synoptics are simple and generally practical; in John they are theological and most profound. For this reason, John, even in the early centuries, was called 'the spiritual Gospel,' and has been likened to the inner sanctuary of the temple. It presupposes an intuitive perception of the deepest religious truths when these are presented without explanation or comment" (Introduction to the Life of Christ, p. 126). Certainly no one would deny that the Gospel of John is spiritual" and its reports of the teachings and sermons of Jesus generally most profound and concerned with the revelation of Jesus as God's Son. However, the person who attempts a careful study of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and then declares that their reports of the teachings of Jesus are "simple and generally practical" (as contrasted with "theological and most profound"), reveals the shallowness of his own mental processes. The proposition that the Synoptics are devoted to practical morality apart from the deep doctrines of the divine person and program of Jesus, is a figment of the unbeliever's imagination. It is true that the teaching of Jesus has an absolutely unique combination of simplicity and profundity so that the uneducated man finds practical meaning and the scholar finds unfathomed depths beneath the limpid surface. Read the Synoptics with this in mind. The first words quoted from the lips of Jesus (Luke 2:49) were spoken by the child of twelve in the temple. They were spoken and are recorded "without explanation or comment," except that Mary and Joseph "understood not the saying" and that she "kept all these sayings in her heart." They caught a glint of meaning, enough to rebut their criticism of His conduct; but they could not fully grasp the mysterious implications as to His person and mission. This might be used as a text for the study of the four narratives, and the teaching of Jesus in all four would be found continually to possess these same qualities. Illustrations abound everywhere, such as the replies of Jesus to the devil during the temptation, and any of the parables and sermons of Jesus in the Synoptics, and even the Sermon on the Mount, which the modernists like to describe as "simple and generally practical" (meaning to exclude deep doctrinal implications as to His person and salvation through Him). Characteristic examples from the Synoptics are found in the enigmatic replies of Jesus to certain men who proposed to follow Him: "And there came a scribe, and said unto him, Teacher, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And another of the disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go bury my father. But Jesus saith unto him, Follow me; and leave the dead to bury their own dead" (Matthew 8:19-22). "And another also said, I will follow thee, Lord; but suffer me first to bid farewell to them that are at my house. But Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:61, Luke 9:62). Now these sayings are introduced "without explanation or comment." There is no indication that they were softened or interpreted by any further statements when first delivered. The men were left to fathom the meaning for themselves. The readers are left to meditate upon the probable character and motives of the men and the depth of meaning in the statements of Jesus. Some years ago a famous New York preacher delivered a series of sermons upon "The Hard Sayings of Jesus." These three were among them, as well they might be, and they are all from the Synoptics. The thoughtful Bible student will discover throughout all four Gospel narratives a depth which baffles and defies complete comprehension, and yet which illumines, satisfies, and stirs to profound, lifelong

meditation. The reports of all four evangelists are unanimous in showing the profound character of Jesus' teaching; the account of John does give more profound doctrinal teaching, but this is entirely harmonious with the others and merely indicates the independent character of his Gospel.

018. Chapter 16 - The Date of the Crucifixion

Chapter 16 - The Date of the Crucifixion The Issues The question as to the day on which Jesus was crucified is one of the most interesting and perplexing problems in chronology to be found in the New Testament. It is not a discussion where conservatives defending the Bible are ranged against radicals assailing it, but rather an earnest attempt on the part of Christians to study the New Testament and determine as far as possible the facts in the case. The fact that J. W. McGarvey, one of the foremost exponents and defenders of the Bible, held strongly to the view that Christ was crucified on Friday, and B. F. Westcott, the great English conservative who led in the work of publishing the English Revised Version, argued that Christ was crucified on Thursday, shows that this is a matter of difference of opinion on the part of men of faith. Recently some have urged that Christ was crucified on Wednesday.

Many who have been accustomed to think of Jesus as being crucified on Friday, merely because this has been the almost universal view of Christians through the centuries, have found themselves forced by this discussion to a careful restudy of the Gospel narratives. Much of the confusion and difference of opinion results from the persistent effort to take one single passage of Scripture and to overlook the rest or to press them into an agreement with a literal interpretation of the one passage. An adequate study of the subject demands a review of all the statements of all four Gospel narratives. The Date of Jesus' Birth The New Testament makes absolutely no effort to record the day of the week or month, or even the year, of Christ's birth. It is simply placed in the reign of Herod the Great and of Augustus. We are left to the statements of tradition in an attempt to date the birth of Jesus. A mistake of at least four years in our present calendar made by a monk, Dionysus Exiguus, in the sixth century increases the confusion. We know that Herod died the last of March, 4 b.c. How long before that time Jesus was born, we do not know. The Passover The fact that Jesus was crucified at the Passover feast makes evident the time of the year, since the Passover lamb was killed on the fourteenth of Nisan, and the feast observed on the following day and through the week. The fourteenth of Nisan varied according to the appearance of the new moon, and the range of dating through March and April is familiar to all through our observance of Easter. Absolute certainty as to the dating of the Passover, when Jesus was crucified, is impossible, since the year is uncertain. The fact that the New Testament writers have deliberately left us without more chronological data concentrates attention on the one sacred day — the first day of the week — and warns us not to be too dogmatic in our particular solutions of dates. The following questions inevitably arise in an effort to determine the day of the crucifixion: (1) On what day did Jesus arrive in Bethany? enter Jerusalem in triumph? engage in the discussions which followed? (2) On what day did Jesus keep the Passover? Did He keep the Passover or a substitute supper before the time for the feast? (3) On what day was Jesus crucified? at what time of the day? When did He die? (4) When was Jesus buried, and how long was His body in the tomb? (5) On what day was He raised from the dead? at what time during the day? The Time of the Resurrection

Perhaps the best method of procedure is to answer the last group of questions first, since the foundation stone of the whole dating is the indubitable fact that Christ was raised from the dead on the first day of the week. All the Gospels are clear upon this point. The whole practice and history of the church confirm it. The question as to the exact time of the day when the resurrection occurred is more difficult. The Gospel records read as follows: “Now late on the sabbath day, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And behold, there was a great earthquake” (Matthew 28:1, Matthew 28:2). “And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, they come to the tomb when the sun was risen” (Mark 16:1, Mark 16:2). “And on the sabbath they rested according to the commandment. But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came unto the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb” (Luke 23:56; Luke 24:1-2). “Now on the first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, while it was yet dark, unto the tomb, and seeth the stone taken away from the tomb” (John 20:1).

These Scriptures do not explicitly affirm the exact time of the resurrection, but the whole weight of the testimony is that it occurred between the time that the women started from Bethany to come to the tomb, which was very early on the morning of the first day of the week, while it was yet dark (Luke 24:1; John 20:1), and the time of their arrival at the tomb, which was after the sun had risen (Mark 16:2). The journey was considerable, and they seem to have bought spices on the way to supplement those which they had prepared before the Sabbath caused them to desist from their labors (Mark 16:1, Mark 16:2).

Saturday Evening? The most startling and revolutionary interpretation which has characterized the recent discussion is the effort to place the resurrection of Jesus on Saturday evening at six o’clock. The reason for this interpretation is the desire to place the resurrection at such a time as will produce a fulfillment of a rigid, literal interpretation of the prediction of Jesus recorded in Matthew 12:40 : “So shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” But a study of the passages quoted above will show plainly that such a view is not tenable.

It is affirmed, by those who have this view, that Matthew’s account places the resurrection at 6 p.m. Saturday, which was just as the first day of the week began, according to the Jewish count (sunrise to sunset). This view is based on a misapprehension of the phrase, “late on the sabbath day, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week,” and brings Matthew’s account into direct contradiction with the other narratives. The revised translation of Matthew 28:1 is a plain contradiction in terms, but when it is learned that the preposition translated “late” has the meaning “after” when followed by the genitive case, and that “sabbath” is here in the genitive, the obscurity is cleared up, for “after the sabbath day, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week,” is quite clear and is in absolute harmony with what the other Gospels say.

If the translation “late” is insisted upon, then what does Matthew affirm? He affirms that late on the Sabbath day the women started their journey, whereas Luke says flatly that they rested till the Sabbath day was over, and did not start for the tomb until the next morning at early dawn. Mark also says the Sabbath was past before they attempted to finish their purchase of spices, and that the arrival at the tomb was at sunrise. G. F. Moore, of Harvard, famous Greek and Hebrew

scholar, says that Matthew's use of opse in the sense of "after" is due to an idiom arising from the Aramaic, and that the passage is not a contradiction of the other Gospels, but is an affirmation that the start of the women is after the Sabbath, in the early dawn of the first day of the week. Thus there is really no contradiction whatsoever between these Gospel records.

Time of Burial A study of the time of Jesus' death and burial also makes plain that a fulfillment of a stringent interpretation of "three days and three nights" as meaning exactly seventy-two hours can not be achieved from the Gospel narratives. Jesus was crucified at 9 a.m. and died at 3 p.m. (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:25, Mark 15:34; Luke 23:44). John 19:14 describes the trial as still in progress at "the sixth hour," which by the Jewish count would be 12 p.m., but John evidently uses the Roman method of counting time in his Gospel, which places the trial in progress at 6 a.m. and fits with the other narratives, since they place the crucifixion at 9 a.m. The Gospels make clear that Joseph asked for the body of Jesus immediately after His death, and that the burial took place on the same day as His crucifixion — before sunset. The Jews insisted that the bodies be taken down before sunset, and the death of the robbers had to be hastened by breaking their legs in order to bring this about. The burial of Jesus was probably about 4-5 p.m., and certainly before sunset. John 19:31-42 plainly affirms that the burial was on the preparation for the Sabbath. There is a fragment of a day here which must be evaded if the exact count of seventy-two hours is insisted upon. The Scriptural records, both of the burial and the resurrection, warn one from a literal insistence upon seventy-two hours." The accompanying diagram is offered to show the three views in their relation to the established facts that Jesus was buried late on the day before the Sabbath and rose early in the morning on the first day of the week.

"The Third Day" When it is recalled that the Jews counted a part of a day as a day in reckoning time, and when it is recalled that this free use in recording time is quite universal, the difficulties disappear. The Scriptures were recording in thrilling fashion the great fact of the resurrection, and not undertaking to achieve mathematical exactness in chronology. The best proof that Jesus did not mean the "three days and three nights" to be taken literally as seventy-two hours is shown by the fact that He also predicted that His resurrection would occur "on the third day." This is recorded by Matthew himself, not once, but three times (Matthew 16:21; Matthew 17:23; Matthew 20:19). A resurrection after "three days and three nights" is not on the third day, but the fourth, and yet Matthew reveals not the slightest embarrassment in recording these four predictions. This is clear evidence that Jesus was making a free use of terms. This was entirely current among the Jews, as is seen both in the Old and New Testaments. The arguments that the Biblical use of ordinal numbers (first, second, etc.) is relative and free, and that of cardinals (one, two, three, etc.) is absolute and exact, is a pure dogmatism which is easily disproved from both the Old and New Testaments. Compare Hebrews 11:30 with the sixth chapter of Joshua, and it is apparent that the "seven days" is used freely and can not mean seven days of twenty-four hours each (cf. 2 Chronicles 10:5, 2 Chronicles 10:6). In Esther 4:16 and Esther 5:1, a part of one day, a full day, and a part of another day are reckoned freely as three days and nights, as in the case of the resurrection of Jesus. "After three days" is used as parallel to "the third day" in the following passages: Matthew 27:63, Matthew 27:64; Matthew 16:21; Luke 9:22; and Mark 8:31; Mark 10:34. This shows clearly that both types of numerals are used freely, and that, instead of insisting upon a literal interpretation of one passage — "three days and three nights" — and cutting the narrative to fit, we should follow the Jewish method of counting and accept the narratives as to what

happened at their face value. Historical declarations of facts must rule.

Luke’s Chronology

If we remember that the Jews did not use the terms “Friday, Saturday, Sunday,” but “Preparation, Sabbath, and First Day of the Week,” then the following account of Luke is a perfectly clear affirmation that Christ was crucified on Friday. “This man went to Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. And he took it down, and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid him in a tomb that was hewn in stone, where never man had yet lain. And it was the day of the Preparation, and the sabbath drew on. And the women who had come with him out of Galilee followed after, and beheld the tomb, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. And on the sabbath they rested according to the commandment. But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came unto the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb” (Luke 23:52-56; Luke 24:1-2). This plainly affirms that Jesus was buried immediately after His death on Friday afternoon, and that there was still time after His burial and before sunset for the women who had followed the body to the tomb to sit there in silent meditation (Matthew 27:61; Luke 23:55), and then to return home and prepare spices and ointments before the sunset because “they rested on the sabbath” (Luke 23:56); that, after resting during the Sabbath, they came at early dawn of the first day of the week to embalm the body, but found the tomb empty. Jesus was crucified and buried on Friday and raised early Sunday morning, according to this clear statement, and the other narratives agree with this. Did Jesus Keep the Passover? The question arises as to whether Jesus ate the Passover which was kept on the fifteenth of Nisan (the feast beginning after sunset) or a substitute meal the evening or two evenings before. A fierce discussion raged in the early church over this very question. It was called “The Quartodeciman Controversy.” The Eastern churches started keeping the Passover feast as commanded in the Old Testament, giving as their reason the fact that Jesus kept it on the night of His betrayal. The Western churches argued strongly against the practice, but, instead of basing their objection solely on the fact that the Old Testament had passed away, they declared that Jesus did not keep the Passover but was crucified on the fourteenth of Nisan; being our Passover, He was slain at the same time the Passover lambs were being slain. But the Synoptics are very positive in their assertions that Jesus did keep the Passover, and that the day on which they ate the Passover was the Preparation for the Sabbath (Matthew 26:17; Mark 14:12; Luke 22:7). “And on the first day of unleavened bread, when they sacrificed the passover, his disciples say unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and make ready that thou mayest eat the passover?” (Mark 14:12). This is a plain assertion that the day on which they were making preparations for the feast in the upper room was the very day on which the Passover lambs were being slain. This is exactly as it should have been if they were keeping the Passover, and the above Scriptures shut out the possibility that Jesus was eating a substitute meal the day before the Passover lamb was slain. The word “passover” is used in three different senses: (1) the Lamb that was slain; (2) the meal which was eaten after sunset on Nisan 15; (3) the feast which lasted eight days. In the above passage the word “passover” can only refer to the lamb which was sacrificed or the meal at which it was eaten. The Argument from John

Radical writers claim that John contradicts the Synoptics by asserting that the supper was eaten in the upper room before the Passover. “Now before the feast of the passover, Jesus knowing that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own

that were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And during supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas...” (John 13:1, John 13:2). But this can only be made an assertion that the supper occurred before the feast of the Passover by wresting the latter phrase out of the first sentence and placing it with the second. The phrase evidently modifies “having loved”: “Having loved his own, before the feast of the passover, he loved them unto the end” (that is, unto the feast when He was crucified).

John’s Testimony

It is affirmed that John declares the crucifixion to have taken place before the feast of the Passover (John 19:14, John 19:31, John 19:42). But a careful study of his language indicates he places it on Friday, the day of the Passover feast, just as the other Gospel writers. He calls the day “the Preparation,” “the Preparation of the passover,” but he carefully explains that he means by this latter term the preparation of the Sabbath which occurred during the Passover week. When we recall the three uses of the word “passover,” we can readily understand his usage, and he himself explains: “The Jews therefore, because it was the Preparation, that the bodies should not remain on the cross upon the sabbath (for the day of that sabbath was a high day)” (John 19:31). The Sabbath which came in the midst of the Passover feast would naturally be a “high day.” John represents the Jews as not entering the praetorium, “that they might not be defiled, but might eat the passover.” This was during the trials of Jesus. Here the word “passover” must be used in the sense of the seven-day feast, and the eating must refer to some meal (such as described in Numbers 28:16-23) as occurring on the first day of the Passover festival — a meal which was eaten before sunset. It can not refer to the eating of the Passover lamb, for this occurred after sunset, and entrance into the praetorium would only make them unclean until sunset (Leviticus 15:1-24; Leviticus 16:26, Leviticus 16:28; Leviticus 17:15, Leviticus 17:16). The Departure of Judas The passage is also cited which states that the disciples thought Judas was leaving the upper room to buy things “for the feast.” But a seven-day feast might be expected to require further supplies; such supplies would be purchasable, since the law explicitly makes this exception in regard to the first and seventh days of the feast: “No manner of work shall be done in them save that which every man must eat, that only may be done by you” (Exodus 12:16). Urgency to go out at night and secure such supplies would be felt only if the next day was a holy day, such as the first day of the feast. The argument that the Jews would not have indulged in the work entailed in the crucifixion of Jesus on the day of the Passover feast overlooks the fact that they had the Romans do this work and that they repeatedly showed themselves ready to kill Jesus on the Sabbath if the opportunity offered. They dreaded killing Him at the feast because of the great crowd, which might prove unmanageable. The Term “Sabbath”

Westcott claims that the first and last days of the Passover feast were called Sabbaths, and he insists that “Preparation for the sabbath” means Preparation for the Passover feast. McGarvey flatly denies that either of these days is ever called a Sabbath in the Scriptures, although they are called days of holy convocation and rest. The passages in dispute are Leviticus 23:6-8, Leviticus 23:24, Leviticus 23:27-32, Leviticus 23:33-39 (cf. Evidences of Christianity, pp. 44-50). Whether or not the Jews ever referred to either of these days as a Sabbath is not a matter of final significance, for the clear-cut statement of Mark 14:12 (backed by Matthew 26:17 and Luke 22:7) that the Passover lamb was slain on the day Jesus was making preparations for the supper in the upper room, together with the repeated declarations that the day on which He was crucified was the

preparation for the Sabbath (Matthew 27:62; Matthew 28:1; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:14, John 19:31, John 19:42), and that the day following this Sabbath was the first day of the week (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1, Mark 16:2; Luke 23:53-56; Luke 24:1-2; John 19:31, John 19:42; John 20:1), establishes Thursday night as the time of the supper, which was the Passover feast, and Friday as the day of Jesus' crucifixion.

Dating of Events The arrival at Bethany was evidently on Saturday, Nisan 9; the supper at Simon's house was on that evening, and the triumphal entry the next morning. Monday the cursing of the fig tree and the second cleansing of the temple occurred. Tuesday was the great day of questions. Wednesday was spent by Jesus in quiet seclusion, and by His enemies in plotting His death. Thursday the preparations for the Passover were made. Friday began with the supper in the upper room and ended with the death and burial of Jesus. The resurrection was early on Sunday morning, Nisan 17, the first day of the week.

019. Chapter 17 - The Self-Revelation of Jesus

Chapter 17 - The Self-Revelation of Jesus Unity of Purpose

“These are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (John 20:31). Thus does John explain the purpose of his narrative. The theory that the Synoptics have an objective which is something short of this will not bear investigation. This, however, is one of the fundamental lines of attack upon John’s narrative and the secret of the hostile criticism of his account. It is a most amazing thing how the writers, with this deep-set and consuming purpose in their hearts, yet restrain themselves from arguing the case and allow Jesus to state His own claims and offer His own proof. They leave Jesus to reveal Himself in their narratives even as He did during His ministry. Instead of trying to add their arguments as to how certain and conclusive were the proofs He gave of His declarations of deity, they rather confess how slow they were to understand and believe. Truly these narratives are not according to the fashion of worldly wisdom.

John’s Testimony The chief objection of skeptics to the Gospels is concentrated upon Jesus’ teaching concerning Himself. This, on the one hand, is the heart of the Christian gospel, and, in like manner, is the center of the modernistic effort to weaken the claim of Jesus and thus reduce Him to merely human stature. John begins with the identification of Jesus, the Word, with God, and he closes with the crowning proof which Jesus presented in His resurrection; and which caused even Thomas to cry out with fervent conviction: “My Lord and my God.” John records so many clear declarations by Jesus of His deity that the only possible recourse of those who deny His deity is to repudiate John’s narrative: “I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever” (John 6:51); “the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he the Son also to have life in himself” (John 5:25, John 5:26); “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12); “Ye are of this world; I am not of this world” (John 8:28); “If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing: it is my Father who glorifieth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God; and ye have not known him: but I know him….Before Abraham was born, I am” (John 8:54, John 8:58); “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30); “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I have believed that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, even he that should come into the world” (John 11:25-27); “I am the way, and the truth, and the life...he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:6, John 14:9).

Mark’s Testimony The critical question is, Does this presentation agree with the teaching of Jesus concerning Himself as reported in Matthew, Mark and Luke? The modernist seeks to establish that while the Synoptics represent that Jesus revealed Himself as the Messiah, He did not mean by this more than the chosen One of God, and certainly not the Son of God. Since they claim that Mark was the first of these to be written and that there is a development of the doctrine of Jesus’ deity to be seen in the four narratives, it may be best to consider Mark’s Gospel first. The Son of God

Instead of Mark's regarding Jesus merely as a man and desiring to present Him as a worker of wonders and an extraordinary teacher, but nothing more, he sets forth in the first words of his book this impressive summary: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." This then is his purpose: to write an account of the gospel which will show Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God. Now hear what John declares his purpose to be: "But these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" (John 20:31). Could any more complete unity of purpose be imagined or expressed? And yet the modernists insist that Mark presents an entirely different picture of Jesus as a mere man, and does not desire to prove He is the Son of God. Take the second and third verses of Mark, and what do you find? The second thing Mark does is to quote a passage from Isaiah about the coming of the forerunner to prepare the way for One who is identified with God. Five verses later he introduces the Holy Spirit into the narrative when he records the mysterious prediction of John the Baptist that the Messiah is to baptize in the Holy Spirit. In the tenth verse he describes the marvelous scene where the Holy Spirit descends from heaven and joins Jesus in His earthly ministry. The next verse records how God Himself spoke from heaven and declared Jesus to be His beloved Son.

Testimony of Demons

Mark continually records the cure of those afflicted with demons and the fearful testimony of the demons, quickly silenced by Jesus: "What have we to do with thee, Jesus thou Nazarene? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God" (Mark 1:24); "And the unclean spirits, whensoever they beheld him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God" (Mark 3:11); "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God?" (Mark 5:7).

Controversies and Testimony

He introduces various controversies with the Jewish leaders who hated and opposed Jesus, in order to show not merely the development of the tragic struggle, but the absolute claims to deity which Jesus made: "The Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins"; "Who can forgive sins, but one, even God?" (Mark 2:10, Mark 2:7); "Why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?...The Son of man is lord even of the sabbath" (Mark 2:24, Mark 2:28). This much is affirmed in the opening paragraph of his book. The same object is pursued throughout. The Good Confession

Much is made of the fact that Mark's brief summary of the scene at Caesarea Philippi omits "the Son of God" from the confession of Peter, which is simply, "Thou art the Christ," but Mark shows in the same chapter that the confession Jesus is the Christ necessarily implies that He is the Son of God, as he has repeatedly declared and as he now makes clear in the record of the testimony of God at the transfiguration, which immediately followed the confession of Peter: "There came a voice out of the cloud, This is my beloved Son: hear ye him" (Mark 9:7).

Final Declaration of Jesus The testimony of Jesus when on trial before the high priest is of central importance: "Again the high priest asked him, and saith unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven. And the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What

further need have we of witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be worthy of death" (Mark 14:61-64). The testimony of the centurion is recorded by Mark: "Truly this man was the Son of God." In the closing verses of his Gospel, Mark affirms: "So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken unto them, was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God"(Mark 16:19).

Purpose of Mark

It is sometimes affirmed by scholars that the purpose of Mark was "not biographical, but theological." This is not Scriptural language, but if it is meant to affirm that Mark did not write specifically a book of biography, but had a definite purpose to show how it came to pass that Jesus was condemned and put to death by His own people, then there is truth in the statement. Mark makes no effort to record mere biographical notes; there is a deep-set purpose in each incident and statement that is introduced; he is attempting to show how Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, and how He proved His claim; how it came to pass that, even though He is the Son of God, yet the people rejected and crucified Him; how the purposes of God were fulfilled in this, as seen in His resurrection and the completion of the divine plan of salvation. The Decisive Passage in Matthew When we turn to the Gospel of Matthew and that of Luke, we find ourselves in possession of the same chain of evidence, for most of the above testimony is thrice told, and, in addition, some very powerful new evidence is presented. The key passage for the whole discussion as to whether Matthew represents Jesus' talking about Himself in the same fashion that John does is found in the close of the eleventh chapter: "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (John 11:27-30). This is so completely of one piece with the reports of John that it sounds like a quotation from his narrative. It is so disastrous for the radical theory that the modernists turn and twist in every conceivable direction trying to escape from it. They try to say that what Jesus meant to say was that every son knows his father better than any one else and vice versa, but when the grand declaration of deity by Jesus is thus diluted, what sort of an introduction does it make for the most daring and touching invitation ever issued to the world: "Come unto me"? The personal pronouns "I," "me, "mine," occur seven times in the great invitation and it is absolutely impossible to make it impersonal. Moreover, the declaration of His universal authority with which the statement begins is distinctly personal. All of this personal element is so inter-woven into the texture of the whole passage that some critics, such as Professor Frank Porter of Yale, chose the desperate expedient of tearing the whole passage out of Matthew. When this is done without the slightest textual support from any manuscripts, it is merely a confession that theory has been enthroned and facts blindly discarded. Even Professor Allen declares concerning this passage: "It is a reminiscence of a side of Jesus' teaching which is prominent in the Fourth Gospel." After citing the parallel passage in Luke 10:21, Luke 10:22, and "the similar use of the Son — the Father" in Mark 13:32, he declares that this "saying of Christ is as strongly supported as any saying in the Gospels" (Commentary on Matthew, p. 123). The Virgin Birth

Further study of Matthew and Luke will show that their reports of the teaching of Jesus throng with affirmations that emphasize or imply Jesus' claims to deity. The detailed account of the temptation

in both narratives brings out in bold relief the central proposition of the devil, which was a challenge of that which God had just affirmed at the baptism: “If thou art the Son of God.” This establishes as the major objective both of Jesus’ ministry and their narratives that all men shall believe God’s testimony that Jesus is His Son and shall obey His teaching, even as it implies that those who seek to deny this find themselves in the company of the evil one who first challenged it. The accounts of the Nativity in Matthew and Luke declare with unimpeachable evidence and with the most careful and powerful language the virgin birth of Jesus. This shows at once that the deity of Jesus is at the very heart of their presentation of the Gospel. Again, it is exceedingly unfortunate for the radical position that the definite details as to the virgin birth are recorded, not in John, but in Matthew and Luke! If only all the emphatic declarations of Jesus’ deity could be traced to one of the Gospels, the rejection of the testimony would be so much simpler. At this point, it is Matthew and Luke, rather than John, which are assailed. Not only do Matthew and Mark sustain John, but the fact they were written much earlier than John is fatal to the developmental theory, for why, then, does John omit any definite account of the virgin birth? The critics try at this point to use John to discredit Matthew and Luke by arguing that his silence as to the virgin birth impeaches their testimony, but they are thwarted in this attack by the fact that John’s grand prologue to his Gospel gloriously proclaims the pre-existence of Jesus, which reveals the divine unity of the diverse testimony of the Evangelists.

Further Witness of Matthew and Luke The continuous, vivid narration of the terror-stricken testimony of the demons to the fact that they were in the presence of the Son of God shows that all three of the Synoptics have the very same objective as John: to show that Jesus is the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. Jesus did not permit the demons to testify: He desired to reveal Himself and not to be revealed by the devil. Nevertheless, as the demons cried out in terror, their cries were heard by the multitudes and must have produced a deep impression. The fact that Matthew, Mark, and Luke repeatedly tell of their outcries shows that these details are introduced into the narrative for the purpose of showing Jesus’ divine power and authority — His deity. John does not introduce this line of evidence, because it had already had abundant and emphatic expression; but the evidence he does present has the same purpose and is in harmony with that in the Synoptics.

Further Evidence The sermons and parables of Jesus, which are so much more fully reported in Matthew and Luke than in Mark, reveal the same focus of intense desire of these two writers to show that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and that He would return in glory to judge the world. The climactic revelations of the divine person of Jesus at Caesarea Philippi and at the trials before the Sanhedrin and Pilate are clearly brought forth in the Synoptics. in fact, the more one examines the four Gospels, the more impressive becomes the testimony to the deity of Jesus which is recorded in the Synoptics and not mentioned in John. If John’s Gospel had never been written, it would have been impossible for anyone to have read and believed the accounts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke and not accepted the deity of Jesus. Instead of contradicting John’s testimony, they supplement it in a most remarkable way; instead of teaching a doctrine of the person of Jesus which falls short of that in John, they present the same doctrine with the most convincing variety of testimony.

Demise of the Theory The radical theory that the reports of how Jesus revealed Himself show a steady development from Mark who gives but little of claims to deity, to Matthew who describes

much stronger claims and begins to omit details which reveal the humanity of Jesus, to Luke who proceeds much further with this development, to John who represents the completion of the development, flattens itself against the solid wall of early Christian testimony that Matthew was written before Mark. Furthermore, according to their own admissions, John was not written later than the close of the first century, and this does not allow time for such an evolutionary process as they suppose In the Gospels. The complete collapse of the efforts to place these books late — in the second century — places the entire modernistic position in a chronological strait jacket. They must keep their suppositions as to the date of the Synoptics as far removed from the death and resurrection of Jesus in order to attack the miraculous elements in the testimony; they must keep them as far removed as possible from the admitted date of John in order to leave as much time as possible for supposed development of views from the Synoptics to John. Thus they place the writings of Matthew, Mark, and Luke within a single decade, naming as a rule the year a.d. 70. And the long process of development of theological ideas which they formerly supposed took place in the Synoptics during a period of a hundred years, they now must affirm took place in ten years. The absurdity of such a supposition is self-evident. Finally, the quotations from the Synoptics which are given to prove such a development, instead of showing any such process, merely show that the writers give independent and varied testimony, some emphasizing one feature or line of evidence, more than another.

Purpose of Miracles A second general objection to the record of the self-revelation of Jesus in John's Gospel is the assertion: "In the Synoptics the miracles are primarily a manifestation of the sympathy of Jesus, or, at the utmost, of His power and authority. In John they are a revelation of His divine, preexistent glory" (John 2:11) (Hill, Introduction to the Life of Christ, p. 128). This immediately suggests the reflection as to where Jesus ever showed any more sympathy than at the grave of Lazarus, but John is the only writer who records the resurrection of Lazarus. How wonderfully He shows both sympathy for Mary and Martha and the desire to give to the world indisputable proof of His deity! And where would one find any stronger declaration of the fundamental purpose of Jesus in working miracles, that it was to bring faith in His deity and hence salvation to the souls of lost men, than is found in the eleventh chapter of Matthew? The statement that His miracles are merely self-revealing in the Synoptics to the extent of showing "His power and authority" raises the question: How much power and authority? If enough power and authority is claimed, then deity is of necessity affirmed; this is exactly the case throughout all four accounts. Take the case of the paralytic whom Mark declares that Jesus said He was healing to prove that He had the power on earth to forgive sins, in the very face of the charge of the Pharisees that His claim was blasphemy (Mark 2:5-12). John says: "But though he had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on him" (John 12:37). But is this any stronger than the very language of Jesus reported in Matthew: "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes"? (Matthew 11:21). Could any clearer affirmation of the purpose of miracles to lead men to believe in Jesus be imagined than that quoted from the lips of Jesus by Matthew in answer to John's question of doubt? "Go and tell John the things which ye hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me" (Matthew 11:4-6). The Synoptics are filled with proof that Jesus worked His miracles, not merely because of sympathy for physical suffering,

but to prove His deity. The cursing of the fig tree is a most dramatic example. All the declarations of faith by people who were healed, made both before and after the healing, and the constant question of Jesus, “Believest thou?” or His commendation, “Thy faith hath made thee whole” furnish a continuous line of evidence in the Synoptics as in John. The implication of this whole radical objection is that there is a contradiction between Jesus’ working miracles Out of sympathy and out of the desire to prove His deity. This is a monstrous assumption. The two motives are everywhere harmoniously united. The love of Jesus was not so blind as to minister to the ills of the body and disregard the ills of the soul!

Manner of Revelation The last attack upon John’s presentation of Jesus’ self-revelation, and the one upon which the radicals place the most emphasis, is the claim that John contradicts the Synoptics in representing that Jesus revealed Himself as the Son of God at the very start of His ministry, while the latter show that He very gradually unveiled His claims. “In the Synoptics we find a slow and orderly advance in Christ’s unveiling of His mission and claims. He begins by preaching the kingdom of God, but says nothing about Himself as the King — the long expected Messiah. He checks the demoniacs when they would proclaim Him the Son of God. He waits patiently for the time when there shall dawn upon His disciples a recognition of what He is; and He rejoices greatly when Peter — far along in the course of the ministry — pronounces Him to be the Messiah, the Son of God; but even then He charges them to say nothing publicly about it And only in the last week of His life does He throw away all reserve, and announce His divine claims to any one who may listen. In John there is no such progress: all is evident from the outset. The Baptist points out Jesus as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29). His disciples at the very outset hail Him as the Son of God, the King of Israel (John 1:49). To the woman of Samaria, looking for the Messiah, He says, ‘I am he’ (John 4:26). And in His public discourses from the very beginning He emphasizes His divinity” (Hill, Introduction to the Life of Christ, p. 127). A Divine Mosaic This sounds like a very imposing theory: startling and convincing by reason of its simplicity; menacing in its implications as to the credibility of John. When one places the theory, however, in contact with the actual facts as to the testimony of the four Evangelists, just what happens? It is found to be in such absolute contradiction to the facts in the case, that the only way the unbelieving critics can hope to make out their theory is by cutting up the records with the most ruthless violence and discarding the evidence which would destroy their theory. The testimony of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as to the self-revelation of Jesus is as an exquisitely beautiful mosaic most mysteriously and marvelously interlaid. When such an effort is made, as in the above theory, to analyze and divide the mosaic on some direct line of cleavage which leaves the Synoptics on one side and the Gospel of John on the other, it immediately becomes clear that the mystifying intricacy of the mosaic defies such division: the blocks of evidences are so fitted together that they overlap or fall short of the theoretical line: here, a block reaches over too far; there, another does not reach; here, they are absolutely intertwined. The only thing the exasperated critic can do in his desperate determination to unearth a line of cleavage which will prove a contradiction and enable him to deny the testimony to the deity of Christ, is to seize a knife and cut right through the mosaic, regardless of the facts. To represent these emasculated remnants as the actual, original design requires a curious disdain for historical facts and an amazing confidence in the infallability of one’s own imagination.

First Recorded Words of Jesus The first words recorded from the lips of Jesus are words of startling self-revelation. They pertain to His person, His conduct, His divine mission, and His relation to the Father. The crucial phrase “My Father” occurs in this statement of Jesus. Hear the child of twelve standing in the temple, surrounded by the scholars of the nation, say to His astounded mother and to Joseph: “How is it that ye sought me? knew ye not that I must be in my Father’s house?” What a grand argument for the above radical theory, if the critics could point out that this scene and statement is recorded only in John! They hold that John represents Jesus as telling everything about His personality right at the beginning and that the Synoptics represent Jesus as not discussing Himself, but the kingdom, up to the scene at Caesarea Philippi. If this be true John must be the writer to tell how Jesus thus declared Himself in the temple at the age of twelve. How unfortunate for the theory that these first recorded words of Jesus are not found in John’s Gospel at all, but only in Luke 2:49! Thus at the very first historical test applied to the theory, the critic must resort to violence, as he reaches for his operating knife to remove the historical testimony from the records in order to maintain his theory. The Second Recorded Words The second recorded words from the lips of Jesus also concern His divine person. John the Baptist draws back in awe from the request of Jesus to be baptized: “I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?” The reply of Jesus confirms the implication of sinlessness and the resulting conclusions as to the divine mystery of His person: “Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.” According to the theory, this should be found only in John, but, as a matter of fact, it occurs only in Matthew 3:14, Matthew 3:15. The Third Recorded Words The third recorded words of Jesus also center in the mystery of His deity, as He answers calmly the repeated challenges of the devil in the wilderness: “If thou art the Son of God….” This, too, should be found only in John, to make the theory work out. On the contrary, it is not mentioned in John, but is found only in Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13. The miraculous testimony of God Himself to the identity of Jesus, His Son, occurs between the second and third recorded words of Jesus. Hear the voice from heaven as Jesus was raised from the waters of baptism: “Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased.” Here again is death and destruction to the radical theory that everything is unveiled at the beginning in John’s Gospel and only gradually revealed in the Synoptics! All three Synoptical writers record the testimony of God; John does not mention it. Thus the very first meeting of the theory with the facts not only deflates the theory; the facts turn it upside down and inside out. The radicals declare John is unhistorical because he represents the Baptist as declaring plainly at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry: “Behold the Lamb of God.” But the Synoptics (which they use to discredit John) declare that God spoke from heaven and proclaimed, “Thou art my Son...!” The critics are forced to resort to violence again and with high hand remove the evidence by denying the miraculous testimony of God. Some hold that the descent of the Spirit and the voice of God were not perceived or understood by the multitude. It is most probably true that the crowd, although the filled with awe at what they saw and heard, did not understand the significance of the descending dove, nor understand the words spoken by God (John 12:27-29; Acts 9:3-8; Acts 22:9). Jesus was thus left free to reveal Himself. It must be noted, however, that John indicates even more clearly that the testimony of the Baptist (“Behold the Lamb of God...”; “I have seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God) was given, not to the multitudes, but to His disciples (John 1:35). Thus, while both the Synoptics and John depict events and record statements that must have created a certain surge of excitement and expectation in the nation, yet they left abundant room for Jesus to reveal Himself as He would. The Sermons and Miracles of

Jesus When we begin to examine the sermons of Jesus in all four narratives, we find that the theory can not stand in the presence of the facts: instead of Jesus' never discussing Himself in the early Synoptical accounts but always teaching concerning the kingdom, we find the unveiling of the kingdom and the King are parallel in each of the Gospels. This is an absolute necessity for a kingdom to have a King; the proclamation of the kingdom of God could not be so abstract as to ignore the King. The Old Testament had clothed the predictions of the kingdom continually in terms of the divine King who should come; John the Baptist had set the nation on fire with his bold predictions: "There cometh after me he that is mightier than I..." (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:7, Luke 3:16; John 1:27). These predictions were made by John after his ministry had stirred the most excited inquiries throughout the nation as to whether he were the Christ. "And as the people were in expectation, and all men reasoned in their hearts concerning John, whether he were the Christ" (Luke 3:15). "The Jews sent unto him from Jerusalem priests and Levites to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed and denied not; and he confessed, I am not the Christ" (John 1:19, John 1:20). Now when Jesus began His ministry with a marvelous succession of miracles, it was inevitable that everyone should discuss the question as to His identity. This is exactly what happened, and it is indicated in all four narratives. The theory that Jesus did not discuss Himself but merely gave abstract teaching concerning the kingdom until the last days of His ministry, overlooks the excited atmosphere in which His ministry was carried on; it denies the astounding miracles which accompanied His teaching from the very start, for they constituted a self-revelation of Jesus and forced people to conclusions He did not need to affirm each time a miracle was worked.

Harmonious Testimony

John shows that when Jesus cleansed the temple in the opening days of His ministry, the national leaders immediately issued a challenge to Him to work some overpowering miracle to prove His Messiahship (Who else but the Messiah could thus have the right to take charge of the temple?): "What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?" (John 2:18). The miracles worked in Jerusalem caused many to believe on Him, and caused Nicodemus to come for a night conference. It is very important to notice that Nicodemus began with inquiries as to the person and work of Jesus, but the replies of Jesus turned the discussion to the kingdom. This is in John's Gospel and not in the Synoptics! The opening phases of the Galilean ministry as described in the Synoptics were after the same fashion, as Jesus discussed both the King and the kingdom. The outcries of the demoniacs, stifled by Jesus' stern rebukes, yet heard by the multitudes, concentrated the most excited inquiries upon Jesus: "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God….What is this? a new teaching! with authority he commandeth the unclean spirits and they obey him" (Mark 1:24, Mark 1:27; Luke 4:34-36). The personal claim of Jesus that He had the power on earth to forgive sins introduced a discussion, not of the kingdom, but of the King. The Pharisees protested He was claiming the authority of God Himself; Jesus responded, not by an abstract discussion of the kingdom, but with a miracle which proved the divine claims of the King! (Matthew 9:2-8; Mark 2:5-12; Luke 5:18-26). Fear and amazement filled the hearts of the people and their awed reflection shows how their thoughts were focused upon the person and nature of Jesus: "We have never seen it on this fashion." The Sermon on the Mount The Sermon on the Mount contains a startling revelation of the divine person of Jesus. He is discussing the kingdom throughout, but see how often the King enters the discussion. "When men persecute you for my

sake"; "I came not to destroy but to fulfill"; "I say unto you "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth..."; "Every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them…." The Sermon on the Mount is the favorite citation of radicals to prove that Jesus discussed the kingdom and not the King in the Synoptics. It, by itself, is quite sufficient to destroy their theory! Jesus is the King! The implication is that those who do not accept Him as Lord shall not enter into the kingdom, even as those who call Him "Lord, Lord" but obey not. This same presentation of Himself, more veiled at times than others, is seen throughout the Synoptics and is especially pointed and emphatic in the sermon recorded in the eleventh chapter of Matthew. Read again this whole sermon with its towering declarations of deity and its presentation of the evidence. The Sermon at Nazareth A most important example is seen in the sermon at Nazareth in the very opening of the Galilean ministry. Jesus read as His text a glowing Messianic prediction from Isaiah and declared Himself the fulfillment of it. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Because he appointed me to preach good tidings to the poor: He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovering of sight to the blind, To set at liberty them that are bruised, To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord….And he began to say unto them, Today hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears. His sermon is not recorded beyond the opening assertion that He was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, but the excited discussion of the people at its close did not concern the kingdom but the personal claims of Jesus Himself and led to the furious attempt of the unbelieving crowd to destroy Him. The theory that Jesus did not unveil His person in the early part of His ministry as recorded in the Synoptics finds a deadly rebuttal in this passage in Luke 4:16-30. The Divine Method

Students of the Book of Acts are sometimes puzzled at the variety of answers given to the supreme question of life: "What must I do to be saved?" A careful study of the context in each case will show that the question always received the same answer: faith, repentance, confession, baptism, and a life of devoted service to Jesus, although not all these elements are actually stated in the specific answer to the question on any occasion. The immediate answer given in each case differed according to the particular situation of the hearer, but the elements of the complete answer are plainly implied in the context. Exactly the same method is seen in the delineation of the self-revelation of Jesus in the four Gospels. There is a steadfast, harmonious presentation; sometimes He revealed Himself more clearly than at others. There is a gradual crescendo, a distinctly developing climax in each of the narratives, even though the details are so often completely different.

General Principles

Two general considerations are plainly shown to have governed the manner and degree of the self-revelation of Jesus: (1) the attitude, situation, background and motives of the hearer; (2) the public state of mind in the community or the nation. Too sudden and complete an unveiling of His divine person and His unlimited power would have defeated itself. God's love, as well as God's power, had to be revealed: the spiritual nature of the kingdom as well as the infinite power of the King. Although it seems at a glance that John's narrative leaves no room for gradual revelation because of very startling revelations made at the beginning, a study of the text will show that these declarations were semi-private and still left the unprepared multitudes to be informed gradually. The Baptist's testimony was to his disciples; the declaration of Nathanael, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel" was heard only by the little group of disciples; the revelation to

Nicodemus was to a single individual and closely veiled. John 3:16 seems very plain to us, but the entire conversation was a stimulating but perplexing enigma to Nicodemus; the declaration “I that speak unto thee am he” was very clear, but limited to the Samaritan woman and the isolated community where He thus proclaimed Himself. Such a revelation would not prevent the gradual unfolding of His person and program in Galilee and Judaea. There is no contradiction between this record of the early Judaean ministry in John’s account and the gradual revelation of Himself in the other three Gospels.

Jesus’ revelation of Himself to the nation faced the obstacle of a stubborn, ingrained conception of the Jewish people that the Messiah was to be a worldly monarch, destroying Rome’s might and giving the Jews glorious domination over the world. This was the beacon light of hope in the hearts of the people. The mighty sweep of Jesus’ ministry met this stolid devotion to a worldly ideal like an irresistible force meeting a well-nigh immovable body. The ministry of Jesus was not play-acting; it was a living movement which had to face the inevitable maelstrom of political maneuvers by selfish parties and cliques. There were two mighty whirlpools of politics: one centered in Jerusalem — a swirling cesspool of self-seeking and bitter party struggle between the Pharisees and Sadducees for the control of the nation, that drew in a great crowd of sycophants and petty office holders; the other centered in Galilee — the wild, fanatical movement of the Zealots that continually threatened to engulf the nation in war against Rome. The ministry of Jesus rose to a mighty flood, which, though influenced by the vortex in Galilee or that in Jerusalem, ‘yet swept through and over them and burst the man-made obstacle of the crucifixion to rush on after the resurrection in the fulfillment of the purpose whereunto God had sent it.

Meeting Hostility and Misplaced Enthusiasm

All four Gospel accounts show how the self-revelation of Jesus was influenced by these two political whirlpools and their outlying eddies. John shows more of the collision with the Jerusalem forces, although he also gives important information on how He altered His methods of revealing Himself to meet the Zealot efforts to capture His movement in Galilee. The Synoptics show plainly the impact of Jesus’ ministry against both of these shifting currents of hostility or impulsive, mistaken zeal. Three general effects were produced on the methods of self-revelation of Jesus: (1) The hardened unbelief of the hypocritical leaders in the capital led Him to make His claims very strong and clear, and His miracles very public when in Jerusalem, so that they were without excuse in rejecting Him, and the slow-moving faith of the capital would have every needed stimulation. (2) The rash, violent program of the Zealots that led them to rush forward in wild excitement to seize His movement for their own selfish ends caused Jesus to proceed more carefully in His self-revelation in Galilee and to guard His demonstrations of miraculous power with the most emphatic teaching of the spiritual character of the kingdom. (3) The sweeping currents of hostility or misplaced zeal caused Him continually to shift His location from one town or community to another, lest the inevitable, tragic climax of His combat with the hostile hierarchy come before He had time to evangelize the nation; or the irrational ardor of the Zealots should overflow to the destruction of life. Thus we find in John’s Gospel, Jesus healing the lame man at the pool of Bethesda and sending him straight through the midst of the Sabbath throngs in the temple in order to focus upon the miracle the attention of the hardened, unbelieving leaders at the capital. And we also see in the Synoptics Jesus strictly warning the leper He has healed in Galilee, which is already in a ferment of excitement over Him, to tell no man of the cure but to go to the priest as

commanded in the law. This was the continual policy of Jesus in the exciting days of His Galilean ministry. The teaching of Jesus concerning Himself was governed by exactly the same method, as all four Gospels show. The climax of excitement came in Galilee with the feeding of the five thousand, where the Zealots, in their wild enthusiasm, sought to take Jesus by force and make Him king. It is John who gives us the clearest view of this crisis with the Zealot movement and how Jesus thwarted the worldly-minded, violent leaders by dismissing both His disciples and the multitude, spending most of the night in prayer on a mountain top, and then rejoining His disciples by walking on the water. The modernists argue strongly against the credibility of John because of the self-revelation in Jesus' sermon in the synagogue at Capernaum the next day: "Even the sacramental teachings concerning eating His flesh and drinking His blood are given in the discourse on the day after the feeding of the five thousand; and John wholly omits any institution of the sacrament in connection with the Last Supper" (Hill, Introduction to the Life of Christ, pp. 127, 128). A study of the circumstances shows that Jesus achieved an eternal purpose that day in giving for all the ages a sublime sermon on the Bread of Life, and that He achieved an immediate purpose of thwarting any further move by the Zealots by preaching such a profoundly difficult sermon that they could not comprehend and turned away from Him in selfish disgust. To make a point out of the sermon in the sixth chapter of John, the radicals would have to show that the tremendous declarations of Jesus about Himself as the Bread of Life led everybody to realize His deity; as a matter of fact, John tells how it was so obscured from their worldly minds that it caused them to desert Him in such numbers that only a few disciples remained faithful (John 6:60-69). Thus the climax of their vituperation against John becomes a deathblow to their own theory.

Revelation to the Disciples

Running parallel to the unveiling of the divine majesty of Jesus to the nation, there was the continuous self-revelation to His chosen disciples. Each was a separate movement, for, while every exciting impulse to believe which came from miracle or sermon was shared by the disciples, yet they were given much to sustain them when the faith of the multitude sagged, and the disciples, in the midst of their hours of growing faith, had to wrestle with terrifying predictions, as yet withheld from the crowd. The accompanying chart should help in gaining an understanding of how these two movements grew, and how they were related to each other.

The measure of faith in the hearts of the disciples and of the multitudes is an imperfect gauge and yet somewhat of a gauge as to the self-revelation of Jesus. It might be considered a minimum measure inasmuch as their faith continually fell short of the height to which the actual revelation should have carried them. The chart is arranged to show how the tides of faith rose and fell, in both the hearts of the disciples and the multitudes. Faith always holds mortal combat with doubt in the human heart, and we are never able to maintain exactly the same high level of faith any more than we are able at all times to occupy the heights of unselfish nobility that we at times achieve. Obstacles from without and weaknesses within continually cause at least some fluctuation. The faith of the disciples started upward under the initial impulse of the testimony of John the Baptist backed by the miraculous events of the baptism and rose to an early climax in the confession of Nathanael (John 1:29-51). It was strengthened by the miracle at Cana (John 2:11). The disciples were left bewildered and confused by the shocking collision with the national leaders which followed the cleansing of the temple (John 2:22); but the miracles and ministry in Jerusalem further increased their enthusiasm (John 2:23-25). When Jesus retired from Judaea under the increasing

pressure of hostility (John 4:1-3), it seems to have caused the faith of the disciples to sag, but the self-revelation to the Samaritans furnished another upward impulse to their faith. Thus we find the tide rising and falling throughout the ministry of Jesus. The miracles and the astounding teaching of Jesus tended constantly to develop the faith of the disciples and of the multitudes, but the spiritual character of Jesus' teaching and program collided strongly with the current materialistic views about the Messiah, and the hostility of the leaders of the nation tended to make the faith of those about Jesus erratic and uneven. Especially when Jesus retired from the fierce assaults of His enemies and carried on quiet evangelistic work in other centers, such a course caused the faith of the disciples to sink. A good illustration of the influence of this opposition upon the faith of the disciples is found in the perplexed and discouraged protest of the disciples after Jesus' controversy concerning eating with unwashed hands: "Then came the disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, when they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up Let them alone: they are blind guides" (Matthew 15:12-14). This shows also how Jesus sought to brace their faith under such a strain. The refusal of Jesus to meet the challenge of His enemies to show a sign from heaven had a like effect upon them and was followed by a similar aftermath of rebuke and exhortation that analyzed their hearts: "And Jesus said to them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matthew 16:6). The self-revelation to the multitudes naturally was more limited, faced greater obstacles, and did not receive the same antidote of private instruction. Moreover, the constant change of location from one city to another enabled Jesus to evangelize a wide territory, and it also had the effect of delaying the fullness of His self-revelation to the nation, for a community which had been stirred to fever heat by His miracles and messages was allowed to calm down and think things over while He was gone from the midst. Thus an abortive climax was avoided in either Judaea or Galilee or in any separate community: the Zealots were prevented from capitalizing on His movement and turning it to their worldly ends; the Pharisees were thwarted in their deadly plots and were themselves given time to reconsider and repent; but the fires of enthusiasm were not allowed to die out completely in any one section by reason of too long an absence of Jesus.

Climactic Development The feeding of the five thousand stands out as the first great climax of the self-revelation of Jesus both to the multitudes and to His disciples. It was immediately followed by a collapse of popular enthusiasm because of His refusal to permit the Jews to make Him king. This also caused a sharp decline in the faith of the disciples, and it was for this reason, largely, that Jesus dismissed the disciples and sent them across the lake to separate them from the corrupting influence of the worldly-minded crowd. When He came to them, walking on the water, their faith, staggered by the events of the day, was again roused to the heights and made more spiritual. The difficult sermon on the Bread of Life at Capernaum the next day definitely ended the popularity of Jesus in Galilee and gave His disciples grave concern, but they refused to yield their faith (John 6:66-69). The self-revelation to the multitudes in Galilee practically ended as Jesus went from one trip of retirement to another; isolated campaigns such as the one in the Decapolis which culminated in the feeding of the four thousand followed, but most of the time was devoted to the earnest instruction of the disciples. The confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi stands out as the culmination of the self-revelation to the disciples. The chart suggests that at the very moment when the faith of the multitudes was the lowest, that of the disciples was the highest; this resulted from the revelations given to them apart from the crowd. The stunning prediction of His death,

following immediately upon the confession of Peter, left the bewildered disciples in a whirl of despairing thoughts from which the transfiguration lifted them (the three by direct revelation, and the rest by unconscious influence). Renewed predictions of His death brought further vacillation and dazed anticipations from which the resurrection of Lazarus, mighty miracle though it was, was unable to stir them, for the predictions of death formed an obstacle they could not evade or surmount. The triumphal entry brought about the swiftest change in the feelings of the crowd and the disciples: it caused the disciples to forget the predictions of His death and led the multitudes to hope that at last He would declare Himself king by force and use His invincible power to destroy His enemies. When He failed to do aught but continue His spiritual program, the fickle, worldly multitudes turned away in disgust, and the disciples with breaking hearts saw the tragic end closing in. The crucifixion brought the depths of despair from which nothing but the actual presence of the risen Christ was able to stir the disciples. A number of appearances and much instruction was needed to lead them to a faith that was now clear and complete and which wavered not as they went forward to Pentecost and the hectic days which followed. The multitudes remained in the valley of despair until the amazing announcement of the resurrection led them forth at Pentecost to the final mountain top of faith.

Chapter 20

020. Book Two The Early Period

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021. Chapter 1 - The Pre-Existence of Christ

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John 1:1-18 Eternality of Christ The life of Christ has no beginning. He is eternal: without beginning or end. This is the magnificent assertion with which John introduces his Gospel account. “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” John deliberately quotes Genesis 1:1 and begins his narrative where the Bible begins. Both Moses and John thus affirm their miraculous inspiration in the very first words they record. How could mere finite man know what existed or happened before the first man came into existence? How else but by the direct revelation of God?

“In the beginning” of time or of creation. The essential elements of time are a beginning and an ending. This is true of a second, a year, or a millennium. Time is that which is between. That which was before creation had an ending at creation, but it had no beginning — it is timeless, eternal. That which will be after the judgment will have a beginning, but it will have no ending. It will be timeless, eternal.

John affirms that the Word existed before any act of creation occurred. By impressive repetition he affirms and reaffirms the eternality of Christ. He not only declares that the Word existed before creation began, but he repeats emphatically that the Word is the Creator of all. “Creator” and “created” are mutually exclusive terms. In this tremendous opening sentence John affirms (1) eternality (“In the beginning was the Word”); (2) personality (“And the Word was with God”). One person cannot be “with” another person unless he is a different personality; (3) deity (“And the Word was God”). Although we cannot understand how the Father and the Son can be the same person and yet different persons, we need to remind ourselves that we cannot understand God. But apart from God we cannot understand anything. We find the Trinity — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — emphasized (although the term “Trinity” is not used) in Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 6:23; Colossians 1:1-6 (and the disputed text of 1 John 5:7). The pre-existence of Christ is affirmed in John 8:58; John 17:5; Colossians 1:15, Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:1-4; 1 John 1:1; Revelation 22:13. The Word The mysterious title “the Word” emphasizes the unity of the Father and the Son. John the Baptist called himself “the voice of one crying in the wilderness,” citing the predictions of Isaiah and Malachi. The terms “voice” and “Word” set forth the mission to reveal. John is the only New Testament writer to use this title (cf. John 1:1, John 1:14; 1 John 1:1, 1 John 1:2; Revelation 19:13; and the somewhat similar use in Hebrews 4:12, Hebrews 4:13). John does not return to the use of this title in his Gospel and does not attempt to build any argument upon it. It is rather a grand affirmation. This preface is a profound philosophical introduction to a matter-of-fact recital of historical facts. When God gave His final revelation to man, He did not create a new language in which to reveal it. He used the universal language of the civilized world in the first century. The Greek language is unexcelled for accuracy and beauty. It is therefore plain that the words God inspired His messengers to use had been used before an incredible number of times. So with this noun logos — “Word.” But the meaning which John gives

to this noun is absolutely unique. He makes it a title for Jesus Christ the Son of God. In using the term logos as a title for the Son of God, John did not coin a new word, but gave a new meaning to a word already in use. Plato had used the term in his system of philosophy as did the Stoics after him. Philo, the Jewish philosopher of Alexandria in Egypt, adopted the Greek system of philosophy which held that the world contained two elements: spirit and matter. The spirit was good and the matter bad; an intermediate being which he called “logos” came between. The Greeks used the term in the sense of “reason.” B. F. Westcott affirms the term is never used in this sense in the Scripture. When John uses the term as a title for Jesus, he introduces it without explanation. This follows the pattern of Christ’s teaching in boldly submitting extremely difficult instruction without explanation and leaving the hearers to deep reflection and intense effort to comprehend. The view that Jesus was the Word until His incarnation and then became the Son of God at His birth in Bethlehem will not bear investigation. Jesus declares, “For God sent not his Son into the world to judge the world” (John 3:17). This first sentence has sublime simplicity of style and unfathomable depth of meaning. Every word is important, but when read aloud the emphasis should be placed on the nouns rather than the two verbs (“was”) and the preposition (“with”): “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” This shows the balanced nature of the grammatical structure and communicates most effectively the profound meaning. Neither the a.v. nor the a.s.v. retain the order of the Greek words in the last clause. John wrote: “and God was the Word.” A translator is not obligated to retain the order of Greek words; it may result in clumsy English. The standard translation of the a.v. and a.s.v. is beautiful and majestic. But a vital emphasis which John gave in the order of the Greek words is lost. A footnote could have supplied this information to the reader. John exhausted every means of language to give clear and emphatic affirmation of the deity of Christ.

Rules of Greek Grammar The translation of this verse in the edition of the Jehovah’s Witnesses is a classic mistranslation. Seeking to defend their doctrine that Christ is a created being, they render: “In a beginning.” The translator evidently knew enough Greek to discern that the definite article, “the,” is omitted in the Greek text. They left room for the proposition that before this beginning (the creation of the universe) there had been an earlier beginning in which the Son had been created. They turn this clause into a revolving door. The Greek language has a word for the definite article, “the”; it does not have a word for the indefinite article, “a.” There is no such rule in Greek grammar that if “the” is not stated, “a” must be supplied. The context determines whether or not a is inserted. Both the a.v. and a.s.v. italicize all words in their translations which do not actually occur in the Greek text. It is characteristic of the radical r.s.v. that they do not italicize their insertions. This sets them free to paraphrase or pervert the text at will, without notifying the reader. In this sentence the a.v. and a.s.v. do not italicize “the beginning.” The reason is that the definite article is actually in this verse by virtue of a rule of Greek grammar. The Greek noun arche means “rule, province, beginning.” When it means “beginning,” the definite article is omitted. In the last clause the translation of Jehovah’s Witnesses is: “and the Word was a God.” With this ridiculous mistranslation they affirm polytheism. Here again, the definite article is omitted in the Greek; but a rule of Greek grammar states that proper names may have the definite article or not with utter freedom. The definite article is seldom translated when used with a proper noun. But it may be: “This is the Socrates who taught in Athens.” Thus we read in the Scripture: “I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” When radicals insist on having the Scripture declare Jesus is “a son of God” when the definite article is omitted (as the basis for their denial that Jesus is the Son of

God, but only a son, as all of us are sons), they ignore this rule of Greek grammar and contradict the plain teaching of the Scripture. If the Jehovah's Witnesses' translation had retained the order of the Greek words the absurdity of their rendering would have been even more manifest: "and a God was the Word." The view that Jesus is a created being contradicts completely John 1:3. Stating the case both positively and negatively John makes absolutely plain that Jesus is the Creator of all: "All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made."

Light and Life The prologue is notable for the key words it contains, such as light and life, witness, grace, and truth. These words appear constantly in the entire book. While affirming that Christ created all things that have been created, John does not affirm that He created life and light. "In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). Life and light are eternal elements of God's being. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). Genesis 1:3 is to be understood not as creation of light, but of causing the divine light of His presence to shine upon the darkened void of the earth: "Let there be light [upon the earth]: and there was light [upon the earth]". "And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not" (Genesis 1:5). Notice the present tense (continued action) "shineth" followed by the aorist tense which emphasizes the definite historical rejection of Jesus in His ministry. The a.s.v. has an alternate translation for "apprehend"; it gives in a footnote "overcame." The a.v. has "comprehended." The Greek verb usually means "to seize or to apprehend," whether physically or intellectually. The a.v. "comprehend" is clear — did not understand, appreciate, accept. The a.s.v. "apprehend" does not make clear whether intellectually or physically. The footnote "overcome" is clear. The verb can mean "pursue, overtake, overcome." Origen and other early Christian writers held the meaning — the darkness is perpetually pursuing the light, but never overtaking it. But John 1:7-9 make it plain that John is using "Light" as a title for Jesus. The a.v. capitalizes Light in John 1:7-9, but uses a small letter in John 1:5. The a.s.v. uses a small letter in all four verses. If "overcame" is the proper translation and Light is a title for Jesus, then the death on the cross comes into view. Although achieving His death, the devil did not overcome the Light. Whatever the specific meaning, it is here that we find the first intimation of tragedy in the book.

Jesus and John

Contrasting verses John 1:1 and John 1:6 we see the following opposites: (1) "being" vs. "becoming"; (2) deity vs. humanity; (3) eternality vs. temporality. The Word, who is God, stands in contrast with John, who was merely a man. The Word, who is eternally with God vs. John, who was sent from God. The name and personal identity of the Word remains clothed in mystery; the name of John is immediately clear. The Greek verb can mean either to be or to become. The a.s.v. "There came a man" is much superior to the a.v. "There was a man." "Whose name was John." Since the apostle John, the author of the book, omits his name from the entire narrative, there is no need to add here the title: "John the Baptist." It is perfectly clear of whom he is speaking.

John 1:7. "That he might bear witness of the light." This was the objective and the content of John's preaching. "That all might believe through him." Even though John's ministry was so brief and limited to so small a geographical area, yet through the divinely inspired records of the New Testament John has preached in all times and places. Abbott insists that "through him" refers to Jesus (and not to John). Bernard replies ably that John's Gospel never speaks of believing

through Jesus (as the medium), but always “upon Jesus” (as the object).

John 1:9. “The true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world.” The participle “coming” can modify either “light” or “man.” The Light, when He came into the world, offered redemption to every man, or the Light gives to every man when he is born into the world the intellectual and spiritual gifts which light his path, or the redemptive light of the gospel, which is offered to all.

John 1:10. “He was in the world.” The mystery of the incarnation and the rejection of the Messiah by the world are recurring themes of this prologue. “The world was made through him.” He not only holds the world in His hands, but He has brought it into existence. This makes it the more tragic that “the world knew him not.” The present ridiculous “God is dead” movement is but the continuing perversity of the world in rejecting God’s revelation of Himself in His Son.

Virgin Birth in John

John 1:11. “He came unto his own.” This Greek adjective is neuter: “his own things.” It is His own world. He had made it. He was the owner, the Lord and Master. He had the right to expect joyous reception and reverent obedience. “They that were his own received him not.” The Greek adjective is now masculine: “His own people” — God’s chosen people to whom He had given the precious revelation of the Old Testament. They could be expected above all others to believe, receive, obey. The universal negative is immediately limited by the exception which is stated in the following verse. No! not everyone rejected Him. There were those who believed and who were adopted as redeemed children back into the heavenly Father’s presence.

John 1:12, John 1:13. “To them that believe on his name, who were born, not of blood [the Greek noun is plural: bloods], nor of the will of the flesh [base, ignoble desire], nor of the will of man [noble desire to have children to carry on the great enterprises of God], but of God.” One of the most interesting textual variations in the New Testament is found here: (1) the accepted text is the plural “them...who were born”; (2) the alternate text is singular: “on his name, who was born.” The first declares the spiritual birth by which a sinner becomes a Christian. The second offers a most impressive declaration of the virgin birth of Christ. Both readings fit perfectly the Greek structure of the sentence and the context, and give a sublime content to the declaration. The translators of both the a.v. and the a.s.v. felt obligated to follow the text of the majority of the most accurate manuscripts in our possession. Sinaiticus and Vaticanus are so highly esteemed that the a.s.v. usually follows them, when they are in agreement, even against all the other manuscripts. Mark 16:9-20 is an exception as the evidence was too powerful in favor of this close of Mark’s Gospel for them to reject these verses (cf. p. 141; also see the section “Mark 16:9-20”. The alternate reading in John 1:13 has only slight textual support. The Old Latin version was translated at an early period when many Greek manuscripts were available which were much earlier than any we possess. Not only does the Old Latin carry the singular “who was born,” but early Christian writers defended this reading. Justin Martyr cites this reading, as does Irenaeus. Tertullian argues vigorously that the plural “who were born” was a false insertion by the Valentinian heretics. Although the Greek texts in our possession do not support the singular in this verse, three modern famous textual experts have adopted and defended this reading: Zahn, Resch, Blass. The Incarnation

John 1:14. “And the Word became flesh.” This is the point at which John makes plain the meaning of his obscure reference in “the Word.” He declares he has used this as a title for the Messiah. The manner of expression fits amazingly the virgin birth accounts of Matthew and Luke: “became flesh.” “And dwelt among us.” Here the wonder of God’s love and Christ’s humiliation of Himself to be in our midst as one of us is paramount. We beheld his glory.” John continually insists that he was actually an eyewitness (John 19:35; 1 John 1:1, 1 John 1:3). “Full of grace and truth.” Jesus was not full of grace in the sense of the unmerited favor of God, for His sinlessness and absolute perfection caused Him to merit the continual favor of God.

John 1:15. “John beareth witness.” Now we come to the close of the profound prologue and begin to contact the historical record of John’s ministry. “He that cometh after me is become before me: for he was before me.” Jesus came after John in the sense that He was born in Bethlehem six months after the birth of John the Baptist. He was before John in the sense of His pre-existence. “He was before me.” The Greek reads, “He was first of me.”

Grace and Truth

John 1:16. “For of his fulness we all received, and grace for grace.” It seems that either “grace” or “for” must be taken in a general sense in this verse. It is hard to choose between the two interpretations as both give a beautiful content. (1) “Grace upon grace” — blessing upon blessing is bestowed upon us as we follow Christ. This translates grace accurately, as we do not deserve the favor which Christ gives to us; but it does not render accurately the preposition anti, which means “in return for.” (2) “Grace for grace” means that as we seek to imitate Jesus for every grace or beautiful virtue in the divine character of Jesus, we gain a like virtue such as love, mercy, righteousness, humility, unselfishness. This does not translate “grace” accurately since Jesus had no unmerited favor. But John has already used “grace” in this more general sense in John 1:14. This inclines one to accept the second interpretation here.

John 1:17. “Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” Now John introduces the personal name and the Messianic title to make full revelation of his meaning in the title, “Word.” He does not imply that there was neither grace nor truth in the Old Testament revelation. The very fact that “the law was given through Moses” shows how merciful God was in thus revealing Himself to man. It is in the comparative sense of the full and final revelation of grace and truth in the gospel that John makes this contrast.

John 1:18. “He hath declared him.” In critical passages such as the time Moses desired to see the face of God, it is made plain the fulfillment of this great desire was not possible (Exodus 33:20.). From the cleft of the rock where Moses stood to see God as He passed by, no description is offered of what God looked like, but rather a magnificent declaration of God’s spiritual character. But when Christ came among men, He could say: “He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father” (John 14:9).

022. Chapter 2 - The Birth of Jesus

Chapter 2 - The Birth of Jesus Matthew 1:18-25;Matthew 2:1-12;Luke 1:5-80;Luke 2:1-20 Birth of John Announced An old priest is offering incense in the temple at Jerusalem. The angel Gabriel appears to him predicting the birth of a famous son. What! After all these years of longing and prayer? In the old age of his wife and himself? Incredible! He demands a sign. Gabriel grants it, saying he will be dumb until the birth of his son. The patient multitude, kneeling without, feel the thrill of tremendous events when Zacharias finally appears — overwhelmed by his experience, dumb and unable to pronounce the benediction.

Announcement to Mary The same angel appears to a virgin living in Nazareth who is betrothed to a man named Joseph, announcing: “The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God.” Though overwhelmed with consternation, she responds, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word.”

Visit to Elisabeth

Deeply troubled in soul, Mary immediately goes to visit her kinswoman, Elisabeth, who is inspired of God to reassure her and reveal to her the extent of the honor that is hers and the supreme destiny of the Son she is to bear. Mary catches the marvelous vision and voices the beautiful Spirit. breathed words, “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit bath rejoiced in God my Saviour.” Mary remains until Elisabeth’s child is born. The relatives and friends are surprised when both father and mother agree that the child’s name shall not be Zacharias, but John. Immediately the father begins to speak with language that rivals the beauty of Mary’s, predicting the greatness of his boy, who is to be the forerunner of the Christ. The Marriage

After a three-months’ visit with Elisabeth, Mary returns to Nazareth to prepare for her approaching wedding. It is Joseph’s turn now to be deeply troubled, but when he is about to break off the betrothal quietly — “being a righteous man and not willing to make her a public example” — the angel of the Lord appears to him in a dream saying: “Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name JESUS; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins.” Joseph’s faith matches that of the noble woman who has promised to become his wife and so the marriage ceremony is performed. The Birth of Jesus

After a time, the couple travel to Bethlehem, their ancestral city, in order to enroll for taxation. The little city is crowded to the utmost. They find shelter in a stable “because there was no room for them in the inn.” There amid the obscurity and squalor of the manger, the Saviour of the world is born. The cruel slander of the “long-tongued gossips of Nazareth” and the cold selfishness of the people in Bethlehem are forgotten as angels sing their joy at God’s loving favor to a lost world.

O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie;

Above thy deep and dreamless sleep The silent stars go by;

Yet in thy dark streets shineth The everlasting Light; The hopes and fears of all the years Are met in thee tonight.

Shepherds

Humble shepherds, rough and uncouth, but noble in soul, are visited by an angel as they watch their flocks. They hear the good news: “There is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour who is Christ the Lord.” Heaven’s gates are flung wide and the vast angelic host send forth hymns of rejoicing: “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased.” Following the direction given by the angel, the shepherds hasten to the manger and offer their homage to the King.

Wisemen A star blazes a path across the heavens pointing the way to the cradle of the Son of God. Wisemen start across the desert to follow its gleaming. They are led to Jerusalem where they inquire for the newborn King. A new King just born! Herod is thrown into a jealous rage. Is his throne to be lost to his descendants? Jerusalem trembles. Are they to suffer another bloody outburst of the half-crazy old king? Herod inquires, “Where?” “In Bethlehem of Judaea,” respond those who have studied the Old Testament prophets. The Wisemen push on and joyfully behold the star again. Had it been hidden during the time they tarried in doubt at Jerusalem? They come to Bethlehem and there the rich gifts of the East are laid at the feet of Jesus. Being warned of God not to reveal to Herod the whereabouts of the Babe, they return by another way to their own country.

How few people knew when the child was born! It was made known to a few humble shepherds out on the Judaean hills and to some Wisemen in the far East. But no one in temple or palace in Jerusalem was granted a revelation of the birth of the King. How few people know even yet that Christ is come! Even in Christian lands, the masses go on in ignorance while the faithful few hear the songs of the angels or bring their gifts to the King. The people to whom God revealed the birth of His Son were representative. What an honor to these humble shepherds! They become the representatives of the nation as they hasten to the manger. They stir memories of the shepherd boy, David, as they stand in the presence of the newborn “Son of David.” The Wisemen were evidently Gentiles and men of great learning and wealth. Thus the poor and the rich, the prince and the peasant, the learned and the untutored, the Jew and the Gentile kneel at the feet of the Christ-child.

There’s a song in the air! there’s a star in the sky!

There’s a mother’s deep prayer; and a baby’s low cry! And the star rains its fire, while the beautiful sing, For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King. In the light of that star lie the ages impearled: And the song from afar has swept over the world;

Every heart is aflame, and the beautiful sing, — In the homes of the nations that Jesus is King!

023. Chapter 3 - Notes on the Nativity

Chapter 3 - Notes on the Nativity The usual starting point, in writing a biography, is to furnish a record of the person's birth. Some, however, prepare the way for this account by tracing the antecedents and giving a sketch of the father and mother. Others prefer to record the events of interest that cluster about the birth of the person. Still another method is to show the relation of the first notable achievement of the person to contemporaneous events. Finally, there is the philosophical approach to biography in which the attempt is made to relate the life of the individual to great world movements.

Methods of Gospel Writers

None of the four Gospels begins with the birth of Jesus. Matthew and Luke are commonly said to begin in this manner. But Matthew begins by tracing the ancestry of Jesus back to Abraham. Luke, after a striking prologue, begins by a description of the parents of John the Baptist and the events leading up to his birth. Mark leaps over the birth and youth of Jesus and records the beginning of John's ministry, relating this to the first great public event in the life of Jesus. John's opening is the most extraordinary of the four biographers. It is the philosophical approach. He begins by relating the birth of Jesus to His pre-existence, to God Himself, to the creation of the world, to the life and destiny of mankind and finally to John the Baptist. His statement of the birth of Jesus (John 1:14) emphasizes the profound mystery of the event but gives no historical details. The Gospels

Matthew emphasizes the purposes and experiences of Joseph; Luke writes of the experiences of Mary. Matthew tells of the visit of the Wisemen; Luke, of the shepherds. Both give genealogies: Matthew, from Abraham; Luke, to Adam. Matthew records the slaughter of the infants and the flight into Egypt. Luke tells of the circumcision and presentation of Jesus in the temple, of Simeon and Anna. Mark probably omits the birth and youth of Jesus in order to condense his Gospel. His work is the shortest and concentrates on the deeds of Jesus. John probably omits any record of the birth because it is already sufficiently emphasized in Matthew and Luke, and he is bent on offering much new material.

Joseph and Mary The betrothal was a very important matter — almost as sacred and imposing as the marriage ceremony itself. It could be broken only by a bill of divorcement. Joseph planned to write a bill of divorcement and break the betrothal privately without bringing Mary before a public tribunal (Matthew 1:19; Deuteronomy 24:1). The announcement (Matthew 1:20-22) was made to Joseph to prevent him from breaking the betrothal, to let him know Mary was guiltless and that it was God's will he should marry and care for her. The announcement (Luke 1:26-38) had been to Mary in order that she might understand God's purposes and the supreme greatness of the child. Matthew 1:25 disposes of the theory of the perpetual virginity of Mary. Tradition represents Joseph as being an old man, many years the senior of Mary. The New Testament offers nothing to support this except the complete disappearance of Joseph from the records after the visit to the temple (Luke 2:41-51). The Wisemen The Magi or Wisemen were probably Persian or Chaldean, a priestly class who interpreted dreams and were soothsayers. They were probably numerous, with

many impostors among them, especially in later times. Apollonius heard of the fame of the Wisemen of the East and says that he questioned them on his travels, but found them “not very wise.” Matthew does not state the number of the “Wisemen” who came to Bethlehem, but tradition says they were three in number and that their names were Caspar, Melchoir, and Balthazar. The three gifts presented suggest that there were three Wisemen. How did they know the appearance of the star meant the birth of a King? Some scholars suggest they had learned the teachings of Judaism from Jews of the Dispersion, but from what Old Testament passage would they have learned this? Why did they have to seek the advice of the scribes in Jerusalem as to where the Christ should be born if they themselves were familiar with the Old Testament? They had direct instructions from God as to how they should return home (Matthew 2:1-12). The shepherds learned of the birth of Jesus through a direct revelation. It is plain that the Wisemen also must have had direct instructions in the beginning. Frankincense and myrrh were both very costly; the former, a white gum affording a fragrant odor when burned; the latter, a famous perfume, being used in embalming. Both were secured from the bark of trees. Joseph probably made good use of the gold, thus providentially bestowed, in paying the expenses of the trip into Egypt. The Star

Many attempts have been made to explain the star on a natural basis. Kepler figured out that there was a conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Saturn in 747 A.U.C. — the planet Mars being added to the constellation in 748 A.U.C. Kent notes that an Egyptian papyrus roll has been discovered which gives the position of the planets from 17 b.c. to a.d. 10. On the basis of this, Oefele figures that the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn occurred between April 15 and December 27 of 6 b.c. (748 A.U.C.). It is supposed that this rare phenomenon must have caused a great deal of excitement in the ancient world. All of this is very interesting, but does not explain at all the New Testament account, for Matthew represents the star as miraculous in character. “Lo, the star which they saw in the east went before them till it came and stood over where the young child lay” (Matthew 2:9). It is argued that Josephus would have recorded this wonderful phenomenon if it had been a miraculous, moving star. He does say that a star of marvelous brilliance appeared over Jerusalem at the time of its destruction. A sufficient rejoinder is to point out that Josephus and the Talmudic writers suppressed the evidence as to all the miracles of Jesus’ ministry and practically all references to Him. There is no more difficulty about a moving star than walking on the water, the resurrection or any other miracle.

024. Chapter 4 - The Date of Jesus' Birth

Chapter 4 - The Date of Jesus’ Birth

We are so accustomed to date the events of history by their relation to the date of Jesus’ birth that it is rather perplexing to consider how to date the birth of Jesus Himself. And it is very disturbing to the ordinary man to discover that the present system of counting time is incorrect due to an error of four years in dating the birth of Jesus. This mistake was made by an abbot of Rome named Dionysius Exiguus in a.d. 526. His Easter cycle fixed the date of the birth of Jesus for the Christian world, and it is now too firmly established to be displaced. In what year was Christ born? We have used b.c. (Before Christ) and a.d. (Anno Domini — “In the year of our Lord” — popularly “After Christ”) so frequently that many have never stopped to consider how such a system of counting time began.

Ancient Modes of Counting Time The moon has always played an important part in the method of keeping time since it is the basis of the division into months. The ancients first used the year of ten months (304 days in a year); then later two more months were added and an extra month every two years (355 days). Julius Caesar brought order out of the general confusion by establishing the Julian Calendar in 46 b.c. with a year of 365 days and the months as we have them today. The Julian Calendar was reformed by Pope Gregory in 1582 because it had fallen behind ten days. He declared October 5 to be October 15 and arranged the leap years to be divisible by four hundred. The method prevailed in early history of counting years from the beginning of the reign of kings or of a dynasty, or as at Rome, the year of Consuls, or by counting from an era in history, such as the Era of Alexander or the Era of Sulla. The Greeks counted by Olympiads — the great national festival and athletic carnival held every four years, beginning in 776 b.c. The Romans counted from the founding of the city of Rome — A.U.C.

Sources When we turn to seek the date of Jesus’ birth we have several sources: (1) Matthew and Luke — the Gospels that tell of the birth of Christ; (2) Josephus — the Jewish historian who wrote shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem; (3) Roman historians and early Christian writers; (4) various ancient tablets and pieces of money bearing names and dates; (5) calculations of astronomers.

Matthew does not attempt to date the birth of Jesus, but makes it plain that Jesus was born when Herod was king and that Herod’s death occurred during the sojourn in Egypt, while the child was probably very young. Two problems are here: When did Herod die? How old was Jesus when Herod died? Josephus and Dion Cassius give us the answer to the first question, but the second question remains unanswered. We can be sure that Mary and Joseph and the Babe remained at Bethlehem forty days (cf. the presentation in the temple — Luke 2:22); how much longer they remained we cannot tell and we can only conjecture the length of the sojourn in Egypt. The Gospel seems to intimate that the stay was short. If it was only a month or so we can date the birth of Jesus closely preceding the death of Herod. The infants in Bethlehem were slain from two years of age and under. This makes it certain that this unknown period was not so long as two years. The

bloody old king may merely have set the high age limit to discount any possible deceit on the part of the Wisemen. The Death of Herod

Josephus tells us that Herod reigned thirty-seven years, from the time he was declared king by the Romans till his death (Antiq. 17:8:1). In other passages he dates this beginning of Herod's reign in the 184th Olympiad (44-40 b.c.) and the consulship of Calvinus and Pollio (40 b.c.). This would date the death of Herod about 4 b.c. Various other passages from Josephus and Dion, and ancient coins that have been discovered bring us to this same date. Josephus notes (Antiq. 17:6:4) that there was an eclipse of the moon shortly before the death of Herod. This is the only time Josephus notes an eclipse of the sun or moon in all his extensive writings. The astronomers have located three eclipses of the moon between 5-3 b.c. Other known facts make it evident that the eclipse on March 13 in the year 4 b.c. is the one to which Josephus refers. For he says (Antiq. VI:4; IX:3) that Archelaus, a son of Herod, had just completed the seven days of mourning for Herod when he attended the Passover. The Passover occurred on April 1 in the year 4 b.c. So the death of Herod must have been between March 13 and March 24 in the year 4 b.c. The flight into Egypt occurred before the death of Herod and the birth of Jesus at least forty days before this so that Christ could not have been born later than sometime in February, 4 b.c. How much earlier than this it may have occurred is uncertain. The two-year age limit for the slaughter of the infants makes it certain that Christ must have been born sometime between 6 b.c. and 4 b.c. The probabilities are that it was about 4 b.c. Thus the present calendar, based upon the Easter cycle of Dionysius Exiguus (sixth century) is in error by four years. The earlier calculations of church fathers as to the date of Jesus' birth seem to have been nearer the truth than Dionysius. (They selected 3-2 b.c.) The Enrollment

Luke dates the birth of Jesus thus, "Now it came to pass in those days, there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment made when Quirinius was governor of Syria" (Luke 2:1, Luke 2:2). The historical records show that Quirinius was governor of Syria a.d. 6-11 and that in a.d. 6-7 he undertook such an enrollment in Palestine. Luke refers to this enrollment in Acts 5:37. He here refers to an earlier enrollment: "the first enrollment made when Quirinius was governor of Syria." The records show that Saturninus was governor 9-6 b.c. and Varus, 6-4 b.c. Then the records are uncertain until Quirinius, ad. 6-11. This is puzzling, but a mutilated inscription seems to indicate that Quirinius was twice governor of Syria — the first time in the period about 4 b.c. He was carrying on a war in Cilicia at this time. Tertullian (a.d. 220) states that Saturninus held the census — which is taken to mean that he began it and his successor continued it. Justin Martyr (a.d. 140) states that Christ was born under Quirinius and that this can be proved from the official records. He says that Quirinius was "procurator" and the Greek word Luke uses seems to assert the same thing. Thus Varus may have been the governor (Legatus) and Quirinius, the Procurator who was closely connected with the taking of this census. The Date of Baptism

Luke states that Jesus was about thirty years old the when He was baptized. The baptism occurred not long after the opening of John's ministry. This event is definitely located by Luke "in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar." But Tiberius began to reign a.d. 15. This would make John thirty-four years old at the opening of his ministry. (John — six months older than Jesus; Jesus born 4 b.c; Tiberius beginning a.d. 15 and this the fifteenth year of his reign; 4+15+15=34.) This would make Jesus about thirty-three. Of course Luke does not say that Jesus was exactly but about thirty years old. How much latitude this allows we do not know, but it has been discovered

that Tiberius was associated with his father as emperor as early as a.d. 11, and this may well have been the time recognized in the provinces as the beginning of his reign. This calculation would bring us back to 4 b.c. (4+11+15=30). Thus the information from Luke tallies with that from Matthew and indicates 4 b.c. (750 A.U.C.). Is December 25 Correct?

There is even greater uncertainty as to the day of Jesus' birth. The New Testament gives no definite data on this point. The earliest reference to this subject in extant Christian literature is from Clement of Alexandria (a.d. 180). He states that some thought the date of Christ's birth was April 21 and others April 22 and others May 20. He seems to condemn their speculative attempts as profane curiosity. The Eastern Church argued that Christ must have been born on January 6 because He was the second Adam and should have been born on the sixth day of the year as the first Adam was born on the sixth day of creation. They celebrated January 6 as the day for many centuries. The Armenian Church still celebrates this day. The celebration of December 25 as the day can be traced back as far as the fourth century. It seems to have arisen in the West. The predominance of Rome led to its well-nigh universal acceptance. The study of the Gospel narrative shows that December 25 fits into the known facts of the life of Christ. Counting back from the death of Herod, December 25 allows time for the various events described. The uncertainty as to the date of Jesus' birth should not disturb us. If it had been an essential feature of Christian faith the New Testament would have given more specific information.

025. Chapter 5 - The Place of Jesus' Birth

Chapter 5 - The Place of Jesus' Birth The Old Testament Prediction

One of the most definite Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament is that which declares: "And thou Bethlehem, land of Judah, art in no wise least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come forth a governor, who shall be shepherd of my people Israel" (Matthew 2:6; cf. Micah 5:2). Critics attempt to becloud and deny the various prophecies of the Bible or make out that they were written after the events occurred. But there is no escape from this prophecy. It is clear-cut proof of the miraculous foresight of the prophet. The prophecy was so plain that it was clearly understood. The answer of the scribes to Herod as to where the Christ should be born was instantaneous. Pharisees, who seemed ignorant of the fact that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, tried to use the prophecy against Him. "Others said, this is the Christ. But some said, What, doth the Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said that the Christ cometh of the seed of David and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" (John 7:41, John 7:42).

Records Supplement Each Other With the Gospel of Matthew alone to guide us, we might conclude that Bethlehem was the place of residence of Mary and Joseph. They are introduced and then the birth in Bethlehem abruptly recounted. And on the return from Egypt there is no intimation that in taking up their residence at Nazareth they returned to their former home. But Luke supplements Matthew by showing Nazareth as the home of Joseph and Mary and how the providence of God brought it about that the Child was born in Bethlehem. If we had Luke alone, we would conclude that they went directly back to Nazareth from Bethlehem, but Matthew supplements Luke by telling of the slaughter of the infants and the flight into Egypt. It is to be noted that it is not merely Joseph and Mary who bring about the fulfillment of the prophecy that the Christ is to be born in Bethlehem. A Roman emperor who issues an edict is the moving cause. "How mysteriously God works His wonders to perform!"

Modern Bethlehem

Bethlehem lies six miles to the south of Jerusalem on the central ridge or watershed of the hill-country and the main line of travel between Jerusalem and all the southern part of the land of Israel. A half century ago there were about 500 houses in the town and about 5,000 inhabitants — Greek or Roman Catholics, with a few Mohammedans. Today the population has increased to more than 15,000, and Jerusalem, instead of being six miles distant, has spread down the Bethlehem road three miles to the well of the Magi. The houses of the old section of Bethlehem have a "dull leaden color" because of their great age. The most famous buildings are "an Armenian, a Greek, and a Latin monastery and two churches all massed together in one confused pile. The oldest part of the structure, the so-called Church of St. Mary, is said to have been erected by Constantine in the year 330, over the Cave or Grotto of the Nativity." Here in a small artificial cave "where a silver star is let into the pavement, is shown the very spot where Jesus was born, and on the opposite side is the manger in which he was cradled. The manger is made of marble." But, as many travelers have pointed out, the traditions of the Greek and Roman Catholic Churches

are in error in selecting this spot as they are so often in the sites they treasure in Palestine: Jesus was born in a manger — animals would not be kept in an underground cave reached by a steep flight of steps. Through the influence of the hermits and monks who lived in such grottoes, Catholic traditions locate practically all historic scenes in Palestine in caves as if the life of our Lord was lived underground. Justin Martyr (a.d. 140) says that Jesus was reported to have been born in a cavern near Bethlehem; but this does not agree with the Gospel of Luke which says He was born "in Bethlehem." The Attack on the Narrative The methods which modernists employ to maintain their skeptical presuppositions are clearly illustrated by their attempt to destroy the miraculous evidence which is found in the prediction of Micah 5:2. They cannot deny that this prediction was uttered many centuries before Christ was born in Bethlehem. It was given centuries after the time of David, and therefore cannot possibly be construed to refer to him. Between the time of David and Christ no other famous individual ever arose from Bethlehem. No great figure has arisen from the village since the time of Christ. The prediction of Micah was so plain that the Jews clearly understood it to refer to the Christ. The actual birth of Jesus in Bethlehem occurred as the result of circumstances which make the historic event fulfill the prediction in the most surprising and dramatic way. How can the modernists, who declare a miracle or a miraculously inspired prediction is an impossibility, escape the force of this evidence? They attempt to prove that the predictions in Isaiah 53:1-12, Psalms 2:1-12, Isaiah 7:14, and other such passages refer to some Old Testament figure:the prophet who was speaking, his child, some unknown person of the time, or even to the nation, which is vaguely conceived as the Messiah. Thus they attempt to confuse the evidence which the Old Testament offers. But when they come to Micah 5:2, they find the prediction is so clear and definite that they cannot hope to untangle the knot. They, therefore, draw the sword of higher criticism and "cut the Gordian knot" by denying the historic fact that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. This is the conduct of desperation. Without the slightest historic basis upon which to found their bold assertion, they declare that "Jesus was born at Nazareth, of Joseph and Mary." So Pfleiderer, Bousset, Oscar Holtzmann, Schmiedel, Soltau, Unsener, Professor G. F. Moore, and others. The Evidence of Matthew and Luke for Bethlehem The effort to place the birth of Jesus at Nazareth is a flat contradiction of both Matthew and Luke, and of the repeated declarations of early Christian writers. The marvelous circumstances, which were woven together by the providence of God to cause the birth of Christ to take place in Bethlehem even though Joseph and Mary lived at Nazareth and the Messiah was reared there, are stated with such simplicity and emphatic power, and with such remarkable independence in the matter of details, that it is only by denying the testimony of both Matthew and Luke that the birth of Christ can be transferred from Bethlehem to Nazareth. Moreover, no conceivable reason can be offered for such a transfer except the determination of unbelievers to deny the deity of Christ and the declarations of the New Testament writers. It is significant that the denial of the birth in Bethlehem is always associated with the denial of the virgin birth. Matthew does not describe the early residence of Joseph and Mary in Nazareth, but he is very clear and explicit in declaring the birth of Christ took place in Bethlehem. Luke does not record the flight into Egypt, but he explains the exact circumstances which caused Joseph and Mary to come from Nazareth to Bethlehem and in the most emphatic manner declares that the birth of the Messiah occurred in a manger in Bethlehem. The miracles which surrounded the birth concentrate the attention of the ages upon the fact that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Thus did God emphasize His fulfillment of the prediction He had vouchsafed through Micah. The coming of the Wisemen, Herod's inquiry of the Sanhedrin as to

where the Christ should be born, the miraculous star that pointed out the very house where the Child lay, the slaughter of the infants, and the fulfillment of the prophecy of Rachel's weeping for her children, all give repeated emphasis in Matthew's account to the fact that Christ was born in Bethlehem. Luke furnishes an entirely different chain of evidence which points to Bethlehem as clearly as did the star: the edict of Caesar Augustus and the lineal descent of Joseph (and Mary) from David, the peculiar circumstances as to the birth of Jesus in a stable, the revelation to the shepherds, and their visit to Bethlehem. James Orr argues powerfully against the group of critics who try to claim that all of this testimony is mere invention by Christians seeking to deify Jesus: "Given, then a faculty or disposition for invention, it may be thought easy to explain how a birthplace was sought for Jesus in Bethlehem. But there is one obvious difficulty. The passage (Micah 5:2) might suggest a birth in Bethlehem, but it would certainly not suggest the kind of birth we have described in Matthew and Luke. The prophecy in Micah speaks of a prince, a ruler, going forth from David's city. How different the picture by the two Evangelists of the lowly Babe, cradled in a manger, because there was no room for Him — not to speak of a palace — even in the common inn! The prophecy was fulfilled, in God's good providence, as Matthew notes; but it was not fulfilled in the way that human imagination, working on the prophet's words, would have naturally devised. Is the story one that human imagination, granting it a free rein would have devised at all for the advent of the Messiah?" (The Virgin Birth of Christ) pp. 130, 131). The Silence of John The fact that John records the declaration of the Pharisees that Jesus could not be the Christ because He was from Galilee instead of Bethlehem, and that he does not refute their argument, is used by the critics in a futile attempt to argue that John did not agree or did not know that Christ was born in Bethlehem. This is the same type of argument they try to bring against the virgin birth — that John does not record it. John did not have to record it. It already had been recorded by Matthew and Luke. The fact that the Pharisees were ignorant of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, or would not admit it, does not contradict the facts concerning the place of Jesus' birth and the miraculous events surrounding it, any more than their denial of His miracles is to be accepted as proof that they never occurred. It is no more surprising that John did not pause to insert a declaration and argument against the Pharisees' attack in John 7:41, John 7:42, than that Matthew did not attempt a defense of the moral conduct of Jesus when recording the charge that He was a "gluttonous man and a winebibber" (Matthew 11:19). It was unnecessary in either case to insert a defense. The refutation lay on the surface of the New Testament narratives. One of the most astonishing things in the New Testament is the way in which the Gospel of John continually confounds modern unbelievers, both by what John affirms and what he omits. According to their radical theory of development, the belief that Jesus was born of a virgin and born in a place which fulfilled Old Testament prophecy, and was in very fact the Son of God, grew up by gradual accretions and increasing assertions. The logic of this demands that John's Gospel, which was written much later than the others, should be the most explicit and emphatic upon all these points. On the contrary, John does not even mention directly the virgin birth or the birth in Bethlehem! He is most powerful in his affirmations of the deity of Jesus but he adduces evidence which is, in the main, different and entirely independent of the other accounts. John presumes a knowledge of Matthew and Luke on the part of his readers and with a divinely inspired independence devotes the magnificent prologue of his Gospel to the pre-existence of Jesus. He did not need to tell again that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. He emphasizes the fact that when Jesus was born into this world, it was not the beginning of His life but a change of state — as the Son of God came to earth

from heaven where He had existed in inexplicable union with God from all eternity.

026. Chapter 6 - The Virgin Birth

Chapter 6 - The Virgin Birth

“Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” So said Isaiah to Ahaz, King of Judah (Isaiah 7:14). Syria and Israel had formed a dangerous alliance against Judah. Ahaz was full of fear. Isaiah was sent by the Lord to encourage Ahaz and give him assurance that his nation would survive the peril. He predicted the birth of a child and pictured the enemies of Judah as desolate before the years of maturity should come to the child.

Radical Position The critics who reject the virgin birth records as an idle myth and scorn the idea that a prophet could foretell such an event centuries before it happened, emphasize the context of his prophecy and try to prove that it refers to some child born in the reign of Ahaz. Their theory rests on two arguments: (1) that the Hebrew word almah (virgin) really means a young woman of marriageable age and may or may not mean a virgin; (2) that it would be no sign to Ahaz — no comfort against the threats of Syria — to say that the child would be born centuries later and that Syria would be desolate before the child should be born.

Meaning of Almah But it is certain that the word does mean virgin in this passage and that the full significance of this prophecy, like many others of the Old Testament, was not understood at the time it was spoken. Note, as to the meaning of the word, that Matthew affirms it is a prophecy of the virgin birth; the other six times almah is used in the Old Testament it does mean virgin; the Jewish scholars who translated the Septuagint version of the Old Testament in 285 b.c. rendered almah (Isaiah 7:14) by the Greek word parthenos which can only mean virgin. Professor Willis Beecher says: “There is no trace of its use to denote any other than a virgin.” Martin Luther declared: “If a Jew or Christian can prove to me that in any passage of scripture almah means a married woman, I will give him 100 florins, although God alone knows where I may find them.” James Orr in his great book The Virgin Birth quotes Luther and adds the significant comment that the 100 florins have never yet been claimed. The Miracle Promised The objection that such a prophecy would offer no consolation to Ahaz leads one to ask what greater consolation Ahaz could have had than that his nation should outlive Syria and be great and powerful after Syria was desolate? Whatever the specific meaning of the prophecy, what Ahaz desired to hear was plain: that Syria would be destroyed while Judah would continue for a long and glorious future. Furthermore, how would it have been a sign to Ahaz, if a young woman in Israel married and bore a son? Such a birth would not have been a miracle and a sign means a miracle. The context with its challenge: “Ask thee a sign of Jehovah thy God; ask it either in the depth (Sheol), or in the height above,” demands the promise of a sign of stupendous character. Such a miracle is the virgin birth of the Messiah. The Child not Isaiah’s The effort to say that Isaiah was predicting the natural birth of some child in his own time, presumably his own child, fails utterly in the light of the description of the child in the following chapters. Moreover, Isaiah’s wife was not a virgin. Such a birth would not have been a miracle such as Isaiah 7:14 implies. The name of Isaiah’s child born shortly after this was Mahershalalhashbaz (“The spoil speedeth, the prey hasteth”). This is

absolutely different from Immanuel (“The Lord with us”), which is the equivalent of Jesus. There is not the slightest suggestion in the text that the child born to Isaiah was the fulfillment of the prophecy. The Child Described The critic who is so eager to render Isaiah 7:14 in the light of its context is not so eager to render the entire chapter 7 in the light of its context. If Isaiah had meant that some young woman in Israel would shortly bear a son, and that before he grew up Syria would be no more, we should then expect in the following chapters an account of the birth of such a child. Is such an account given? No. Is the child mentioned again? Yes. In the ninth chapter and succeeding passages the child is described in such terms as refer plainly to the Messiah Himself: “Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah 9:7).

Two Radical Schools

Around this passage (Isaiah 7:14) turns much of the attack upon the virgin birth. For those who deny the fact must explain the origin of the accounts of Matthew and Luke. One group of critics, led by Harnack and Lobstein, claims that the accounts of Matthew and Luke were invented by early Christian writers under the spell of this prophecy. They saw Isaiah 7:14 predicted a virgin birth for the child, and their imagination did the rest. Other critics, such as Schmiedel, Cheyne, Soltau, and Unsener, are just as positive that the Old Testament could not have been the source, but that what they call a myth arose from pagan sources. With great zest the two groups of critics destroy one another. The second group makes it plain that Isaiah 7:14 was not generally understood to refer to the Messiah. It is not among the 456 passages which are cited by Edersheim as having been given Messianic interpretation by the Jews. They point out that the Jews in the early Christian centuries bitterly attacked Matthew’s interpretation and that the idea of the virgin birth is so foreign to the religious ideas of the Jews that it could not have been invented under any Jewish influence. No Room for a Myth

Harnack and Lobstein point out, in return, that the belief in the virgin birth of Christ can be traced back to the “very cradle of the church,” and that it would take long decades for such a myth to be developed from heathen sources. This destroys their own theory also, for long centuries would have been required to develop such a myth from any source. These critics prove conclusively — a little too conclusively for their own comfort — that there is no room for such development in early Christian history. Finally they argue with great force that the early Christians could not have borrowed these accounts from heathen legends, for they continually express the utmost horror at these coarse stories. Thus the two groups of skeptics destroy one another and leave the accounts of Matthew and Luke standing out hold and clear.

Basis of Radical Position The particular theories offered by radical critics to explain the origin of these records are so numerous and contradictory that each furnishes the refutation for the theory of his neighbor, and reveals the shallow and superficial character of them all. The only real basis either group of critics has for its objections is the conviction that the new scientific ideas (theory of evolution) prove that a virgin birth is an impossibility. This can not be classed as either evidence or argument. It is merely the reflection of colossal egotism and self-sufficiency.

Insinuations

One cannot but express disgust for those who attempt to destroy belief in the virgin birth of Jesus by innuendo and covert insinuation. They are to be classed with those who undertake to destroy

the reputation of a good woman by evil surmise and slander based on their own conjectures. Brought into the court of facts and historical evidence, they have no proof to offer but their own prejudice and evil surmises. Dr. H. E. Fosdick has attempted to state in popular language the insinuation that the records of Matthew and Luke are to be derived from the unspeakably vile stories of the pagan world as to the birth of some of their heroes. Fortunately, most people are able to discriminate between folklore stories of supernatural birth arising out of a dim and distant atmosphere of superstition, and this straightforward historical testimony offered in documents so "closely related in time to the facts described as to belong to the sphere, not of myth, but of history." The early Christian writers themselves point out the vulgar nature of these heathen tales, and the fact that they are vague myths having no historical basis. And yet, during this very period, the critic imagines that the noble and pure records of Matthew and Luke were copied from these same heathen stories. James Orr, in contrasting the Gospel records with the heathen myths, says of the accounts of Matthew and Luke: "They relate to an historical person, and are given, as we saw, in an historical setting, with circumstantial details of name, place, date, etc. The myths with which they are brought into comparison — Greek, Roman, Babylonian, Persian — show nothing of this kind. They are on the face of them quite unhistorical — vague, formless, timeless; their origin lies far back in the dawn of time, mostly in the poetical personification of natural phenomena….But surely to urge these coarse fables as analogies to the story of the Gospels is to show a strange blindness to the facts of the case. It is the fact that not one of these tales has to do with a virgin birth in the sense in which alone we are here concerned with it….It is a strange imagination that can suppose that these foul tales could be taken over by the church, and, in the short space before the composition of our Gospels, become the inspiration of the beautiful and chaste narratives contained in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke!" (The Virgin Birth of Christ, pp. 167, 169).

Summary of Evidence The records of the early chapters of Matthew and Luke find their simplest and most satisfactory explanation in the actual fact that Jesus was born of a virgin. Note: (1) Two Gospels affirm the virgin birth. Their accounts are remarkably different and entirely independent of one another; yet their testimony is a unit. They offer the only records we have concerning the birth of Jesus. (2) These early chapters of Matthew and Luke are inseparable parts of these Gospels. No manuscript evidence of any significance can be produced against them. The peculiar readings of Matthew 1:16, found in the cursive of the twelfth century (346), a few other late Greek manuscripts and the Diatessaron (two manuscripts in Arabic) and the Sinaitic-Syriac, do not necessarily deny the virgin birth and are so feebly supported as to emphasize the overwhelming character of the textual evidence. The desperate expedient of Harnack, Von Soden, Schmiedel, et al., in cutting Luke 1:33, Luke 1:34 from the text when there is absolutely no evidence against it, illustrates the bitter prejudice of the critic and the unassailable character of the textual background of the records of the virgin birth. These early chapters of Matthew and Luke cannot be split off from the respective Gospels. They stand or fall as an integral part of the biographies of Jesus. (3) Matthew and Luke, in offering this testimony, fit into and supplement the rest of the New Testament in this regard. They throw a flood of light upon the profound discussions of the incarnation offered in the rest of the New Testament. Paul and John evidently presuppose the virgin birth, and build upon it in offering their whole conception of Jesus. (4) The citing of ancient myths of the birth of heroes from gods and goddesses is idle gossip unless some literary connection can be established between these and the New Testament. (5) The great importance

of the virgin birth in the “divine meaning of Christ” is shown by the persistent and bitter attacks of the radicals upon it. (6) The fact that most of those who deny the virgin birth also deny the sinlessness and the pre-existence of Jesus, and in fact, the incarnation itself, argues for an essential connection between the manner of Jesus’ birth and the entire New Testament conception of Him. If Jesus is God, and existed from all eternity, how else could He enter the world than through a miraculous birth? Does not His sinlessness demand it? With two human parents, could He have escaped the universal contamination of sin? Without one human parent, could He have shared our experience? The manner of His birth seems essential to the incarnation itself — the inexplicable union of the human and the divine.

027. Addenda on the Meaning of Almah

Addenda on the Meaning of Almah

Primary Basis The Christian's belief in the doctrine of the virgin birth is solidly based upon the clear, unequivocal, divinely inspired testimony of Matthew and Luke. This is the primary, but not the only, basis. The other evidence is corroborative. The Christian believes that the Hebrew word almah means "virgin" because he believes that Matthew was miraculously directed by the Holy Spirit in writing his narrative. Matthew's testimony is precise. He quotes Isaiah 7:14 as the climax of the evidence he presents. He affirms that Isaiah was predicting the virgin birth of the Messiah. He translates almah by the Greek word parthenos, which is exact. Greek literature is emphatic about the fact that Athena, the patron goddess of Athens, was a virgin. The temple on the citadel above Athens was called the "Parthenon." The Septuagint

Powerful corroborative evidence is seen in the Septuagint Version translated at Alexandria in Egypt by seventy Jewish scholars sent from Jerusalem by the high priest at the request of Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-247 b.c.). It translated almah in Isaiah 7:14 by the Greek word parthenos. There can be no question about the scholarship of these Jewish scribes and their knowledge of the Hebrew language. They frequently give (in their Greek version) a free translation of the Hebrew text before them, but the question of a paraphrase does not arise here. They translated one Hebrew word by one Greek word. They were relatively close to the time when Isaiah wrote, as compared to ancient or modern critics of the Septuagint Version. They translated nearly three centuries before the birth of Christ in Bethlehem. They could not have been moved by any sort of prejudice for or against the Christian gospel. They simply translated the text that was before them. How far they discerned the mysterious meaning of the passage we cannot tell, but they must have seen clearly that a tremendous miracle was promised to Ahaz by Isaiah and that this required almah to be translated by the specific Greek word which meant virgin. To suggest that Isaiah may have been referring to the natural birth of some child in his time is to make the passage ridiculous.

Jews Reverse Their Position

Both the Jews in the first century and the early Christians had great reverence for the Septuagint. The great reverence of the Jewish scholars for the Septuagint can be seen from the fact that Philo held that this translation was divinely inspired. The learned Hebrew scribes who wrote the Babylonian Talmud also ascribe divine inspiration to the translators. But when the Christians began to proclaim the gospel and it became evident how clearly the Septuagint substantiated the Christian doctrines, as in the translation of Isaiah 7:14, the Jews reversed themselves completely and turned in furious hatred against the Septuagint. When they had the translation of Aquila in hand to contradict the Septuagint, then they proceeded to burn and destroy all the copies of the Septuagint they could. They attempted to assail the virgin birth by two methods: (1) Foul stories they invented to charge Mary with fornication and to make Jesus an illegitimate son. These slanderous fabrications have been revived and advocated by Dr. Nels F. S. Ferré of Vanderbilt University. (2) Attempts to deny that almah meant virgin and to affirm bethulah was the Hebrew

word which would have been used if this had been the meaning of Isaiah. The controversy has raged through the centuries. The early Christian scholars gave devastating rebuttals to both of these lines of attack. Since the rationalism of the last two centuries has led so many scholars to abandon the Christian faith, we find these modernists also joining the Jewish unbelievers in both of these lines of attack.

Revised Standard Version The publication of the Revised Standard Version (New Testament in 1946 and Old Testament in 1952) with its attacks upon the deity of Christ has called general attention to this controversy over the meaning of almah. They translated the word as “young woman” in Isaiah 7:14, but kept the translation “virgin” in Matthew 1:23. Thus they wielded a two-edged sword against the Scripture, affirming that Isaiah does not refer to any virgin birth of the Messiah and charging that Matthew falsified the evidence when he declared that Isaiah predicted such a virgin birth. In an official document, An Introduction to the Revised Standard Version of the Old Testament, the Old Testament committee had the unbelieving Jewish scholar, Dr. Orlinski who was a member of their committee, write their defense of their translation of Isaiah 7:14. In the most damaging admission which has come from the radical scholars who made the r.s.v. , Dr. Orlinski sets forth that their authority for translating almah as “young woman” is the translation of Aquila made in the second century a.d.

He (Aquila) incorporated the kind of Jewish interpretation which was current in his day, and he avoided the Christological elements which had been introduced in the Septuagint text. Thus Aquila rendered the Hebrew word ha almah in Isaiah 7:14 literally ‘the young woman’ in place of the word ‘virgin’ which the Christians have substituted for it.

I published three reviews of the r.s.v. : (1) An Appraisal (Feb., 1946), (2) A Reply to Dr. Clarence T. Craig (Sept., 1946), (3) The Battle of the Versions (Jan., 1953). The New Testament Committee attempted to reply to the first of these reviews. The Reply to Craig was a rejoinder. In The Battle of the Versions I published detailed evidence that “the kind of Jewish interpretation which was current in his day” was the same kind seen in the New Testament when the hostile Jews charged Jesus was a glutton and winebibber, the associate of sinners and publicans, in league with the devil and guilty of blasphemy. The evidence is overpowering that Aquila is just a Hellenized spelling of Onkelos and that this is the same man who spews forth such vulgar attacks upon Jesus in the Talmud. The list of scholars (which has grown since this brochure was published in 1953) who identify Aquila and Onkelos as the same man and the evidence upon which they rest will be found in The Battle of the Versions, pp. 15-23.

Orlinski’s Charge

It is clear that Dr. Orlinski is charging that the Christians interpolated into the Septuagint what he calls “the Christological elements” (assertions and intimations that the Messiah is to be a supernatural being). Moses Hadas also charges that the Christians interpolated into the Septuagint these Christological elements (Aristeas to Philocrates, p. 81). But why, then, did not the Jews in the second century a.d. display their more ancient copies of the Septuagint and prove that it did not say parthenos? Why go to the extreme of producing Aquila’s version to contradict the Septuagint and of destroying all the copies of the Septuagint they could secure, if the translation of Isaiah 7:14 was not so generally known for so many decades and centuries that they could not dispute the fact that the original was parthenos? Since Dr. Orlinski must face passages such as

Isaiah 9:6, where the prophet reveals that this child which is to be born of a virgin is also “Mighty God, the Everlasting Father,” then it is futile for him to say that Christians had falsified the Septuagint text. The unbelieving Jews and the modernists must find some other way in which to rid themselves of these assertions of the deity of the Messiah in the Old Testament as well as the verifications in the Septuagint. They use on both the vivisection which is their universal practice in handling the Scripture; they carve Isaiah up into two, twelve, or fifty different imaginary authors and place the sections containing the “Christological elements” as late as possible. They handle any other parts of the Old Testament which get in the way of their theories in the same fashion. As for the Septuagint, they deny that there was ever such a translation made during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus. They hold that it was translated piecemeal in various times. This gives them the desired opportunity to say “late editions” or “additions” when they strike something they would deny. The Deity of the Messiah The central proposition of the translators of the r.s.v., also their main attack upon the deity of Christ, is the contention that none of the eyewitnesses of the ministry of Jesus ever believed that He was God as well as man. This was a myth which arose later. They introduce this proposition in a most clever but omnipresent manner by using two dialects of English at once for the translation. They declare in their preface that they use the Old English “thou” in address to God and “you” in address to man in their translation. They then refuse to allow any of the eyewitnesses, as they address Jesus, to use “thou.” Those who use the r.s.v. by their continual repetition have the poison virus injected into their system that Jesus is only a man. Full discussion of this attack on the deity of Christ will be found in the reviews, An Appraisal and Reply to Dr. Craig. Highly embarrassing to the modernists’ central argument that the disciples could not possibly have understood that Jesus was claiming to be God (not even when they heard the hostile Jewish scholars charge Him with blasphemy and threaten Him with death for it) is this assertion from the Old Testament committee that these “Christological elements had been introduced in the Septuagint text.” The proof is evident that, before the time of Christ, Jewish scholars translating the Old Testament had by their translation repeated the assertions of the deity of the Messiah. It is a moot question as to how clearly the Old Testament prophecies which revealed the deity of the Messiah were understood by the Jews at the opening of the first century a.d. Certainly some individual students of the Old Testament would have had a deeper understanding than others. What did the disciples of John understand by his declaration that Jesus was “the Son of God”? (John 1:34). When they came to know about the virgin birth, this assuredly would have increased the understanding which they gained from the self-revelation Jesus gave them. We do not know at what time they learned of the virgin birth, but Luke, who gives so many details of the experiences of Mary, should have found it possible to learn the facts from her. Matthew and the other apostles were frequently in the presence of the mother of Jesus and would naturally have inquired from her information concerning His infancy and youth. We would expect the facts about the virgin birth to have been gained by Matthew in this manner. Divine inspiration would have assisted Matthew and Luke. The Letter of Aristeas Our knowledge of the translation of the Septuagint Version is dependent largely upon a document called The Letter of Aristeas which purports to have been written in the very period when the Septuagint translation was made. The fury of the radical attack on the Septuagint Version has been multiplied against The Letter of Aristeas. A great number of historical errors in the document were pointed out by radical critics who heaped ridicule upon the account. Even such a great conservative as William Henry Green of Princeton yielded to this barrage of evidence and bluntly rejected The Letter of

Aristeas as a “fabrication” (General Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 85). A great change has taken place in the attitude toward this document in this century. A vast amount of papyri has been unearthed in Egypt: letters, deeds, all sorts of odds and ends of documents out of the very period in which the Septuagint was translated and The Letter of Aristeas was written. The Italian scholar Professor Lumbroso, even with the few papyri available to him, after painstaking research declared that the papyri proved the historical accuracy of The Letter of Aristeas in every detail such as court titles, institutions, laws, magistrates, technical terms, and other data. He even declares that there is not a single piece of civil history recorded by Aristeas which is not now confirmed by the papyri. The radical scholars have now been forced to yield. H. St. J. Thackeray protests rather mildly that Professor Lumbroso was a little extreme in his assertion, but be admits that the massive collection of papyri now available does bear out his statement “on the whole” (The Letter of Aristeas, pp 10, 11). He also advances the position, and quotes various authorities to sustain it, that the author by his vivid description of Jerusalem and Palestine shows he was an eyewitness of the period or the years immediately following (The Letter of Aristeas, pp. 10, 11). Moses Hadas, a Jewish scholar, in his work Aristeas to Philocrates takes a similar position. He points out some typically obscure accounts in the Talmud which parallel The Letter of Aristeas in placing the translation of the Septuagint in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus. The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Septuagint

Radical critics still attempt to escape the force of the Book of Isaiah as translated in 285 b.c by putting forth the theory that this was not the entire Old Testament which was translated at that time, but only the Pentateuch. Detailed proof that it was the entire Old Testament will be found in The Battle of the Versions, pp. 34-41. The evidence is so overpowering that they had the Septuagint in its entirety in 130 b.c. that even the radical scholars find themselves compelled to admit this date.

Now comes the explosive evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls to upset their veteran theories of the late date of such books as Daniel and of sections of other books such as Isaiah. Great was the excitement to learn whether the two scrolls of Isaiah (how strange that two copies of the very book which has the greatest wealth of Messianic predictions should have been found) contained the text of Isaiah 7:14 and of Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah 9:7 just as our text of today. If the Dead Sea Scrolls had contained beulah (married woman) instead of almah, what a shout of triumph would have gone up from the radicals! But the text is identical throughout so far as doctrinal matters are concerned, with only slight grammatical variations. Now observe the dilemma of the radicals as the traffic jam of the second century b.c. unfolds according to their radical theories (cf. The Battle of the Versions, pp 25-47). They are compelled to admit that we now have manuscripts of Isaiah older than the date which they admit for the Septuagint. Their theories of the late writings of sections of Old Testament books and of parts of the Septuagint collide in mid-air in the close confines of the time now available. As Dr. Albright has pointed out, the reason so many scholars are so excited about the Dead Sea Scrolls and are fighting so fiercely to deny their antiquity and merit is because they realize that the lives of so many of their “sacred theories” are imperilled. He declares that the impact of this archaeological find sounds the death knell for long revered theories of very late composition of various books. He boldly predicts that these theories will now have to be abandoned (The American Scholar, Jan., 1953).

Aquila's Translation That the Septuagint translates almah as parthenos is a piece of confirming evidence which is further strengthened by these recent discoveries establishing the early date of the Septuagint (285 b.c.), the date which the early Christian scholars maintained and which the Christian world has held through the centuries. The early Christian scholars denounced Aquila's translation as a deliberate attempt to attack the Christian gospel by denying the validity of the Septuagint translation. Irenaeus denounces Aquila as one of the bitter enemies of the Christian religion whose false teaching would destroy the truth of God: "God, then, was made man, and the Lord did Himself save us, giving us the token of the virgin. But not as some allege, among those now presuming to expound the Scripture, (thus): 'Behold, a young woman shall conceive, and bring forth a son,' as Theodotion the Ephesian has interpreted, and Aquila of Pontus, both Jewish proselytes. The Ebionites, following these, assert that he was begotten by Joseph; thus destroying, as far as in them lies, such a marvelous dispensation of God, and setting aside the testimony of the prophets which proceeded from God" (Against Heresies, Chapter XXI).

Meaning of Almah A study of passages in the Old Testament where almah is used (Genesis 24:43; Exodus 2:8; Psalms 68:25; Proverbs 30:19; Song of Solomon 1:3; Song of Solomon 6:8; Isaiah 7:14) will show that the context strongly supports the meaning "virgin." The word means "young woman" as well as "virgin." Of course, an old woman might be a virgin. That this is not the meaning of almah is quite clear from these Old Testament passages. The word carries the meaning, of "young woman," but as between "young woman" and "virgin," it is not a case of either/or, but of both/and.

Meaning of Bethulah

Professor Solomon Bimbaum, formerly of Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, had an interesting article in the November-December, 1953, issue of The Messianic Witness, a magazine devoted to carrying the Christian gospel to the Jewish population of America. He repudiates the r.s.v. translation of almah as "young woman" in Isaiah 7:14. He points out that bethulah, the Hebrew word which the radicals claim is the specific word in the Old Testament for "virgin," actually is used in the sense of "married woman" in Joel 1:8 : "Lament like a bethulah over the husband of her youth." The translators of the r.s.v. try desperately to save their theory by translating: "Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the bridegroom of her youth." In other words, the translators claim that the bridegroom falls dead or is killed just as the wedding service is concluded, and the marriage is not consummated. Such straining to imagine some sort of conceivable situation which would enable them to deny the obvious meaning of the passage as it pictures a widow looking back and lamenting "the husband of her youth" underscores the demise of their theory. It is self-evident that Joel gives an illustration common enough to be understandable to his readers, such as the untimely death of a husband during the early years of married life of a young couple, and not some fantastic circumstances that might conceivably be imagined. Professor Bimbaum also cites Jeremiah 18:13 : "The virgin of Israel has done a very horrible thing," where the word bethulah is used in comparison with Israel in a state of marriage relationship with Jehovah, from whom she had gone astray. Here is a "wife" who has left or lost her husband, but is called a bethulah. Dr. E. J. Young of the Westminster Theological Seminary declares that as between the words almah and bethulah the very fact that bethulah was being used of a married woman makes the word unsuitable for the powerful affirmation of Isaiah in Isaiah 7:14(Studies in Isaiah, pp. 178-185). This brings us back to the challenge of Martin Luther that no one has ever been able to

produce a passage in which almah is used of a married woman. The Old TestamentPassages In the Old Testament passages where almah occurs, the word is translated in the following manner by the Authorized Version, the American Standard Version, and the Septuagint.

Genesis 24:43

a.v. virgin

a.s.v. maiden

s.v. parthenos

Exodus 2:8

a.v. maid

a.s.v. maiden

s.v. neons

Psalms 68:25

a.v. damsels

a.s.v. damsels

s.v. neanides

Proverbs 30:19

a.v. maid

a.s.v. maiden

s.v. neotes

Song of Solomon 1:3

a.v. virgins

a.s.v. virgins

s.v. neanides

Song of Solomon 6:8

a.v. virgins

a.s.v. virgins

s.v. neanides

Isaiah 7:14

a.v. virgin

a.s.v. virgin

s.v. parthenos

Of these seven passages, four times the a.v. gives “virgin,” and the a.s.v. gives three times the emphatic translation “virgin.” In the Septuagint version parthenos is used twice; in the other passages where there is no emphasis on virginity the translation is colorless, “maid” or “damsel.” In other words the translators were not publishing a dictionary, but a smooth, vivid translation which fitted the particular context. It is most interesting to observe that in Isaiah 7:14 the precise content of the word is emphasized. The Greek words neanis and neotes have the colorless meaning of “maid” or “young woman”; but when one studies the passages, it is clear that “married woman” does not fit the context. It is made very plain in Genesis 24:43 that Rebecca was a virgin. Both words, almah and bethulah, are used in the passage; but when bethulah is used (Genesis 24:16), the explanatory phrase is added: “And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her.” If the word bethulah had carried the precise content of “virgin,” this would have been sufficient and no additional phrase would have been needed. In Exodus 2:8, where Miriam is a little girl, the content “virgin” is so plain it does not need to be emphasized in the translation and so “maid” is the fitting translation. In Proverbs 30:19, where Solomon ponders four things which he cannot understand, he mentions as the last of these “the way of a man with a maid.” Instead of accepting the ordinary interpretation that Solomon means “The way of true love never runs smooth,” some critics have tried to insinuate evil content into the passage as if fornication is the ordinary course of courtship. It may have been with the very purpose of directing the reader away from such a monstrous misinterpretation that the translators of both the a.v. and a.s.v. did not use the word “virgin,” but the colorless “maid” in their versions. In Psalms 68:25 the solemn procession of thanksgiving in the assembly for worship is described with the singers, the musicians, and then “the damsels playing with timbrels.” There is no emphasis upon the precise meaning of almah; and the general meaning is given. But certainly it is in harmony with the passages that the damsels were virgins.

Joel 1:8

What translation does the Septuagint Version offer for bethulah in Joel 1:8? Both the a.v. and the a.s.v. translate “virgin,” which is certainly inconsistent with the fact that the passage is plainly speaking of a married woman. The Septuagint does not make this mistake. It translates bethulah with the Greek word numphe, which means: “a bride, any married woman, a young woman.” A derivative of parthenos (parthenikos) is used in the passage, but it is used of the state of this married woman before she was married. The passage in the Septuagint is as follows: “Lament to me concerning a numphe [a bride, any married woman, a young woman] girded with sackcloth for the husband of her virgin youth.”

They saw clearly that bethulah meant a married woman in this passage. They were near enough to the time to have an adequate understanding of the usage of the word. They knew that bethulah usually meant “virgin” so they gave recognition to this translation by adding on the word parthenikos referring to her virgin youth before she was married. But they translated bethulah by numphe, which means a married woman.

Young’s Reply

Dr. Young quotes Orlinski as making the charge in the Introduction to the Revised Standard Version that Christians tampered with the text of the Septuagint to introduce the idea of a virgin-born Messiah.

There is no evidence whatever that Christians tampered with the Septuagint at this point. As Allis says: 'This is an old calumny which red-blooded Christians in the past have not hesitated to brand as malicious and false.' One of the blackest clouds which has attended the publication of the r.s.v. is the publication of the above-quoted statement. It is therefore the more refreshing to see one of the most informed and competent Jewish scholars of the day, Cyrus H. Gordon, write, 'Therefore, the New Testament rendering of "almah" as "virgin" of Isaiah 7:14, rests on the older Jewish interpretation, i.e., the lxx, which in turn is now borne out, for precisely this annunciation formula by a text that is not only pre-Mosaic, but is pre-Mosaic in the form we now have it on a clay tablet' (Introduction to the Revised Standard Version, p. 177).

Gordon's Discovery

Dr. Young is quoting from a brief article (it does not even cover one-half page) in The Journal of Bible and Religion, XXI, April, 1953, p. 106. This is the organ of the radical scholars who make up the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis. It must have been a bitter pill for them to swallow to publish such a statement from a Jewish scholar declaring the Jews had been wrong and the Christians had been right all along in the controversy over the meaning of almah. Dr. Gordon declares that the archaeological discoveries he has made at Ugarit in Syria now have settled the discussion and should bring the controversy to an end. He has unearthed clay tablets which plainly use the word almah in the parallel Semitic language as meaning "virgin." Dr. Gordon deserves the tribute to his scholarship and his generosity which Dr. Young gives to him. But Dr. Gordon is entirely too optimistic as to the decisive results he expects from his discovery. Prejudice is often impervious to historic facts. He would have shown more scholarship and more humility if he had not claimed such unique and solitary character for the archaeological discovery he had made. Similar evidence has been unearthed before, and the Jewish scholars and the modernists have resolutely closed their eyes to the facts and continued their repetition of outworn and disproved arguments. Witness the similar procedure in the advocates of Form Criticism. Their imaginary development of "sources" requires a vast amount of time. But archaeological discoveries such as the Rylands fragment prove the early Christians correct in placing the writing of the Gospel of John in the closing years of the first century (p. 140). This has clinched the evidence, putting the writing of the Synoptic narratives back to within two or three decades after the crucifixion and resurrection. But has the fact that there is no time left for a theory which demands a vast amount of time had any appreciable effect upon the Form Criticism theorists? It has not. They close their eyes to the facts and continue with their weird imaginations.

Earlier Discoveries

Robert Dick Wilson cited the discovery in 1926 at this same Ugarit in Phoenicia (the modern Ras Shamra) of texts that show clearly that the parallel word for almah is used of a woman before she was married, but after her marriage the text uses another word. Moreover, the early Christian scholars, such as Jerome, knew these basic facts that the related Semitic languages used the parallel word of almah in the sense of virgin. They used these facts against the Jewish scholars who urged that bethulah, and not almah, meant virgin.

Tregelles' Citation The standard Hebrew lexicon has been the work of Gesenius. Like all the Jewish lexicons of the middle ages and on, it reflects the bitter Jewish prejudice against the Christian gospel. In 1846 Tregelles, Christian scholar and world-famous textual critic, published a revision of the Hebrew and English Lexicon of Gesenius. After recording Gesenius' definition of almah, which gave the customary Jewish claim, "young woman" rather than "virgin," Tregelles added his own rebuttal, citing this decisive proof from the basic origin of the word: almah in the Punic languages signified virgin, as Gesenius rightly states on the authority of Jerome. The absolute authority of the New Testament is, however, quite sufficient to settle the question to a Christian." We are familiar with the title "Punic Wars" as signifying wars between Rome and Carthage. The city of Carthage was a colony of Phoenicia. The Phoenician language was spoken at Carthage, as was Latin at Rome. Punic languages would then mean the Semitic languages, such as Phoenician and the related tongues.

Positive Prediction

It is sometimes said that the only evidence for giving virgin" as the meaning of almah is negative evidence. This holds that Martin Luther exhausted the evidence when he issued his challenge for any one to show a passage where almah was ever used of a married woman. But it is immediately evident that this is not true. The context of Isaiah 7:14 which affirms a stupendous miracle and which shows that Isaiah chose the word almah to denote this miracle is not negative. This is positive evidence.

Dr. J. G. Machen argues powerfully that Isaiah 7:14 affirms a miracle: The truth is that all these interpretations which find in the child-bearing of the almah only an ordinary birth are opposed by the way in which the promise is introduced. Why should an ordinary birth be regarded as a 'sign'? But it is not merely the use of this one word which would lead us to expect something miraculous in that which the prophet proceeds to announce. Equally suggestive is the elaborate way in which the 'sign' is introduced. The whole passage is couched in such terms as to induce in the reader or hearer a sense of profound mystery as he contemplates the young woman and her child (The Virgin Birth of Christ, p. 291).

Dr. Machen cites the effective use made of this argument by Justin Martyr in his Dialogue with Trypho and declares that Justin's argument has never really been invalidated (Dialogue with Trypho, p. 291). Dr. Machen also calls attention to the use of the definite article in the Hebrew text and the Septuagint translation, "the virgin": "the important word in the passage has the article; it is the almah, not an Almah….The margin of the American Standard Version, which substitutes 'the' for 'a', is therefore clearly to be preferred to the translation in the text" (Dialogue with Trypho, p. 289, footnote). Dr. Young argues that the definite article cannot mean in this verse "the well-known virgin," some such person in Isaiah's time who was well known. "More natural, however, is the generic usage in which the article serves to denote some particular unknown person ….'Behold! It is an almah which is with child.' The generic usage of the article thus serves to focus particular attention upon the subject introduced, the almah" (Young, Studies in Isaiah, p. 164).

Those who deny the possibility of miracles have no hesitation in laying violent hands upon the text and emasculating it. If the references to "a sign" are removed from Isaiah 7:11 and Isaiah 7:14 and almah is declared to be only a colorless word — "young woman" — that could refer to any married woman, then the entire passage could be reduced to a meaningless generality. Dr. Young gives a

careful study and refutation of the attempts of Duhm and Kraeling to emasculate this passage in Isaiah and remove Isaiah 7:15, Isaiah 7:16, and Isaiah 7:17(Dialogue with Trypho, pp. 185-191). This is the very method the modernists use in emasculating the texts of Matthew and Luke. By laying violent hands upon the text and removing the decisive clauses such as “before they came together” in Matthew 1:18; and “and knew her not until” in Matthew 1:25; and “of the Holy Spirit” in Matthew 1:18 and Matthew 1:20, they then are able to declare: “See! Matthew really does not record a virgin birth.” They would have Matthew 1:18 read: “When his mother had been betrothed to Joseph, she was found with child.” But they still would have to remove Matthew 1:19, and the entire account also would be left in a state of utter confusion.

Destroying the Evidence In the Gospel of Luke they remove such clauses as “seeing I know not a man” (Luke 1:34) and insist that Luke 1:35 be given a figurative meaning. They then solemnly declare that Luke does not record a virgin birth. This is the clever process of the r.s.v. which mistranslates Luke 1:34 “since I have no husband.”

Dr. John A. Scott, the eminent Greek scholar of Northwestern University, gave the most scathing denunciation to the translators, declaring they did not even intend to translate the text. “Luke 1:34 : When the angel told Mary that she was to bear a son, this Version makes her reply: ‘How can this be, since I have no husband?’ Mary gave no such reply; she said: ‘How can this be, since I know not a man?’ Many an unmarried girl or woman has become a mother. Mary knew this” (Classical Weekly, Jan. 6, 1947). The Greek word aner can mean either “man” or “husband,” but the verbs gignosko (know) and echo (have) are absolutely different. It was a deliberate violation of the text. As Dr. Scott says further, on Luke 1:3, “To translate the fine Greek word meaning ‘from the beginning’ with the tame ‘for some time past’ seems irony, not intended translation.”

Suppose a person received a letter from a man who disclaimed any involvement in and knowledge of a certain matter and the letter read: “I was not present. I know nothing of the matter.” The recipient of the letter proceeded to cut out the two negatives, not and nothing. He then reported that the man said, “I was present. I know of the matter.” How much of common, ordinary honesty and truthfulness could the recipient of the letter claim to possess? In language not so blunt but very forceful, Dr. Scott says, “The thing in this Version which distresses me most is the irreverent disregard for the simple meaning of the original, and while reading it I feel as Hamlet felt, when he chanced upon the jovial gravediggers: ‘Has this fellow no feeling of his business that he sings at grave making?”

Further Positive Evidence

All of the evidence from parallel words in related Semitic languages is also positive evidence. The parallel words to almah far back in the languages mean “virgin.” Furthermore the parallel words to bethulah show that it was at times used of a married woman. Dr. Young declares that if Isaiah had used bethulah in Isaiah 7:14 it would have been hard to make clear the meaning. He would have had to add some explanatory word or phrase to show that in this case bethulah was being used to mean “virgin.” He says of bethulah, “It is used of one who is truly a virgin, it is employed of one who is engaged or betrothed, and it is also used of one who has actually been married.” After quoting Joel 1:8 he says, “That this bethulah is married is not open to question.” He then cites evidence from other Semitic languages that the parallel words for bethulah are used of a married woman. He quotes Aramaic incantations to show that betulta, the Aramaic equivalent of bethulah,

is used for a married woman. The Hittite-Arab batul is used of a married woman. Dr. Young concludes, “If Isaiah had employed the word bethulah to designate the mother of the child, he would have been using a most ambiguous word.”

Almah vs.Bethulah

Dr. Young declares further, “This word parthenos is a far more accurate rendering of almah than is the neanis of Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion. At this particular point the lxx translators of Isaiah showed remarkable insight into the true meaning of the text” (Studies in Isaiah, p. 177). Dr. Machen declares, “But as a matter of fact there is no place among the seven occurrences of almah in the Old Testament where the word is clearly used of a woman who was not a virgin” (The Virgin Birth of Christ, p. 288). Dr. Young declares repeatedly that almah is a word never used of a married woman. He affirms that of all the words listed above, almah alone seems to have this distinction (Studies in Isaiah, pp. 77, 184). This brings us back to the fine summary of Tregelles. The elemental meaning of the word almah in the Semitic languages is “virgin.” But the faith of a Christian rests solidly on the inspired accounts of Isaiah, Matthew, and Luke. The fact that the word bethulah had been used of a married woman made it a misfit for Isaiah 7:14. “The absolute authority of the New Testament is, however, quite sufficient to settle the question to a Christian.”

028. Chapter 7 - The Genealogies

Chapter 7 - The Genealogies Matthew 1:1-17;Luke 3:23-38 Value of theGenealogies

Anyone who has read Justin Martyr's Dialoguewith Trypho (a series of debates with a Jew, named Trypho, concerning Christ, written about a.d. 140) will realize the very great importance of the genealogies for the early days of Christianity. They trace Jesus' ancestry back to David and connect Him with the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. How clearly these prophecies were understood is evidenced by the question of Jesus, "What think ye of the Christ? whose son is he?" and the ready answer of the Pharisees: "The son of David" (Matthew 22:41-45). The very first thing in the proclamation of the gospel to a Jew was to convince him that Jesus fulfilled the fundamental line of prophecy in the Old Testament by being born of the line of David. The fact that Matthew furnishes the genealogy as a sort of prologue to his record of the life of Jesus shows how essential this is. Luke gives his genealogical list immediately after his account of the baptism of Jesus, and the fact that he included it in his Gospel intended for publication among the Greeks shows that the genealogies had a universal interest. The early Christian messengers doubtless had these lists (especially Matthew's) memorized, and could quote them at will in argument. The works of early Christian writers teem with references to them. The only reason we pass them by with such lack of interest is that we consider the case proved. But if we did not possess proof that Jesus was the descendant of David, imagine the difficulties that would immediately arise in attempting to measure Jesus by the light of Old Testament prophecy. The subject is dry and forbidding, but surely its importance justifies a brief study for the careful Bible student.

Difficulties The genealogies are as different as the general records of the nativity in Matthew and Luke, and fairly bristle with difficulty. Matthew's list is the shorter and more popular. It traces the line from Abraham and records forty-two generations (three groups of fourteen each: 1. From Abraham to David. 2. From David to captivity in Babylon. 3. From captivity to Christ). This arrangement was probably made to aid in memorizing the list, and several familiar names seem to have been omitted in order to make the three fourteens. Matthew 1:8 — "Joram begat Uzziah" — omits three generations — Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah. These names were very familiar, and could easily be supplied from the Old Testament. A fourth name was omitted in Matthew 1:11 : "Josiah begat Jechoniah and his brethren." This omits Jehoiakim, who was the son of Josiah and father of Jechoniah. Moreover, Jechoniah had no brothers. McGarvey suggests that "brethren" here means kindred; i.e., the three uncles of Jechoniah (Jehoahaz, Zedekiah, and Shallum); and that either David or Jechoniah is to be counted twice in order to make the three fourteens. But which one is to be counted and why one rather than the other?

Solutions

It is very plain that Matthew has arranged his genealogy in three divisions which stand out because of an equal number of names in each (14) and because of the different character of the men in each (1. Patriarchs; 2. Kings; 3. Private Citizens); and because of the periods of history (1. From establishment of the nation with Abraham to the climax of the kingdom under David; 2. To

the downfall of the kingdom at the time of the Babylonian captivity; 3. To the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom in the coming of Christ). This makes such a vivid and attractive arrangement and one so easily memorized and used that its very purpose is self-evident. Some hold that Matthew only intended to have forty-one names in the list and that he omitted the name of Jehoiakim deliberately. Since the inclusion of Jehoiakim in the proper place would have made 14 names in the third division and completed the arrangement, it is hard to see why he should have done this.

If a scribal error caused the omission of the name of Jehoiakim, then all the difficulties attached to the omission are solved at once. Zahn, the great German conservative scholar, supposes the scribal error arose in the translation of Matthew from Hebrew to Greek. But it is not necessary to suppose this. The names, Jechoniah and Jehoiakim, are similar in Greek and this may have caused the slip of eye or pen on the part of an early copyist. Some suggest that all four of the names missing from the genealogy were deliberately omitted by Matthew because these were very wicked kings and the omission of the names fulfilled the prediction of Moses “concerning every Jew whose heart turneth away this day from Jehovah our God” and “Jehovah will blot out his name from under heaven.” But the names of these four kings are not “blotted out from under heaven” by their omission from Matthew’s genealogy. Their actual personalities as ancestors of Jesus were not excluded: their names are implied in the list as would be plain to all Jews, for they were well known and the Old Testament genealogical lists familiar to all. Every Jewish student would know where to supply these names. Furthermore, consider some of the names which are included in the list: names of kings much more godless than these four. Take Manasseh for an example (cf. 2 Kings 21:10-12). Surely this was not the reason for the omission of the four names. The arrangement of the three fourteens explains the omission of the three names; a scribal error furnishes the most plausible explanation of the last. Since no conceivable advantage could be gained in argument for the Messianic descent of Jesus by their omission, and since the names are to be readily supplied from the Old Testament, the validity of the list is not impaired by the particular arrangement Matthew has offered.

Added Names

Another puzzling feature of Matthew’s genealogy is the introduction of the names of persons not usually included in such a list: “Jacob begat Judah and his brethren” (Matthew 1:2). Why mention the brethren? Is it because the Old Testament so continually associates the twelve sons of Jacob together? But why mention the brethren of Jehoiakim (Matthew 1:11)? And why mention Zerah and Tamar (Matthew 1:3), Rahab and Ruth (Matthew 1:5) and call attention to Bathsheba (Matthew 1:6)? Certainly Matthew’s purpose is not to clothe Jesus “with the diminishing glories of the first families,” for he stops to emphasize the name of Tamar, who committed incest; and Rahab, who was a harlot; and Bathsheba, who committed adultery; and Ruth, who was a heathen (as also Rahab). Whatever his purpose, he was not trying to cover up the outrageous sins of some of the ancestors of Jesus. It is hard to see just why these names were introduced. They offer no difficulty, however, and had some peculiar interest for the author. Their history in the Old Testament is very striking. Allen suggests that these names were introduced to prepare the reader for the extraordinary experience of the virgin Mary. But this suggestion had no basis in the Gospel and seems to be introduced by Allen to prepare his own readers for his denial of the virgin birth. Perhaps Matthew desired to emphasize that on the human side Jesus’ ancestry was a part of the

world, as he then turns to emphasize on the divine side that He was without sin and came to redeem us.

Luke’s Genealogy

Luke’s genealogy runs backward from Jesus to Adam, seventy-six generations, while Matthew runs forward from Abraham, forty-two generations. From Abraham to David the two genealogies agree. But from David to Joseph they are different except the names of Zerubbabel and his father Shealtiel. These may be different people bearing the same name, or the two different lines may cross by one giving the natural and the other the legal descent at this point. The chief difficulty is that two genealogies so very different are both presented as the line of Joseph. Matthew says that Jacob was the father of Joseph, while Luke says that Eli was the father of Joseph. McGarvey (Evidences of Christianity, Part III, pp. 52-55) shows at length four ways in which the problem may be solved. But it is most likely that Joseph was the son-in-law of Eli, and Luke really traces the line of Mary. (The Sinaitic-Syriac MS has in Luke 2:4 : “They [Joseph and Mary] were of the house and lineage of David.”) Justin Martyr, Ephraim of Cyrus, Irenaeus and Eusebius all affirm that Mary was of the line of David. If this is the genealogy of Mary, then it is in accord with the peculiar interests of Luke in telling of the experiences of Mary. This would help explain general differences between the genealogies. As we study these two lists of names, how they draw the two great Testaments together — the Old and the New! What assurance and profound conviction they bring that “we have found the Christ!” How closely they bring “the Son of man” to us all! The crimson stain of sin that mars this ancestral line is our shame, not His. It sets forth in a moment the very reason — yes, the necessity — for the coming of the Son of God from heaven to be born of the seed of David and redeem the human race.

029. Chapter 8 - Mary, The Mother of Jesus

Chapter 8 - Mary, The Mother of Jesus An Ideal Mother

“Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee.” This was the salutation of heaven to the noble virgin of Nazareth who was to become the mother of Jesus, the Son of God. The favor of God was bestowed upon her because of her righteous and devout character. Her conduct, depicted in the fleeting glimpses of the New Testament, confirms the heavenly tribute. Mary, the mother of Jesus, is the very ideal of all mothers in the mystery of suffering and in self-sacrificing devotion.

Beauty of the Records The New Testament records concerning Mary are amazingly brief and simple. She immediately becomes the center of interest in the story, but almost instantly drops into the background. Her hymn of praise and joy is one of the most beautiful gems in the Bible. Someone has called it “the most magnificent cry of joy that has ever issued from a human breast” (Luke 1:46-55). Each time she appears in the narrative the nobility of her character is suggested; but the scenes are full of restraint and constant reminders that, after all, she is but a woman. The deity of Jesus never stands out more clearly in the narrative than when He is in the presence of His mother.

Faith and Devotion

Mary — at Nazareth, in the home of Elisabeth, in the stable at Bethlehem, in the temple with the young infant, fleeing to Egypt, returning to Nazareth, going up annually to the temple — is the very picture of devout faith and tender love. Mother love is not magnified in the Bible. “Like as a father pitieth his children” is rather the current comparison. But Mary predominates in these scenes for the obvious reason that Joseph was not the father of Jesus. Her overwhelming sense of responsibility, her perplexity and loneliness are all emphasized in these early records. “But Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart.” That is the way of a mother. But how greatly magnified were her interest and anxiety! “Yea, and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul” was the terrifying prediction of the aged Simeon as he unfolded the future of the child. The shadow of the cross flung itself across her pathway, at first in fearful silhouette, and finally with agonizing distinctness. Her Anxious Love The anxious throb of a mother’s love vibrate; in each of the great passages in which she appears. In the temple at Jerusalem, after three days of search which sound the depths of anguish and self-reproach, the striking dialogue reveals her amazement at His conduct, “Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing,” and His calm rebuke: “Why is it that ye sought me? Knew ye not that I must be in my Father’s house?” (Luke 2:45-51). At the wedding feast in Cana, too eager to behold the fulfillment of her dreams she attempts to urge Him on, but again she is rebuked: “Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.” He can suffer no earthly dictation. He is to do the will of God. But there is a song in her soul that cannot be stilled. Unshaken in her triumphant expectation, she prepares the way if He shall desire to enter in: “His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it” (John 2:1-12).

Mary enters again at the height of the early Galilean ministry. He is being overwhelmed with the demands upon His time and strength. The multitudes press upon Him until there is neither leisure to eat nor rest. “And he cometh into a house. And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when his friends heard it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself” (Mark 3:19-21). The phrase translated “his friends” is in the Greek literally: “Those from (the side of) Him.” Many scholars render it: “His family.” This evidently is the meaning, for Mark 3:31 is a continuation of this narrative: “And there come his mother and his brethren.” In addition to the other heart-breaking trials of Mary, she was surrounded by unbelief in her own household. “For even his brethren did not believe on him” (John 7:1-9). In scorn they urged Him to quit His ministry in provincial Galilee, and concentrate on the capital city — Jerusalem. In Mark 3:19-21 and Mark 3:31-35, they seem to have persuaded Mary to accompany them in the effort to compel Jesus to desist and come home. Doubtless they told her: “John has been imprisoned. His death is imminent. Jesus is imperilled by the same foes. He is about to consume His vital energies by excess of zeal, taking time neither to eat nor sleep. We must bring Him home for a rest.” Again there is the anxious solicitude of a devoted mother, and again Jesus stands forth as the Son of God, and administers a kindly rebuke. He continues His instruction, answering His mother’s call by the wonderful word to the multitudes: “Who is my mother and my brethren? Whosoever shall do the will of God.”

Then, finally, in the darkness which enshrouds Golgotha is the patient, bowed form of a mother. “They all forsook him and fled,” but not Mary. Her prostration from grief calls forth that tender word: “Woman, behold, thy son. Then saith he to the disciple, Behold, thy mother” (John 19:26, John 19:27).

Place of Mary in the New Testament Church

During Jesus’ ministry no organization was formed. There were several groups of disciples more or less closely associated with Him: twelve apostles with an inner group of three; seventy disciples chosen and sent forth on missionary work; a wider group of disciples, including women of wealth and distinction who helped to finance the missionary tours of Jesus (Luke 8:1-4; Mark 4:10; Matthew 27:55, Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40, Mark 15:41; Luke 23:55). Luke does not mention the mother of Jesus among this group, but John notes that when Jesus began His Galilean ministry, making Capernaum His headquarters, “his mother, his brethren, and his disciples” accompanied Him (John 2:12). Perhaps Nazareth was now too hostile to make a congenial home for Mary. At any rate, her intense interest led her to be an eyewitness of the great ministry of Jesus (John 2:1-12; Mark 3:19-21, Mark 3:31-35; John 19:25-27).

It is very remarkable that there is not the slightest intimation that Jesus ever appeared to His mother after His resurrection. She was present at the crucifixion, but is not mentioned at the tomb. Perhaps she collapsed when Jesus died, and was taken home by John while some of the other women followed the body of Jesus to the tomb. Jesus appeared to James, His unbelieving half brother (1 Corinthians 15:7). (What a meeting that must have been!) But, if He appeared to His mother, the sacred historians do not record it.

Luke emphatically notes the presence of Mary with the apostles and disciples at Jerusalem before Pentecost (Acts 1:14). The fact that he fails to mention her presence at the cross makes more striking the specific mention of her name in Acts. A certain simple dignity is hers amid the disciples

by virtue of her relationship to the Master.

Apocryphal Additions The New Testament offers no further information concerning Mary, but the early Christian romancers who produced the Apocryphal Gospels soon began to relate all sorts of prodigious things about her. Tradition states she died a.d. 63. It is significant that the New Testament, the last book of which was written a.d. 85-90, does not mention her death or anything further concerning her. The Gospels set forth with the greatest care the fact that she must not be considered above the rest of humanity by reason of her relationship to Jesus. Anyone who does the will of the heavenly Father can be as His brother, sister, and mother (Mark 3:35). But, in spite of all the restraint of the Gospels and their specific statements to the contrary, the church, with the passing of years, proceeded to corrupt the simplicity of its faith by deifying Mary. The “Assumption”

There are two conflicting traditions concerning her death. A letter of the General Council held at Ephesus a.d. 431 states that she lived at Ephesus with John and died there. Another writing of about the same age says she died at Jerusalem and was buried in Gethsemane. The legend states that Thomas desired to see the remains, and that, when they opened her grave after three days, her body was not to be found, and they concluded it had been taken up to heaven. This story, which supposes that she was not translated while alive, as were Enoch, Elijah, and Christ, but that her dead body was taken up to heaven, was called the “Assumption.” Concurrent with the exploitation of this legend, others were set afloat affirming that Mary was sinless, and also born of a virgin, as was Jesus, and that she remained a virgin until her death — this last in spite of Matthew 1:25; Luke 2:7; Mark 6:3, and other passages. The Children of Joseph

Tertullian refers to the marriage of Joseph and Mary and to the brethren of the Lord, making it evident he believed them to be the children of Joseph and Mary. Clement of Alexandria and Origen seem to indicate that this is the general view of the Christian world. Clement refers to the perpetual virginity of Mary with the phrase “Some say.” The growth of asceticism as well as veneration for Mary caused the growth of this idea. The earliest mention of the perpetual virginity of Mary is in the Protevangelium of James, an Apocryphal Gospel of the second century, which treats of the childhood of Mary and Jesus. In clumsy imitation of Matthew and Luke it describes angelic visitations, hymns of nativity, etc., surrounding the birth of Mary of Joachim and Anna. At the age of three she danced in the temple and was “nurtured as a dove in the temple and received food from the hand of an angel” until twelve years old, when she was betrothed to Joseph, a widower eighty years old, who had a number of sons by a former marriage. This piece of fiction represents the beginning of centuries of effort to explain away the obvious meaning of “the brethren of the Lord” and kindred passages in the New Testament. This theory, which received its classic exposition at the hands of Epiphanius (a.d. 377), in reality sets aside the genealogy of Matthew and destroys the Davidic descent of Jesus as the legal heir of Joseph. The exaltation of Mary so engrossed them that they did not perceive the dethroning of Jesus.

Other theories were offered to explain away the “brethren of Jesus,” such as that advanced by Jerome (a.d. 385), that they were the cousins of Jesus — the children of Mary of Clopas, sister of Jesus’ mother and wife of Alphaeus. The Council of Chalcedon (a.d. 451) definitely asserted the perpetual virginity of Mary.

Theory of Sinlessness The theory of the sinlessness of Mary was unknown to the early Christians. Augustine began cautiously to suggest it: “Who knows what power God might have given Mary to

overcome sin?" When the Council of Lyons in the twelfth century sought to institute a festival in her honor, this idea became prevalent. Peculiar relations to the Godhead began to be affirmed of Mary by some writers of Alexandria at the close of the third century. During the next century the phrase, "Mother of God," became common. Cyril of Alexandria in the Council of Ephesus (a.d. 431) speaks of the "Holy Virgin — Mother of God — the spotless treasure-house of virginity." About this time prayer began to be offered through Mary and to Mary. Peter Damian speaks of Mary as "the most exalted of creatures, now deified and endowed with all power in heaven and in earth and yet not forgetful of our race."

Reasons for Worship of Mary

There are several causes of this deification of Mary. The vulgar and blasphemous attacks on the birth of Jesus and on Mary by the brilliant pagan Celsus and the unbelieving Jews caused the Christians to react in her defense, and led them to go beyond the Scripture in all sorts of extreme affirmations about her. A sample of these attacks is the slanderous story that Jesus was the illegitimate son of Mary and a Roman soldier named Ben Pandera.

Joseph Klausner, Jewish scholar of Jerusalem, in his Jesus of Nazareth, published in 1925, reviews this legend and admits its falsity, and traces the origin of the fanciful name "Pandera," or "Panther," to "a corrupt travesty of the Greek word parthenos — Virgin." It is obvious how such vulgar attacks on Mary caused Christians to overstep the Scripture in rushing to her defense. A second cause was the Arian controversy, which caused many to affirm the deity of Jesus in such fashion as to make Him so far removed above the world as to give place to a mediator such as the "virgin Mary." In the very face of such passages as Hebrews 4:14-16, they began to urge the need of a mediator such as Mary, who was not "forgetful of our race"! A third cause is found in the natural religious instincts of people only half Christianized, who had lifelong training in heathen religions which offered female deities to be worshiped. It was an easy matter to substitute Mary for Hera, Juno, or Venus. The development took its rise from the Apocryphal Gospels, which were the romantic output of the masses who naturally felt this loss and unconsciously took this method of supplying it. The place of simple dignity accorded Mary among the disciples at Pentecost should be her place in our hearts today — a recognition of her noble character and her wonderful example of faith and devotion, but towering over all is the word of Christ: "For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my mother." The Gospels present Mary as a mere woman as far removed from Jesus as all of sinful humanity. But what a noble woman was Mary of Nazareth! We are reminded of the gracious tribute of Carlyle to his mother: "If I could have chosen my mother out of all the women in the world, I would have chosen you.

030. Chapter 9 - The Youth of Jesus

Chapter 9 - The Youth of Jesus Matthew 2:13-23;Luke 2:21-52

Sources The amazing brevity and simplicity of the records of Jesus' youth bear convincing testimony to the unique inspiration of the Scriptures. The records reveal a divine restraint. How could the Gospel writers refrain from writing at length of the thirty years that lie between Bethlehem and the Jordan? Many critics who talk learnedly of the "sources" of these early chapters of Matthew and Luke suppose that these authors told all they knew! Even forgetting the inspiration of these writers, can we suppose that the apostles, by campfire or festive board through three and one-half years, had never heard Jesus tell a single anecdote of His youth? Did Mary or James the brother of the Lord forget completely the thirty years at Nazareth? Moreover, the accounts that are given by Matthew and Luke are so simply told: Matthew brings Jesus to Nazareth, but offers not a word concerning His life there; Luke gives two flashlight photographs of Jesus in the temple at Jerusalem, but he tarries only an instant and turns, as Matthew, to the public ministry of Jesus. Finally, what Matthew and Luke do record is so different from what the Apocryphal Gospels tell of the youth of Jesus that the inspiration of Matthew and Luke is profoundly emphasized. The early Christian romancers allowed their imagination to run riot concerning this period in the youth of Jesus. The silly, miraculous tales that these Apocryphal Gospels tell are in contrast with the simple and restrained statements of Matthew and Luke as the night with the day. The history of these early years of Jesus' earthly life is destined to remain as obscure as the place in which they were spent. The hand of God guided the little family to the obscure village and guided the pen of the sacred historians in the paths of almost complete silence. A study of the youth of Jesus should accept as its motto not to become wise above that which is written. If the period at Nazareth can be even faintly reconstructed, it must be in the light of the known facts about this period and in the reflected light of His personality and public ministry. Following the early records of Matthew and Luke we must journey to Bethlehem, Jerusalem, back to Bethlehem, to Egypt, Nazareth, Jerusalem, and back to Nazareth. In Bethlehem

How long the couple and the Babe remained in the stable is uncertain. The crowd which had assembled for enrollment probably ebbed away from Bethlehem in a few days. At any rate, by the time the Wisemen came, they had changed to more comfortable quarters for they were not in a stable, but "in the house." This may have been the home of some friend or relative. But they are nowhere represented as poverty-stricken and unable to pay for lodging. There had simply been "no room in the inn.

Luke says in language severely simple: "And when eight days were fulfilled for circumcising him, his name was called Jesus When John had been circumcised and named, the relatives and friends of Zacharias and Elisabeth gathered to celebrate and rejoice. How lonely this scene in Bethlehem seems in contrast! The shepherds returned to their task on the night of Jesus' birth. The couple solemnly conferred upon the Child the high and holy name which the angel had commanded. Thus He was circumcised for He was "born under the law." But in the same moment

His divine personality and destiny were emphasized for He was called Jesus: “For it is he that shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). In Jerusalem At the end of forty days, as prescribed by the Mosaic law, Mary fulfilled the rules for ceremonial cleansing and took the Child to the temple to present Him to the Lord. Luke pauses to quote the law that every firstborn male shall be holy to the Lord. The offering of “a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons” indicates lowly circumstances, but not extreme poverty — “only well-to-do people offered a lamb and a pigeon.”

Two aged saints of Israel, full of piety and Messianic expectations, who spend their days in the temple in meditation and prayer, are present on this occasion. The age of Anna is indicated by her seven years of married life and eighty-four years of widowhood: she must have been more than a hundred years of age. The age of Simeon is suggested by the statement: “And it had been revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ” (Luke 2:26). Luke draws a beautiful picture of the aged man taking the Babe in his arms and lifting his eyes to heaven saying, “Now lettest thou thy servant depart, Lord, according to thy word, in peace….” He speaks as a watchman released from duty. He can depart now with joy for he has seen the Christ who shall be “a light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel.” Plummer says of this beautiful poem spoken by Simeon, “In its suppressed rapture and vivid intensity, this canticle equals the most beautiful of the Psalms.” As Mary and Joseph marvel at his words, the aged man blesses them, and, addressing Mary, foretells the high destiny of the Child and offers the ominous word that “A sword shall pierce through thine own soul.” This is the first intimation of tragedy in Luke’s Gospel. It contrasts with the joyful message of the angels. Surely the “sword” did not symbolize any doubts concerning Jesus in the heart of Mary, as some suggest, but rather the anguish of her soul at Golgotha. Did not this prophecy cast a shadow across Mary’s path, send them flying with swifter steps to Egypt, and lead them to exercise still greater care over the young Child? As Simeon prophesies, Anna comes forward and gives thanks to God for the Christ-Child, predicting His future to those standing near.

Back to Bethlehem

Luke omits all reference to the Wisemen and the flight into Egypt. He simply notes the return to Nazareth, but it is evident that they must have returned to Bethlehem and that the visit of the Wisemen followed this presentation in the temple. (1) The star appeared at the time of Jesus’ birth. Forty days is not too long for the journey of the Wisemen from the far East. (2) Would the offering in the temple have been as meager as a pair of turtle doves, if they had just received the magnificent presents of the Wisemen? (3) With Herod and all Jerusalem upset by the visit of the Wisemen, the presentation in the temple would have been exceedingly dangerous. (4) Immediately after the departure of the Wisemen, the angel warned the couple to take the Babe and flee into Egypt. In Egypt

One of the most touching pictures in the art galleries of the world is of the flight into Egypt. Mary rides the mule with the Babe in her arms while Joseph walks alongside. Fear of pursuit and tenderest devotion toward the Infant are revealed. The flight into Egypt caused a second fulfillment of that prophecy of Hosea: “Out of Egypt did I call my son.” Egypt, because of its proximity and vastness, had always been the ready refuge of troubled Israelites. How long they remained in Egypt or what happened there, we do not know. Some of the Apocryphal Gospels represent the

stay as lasting several years. This has no basis in the New Testament and it is extremely improbable.

Nazareth

After the death of Herod, Joseph, who must protect both the mother and the Child, is instructed to return to Judaea. Fearing violence from Archelaus, they are encouraged to go on and return to Nazareth. And what of the life at Nazareth? What sort of boy was Jesus? How did He develop? How did He spend His time? We sometimes forget that not merely His childhood and youth but ten long years of His manhood were spent at Nazareth.

One of the certainties is that Jesus worked at some sort of manual labor in His youth. Matthew makes it plain that Joseph was a carpenter (Matthew 13:55). We learn from Mark 6:2, Mark 6:3 that Jesus also was known as a carpenter. The Greek tekton means artisan or artificer in wood — a carpenter. Mark records the amazement with which His townspeople heard of His teaching and miracles: “Whence hath this man these things and what is the wisdom that is given unto this man and what mean the mighty works wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary...?” This clearly points to a quiet, unassuming life at Nazareth. He had been an obscure part of an obscure village. They had never discovered Him. The emphatic “by his hands” thrown in contrast with tekton shows the scorn of the people — “Do these same hands — a lowly carpenter’s hands — now perform miracles?” Justin Martyr says, “He was in the habit of working as a carpenter when among men making plows and yokes” (Dialogue with Trypho 88). A carpenter in such a quiet rural community probably made such tools, also simple furniture, and did the construction and repair work on the roofs or interiors of the simple stone houses. Justin claims to have had this information from the “Memoirs of the Apostles.” It may have sound tradition back of it. Kent discards this tradition from Justin. It is held to be merely a reflection of the saying “Take my yoke upon you. But Kent proceeds to “out-Herod Herod” in this line of ingenious invention by writing a long paragraph on “The Young Master Builder” in which he represents Jesus as a contractor because of “His interest in the foundations of the temple, His parable of the houses built on a rock or on the sand,” etc.; because He showed skill in training His disciples as if He had been accustomed to direct large groups of men in His youth; because He seemed to show partiality to the viewpoint of the employer in some of His parables! (The Life and Teachings of Jesus, pp. 55, 56). It would be hard to conceive a more ridiculous line of argument than this paragraph affords. Other Christian writers of the early centuries represent Jesus as a goldsmith. But this has no historic basis. It probably is a reflection of the general scorn for manual labor. The title “The Carpenter,” applied to Jesus in derision, forever ennobles honest toil.

While the Scriptures make plain this phase of Jesus’ early life, they do not suggest that He ever went to school. He was accustomed to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath day for worship (Luke 4:16). But the only time we find Him in the attitude of receiving instruction from men is in the temple at Jerusalem where He confounded the sages of Israel by His questions and answers. This question of how Jesus developed thrusts us into the presence of the profound mystery of the incarnation. The Roman Catholic View

There are three views of Jesus’ youth. One is that held by the Roman Catholics. It represents Jesus, the boy, as a miracle worker performing the most astounding things in the presence of the townspeople of Nazareth. The ridiculous stories told by the Apocryphal Gospels have been

adopted and developed by the Roman Church. These tales were merely the attempt of early Christians to fill in this period from their imagination and thus tickle the fancy of the public or else prove various heretical views. This is completely contradictory to the New Testament which plainly represents the miracle at Cana as the “first of his miracles” (John 2:11), and represents the people of Nazareth as amazed that such a quiet character as Jesus should be performing miracles. The Modernistic View At the other extreme stands the modernistic view that Jesus was simply a normal boy making His mistakes just as other boys do. This is held by some who still claim to believe in the sinlessness of Jesus. This is an example of the radicals’ disregard of logic. For if Jesus made His mistakes in His youth, at what stage in His development did He cease to make mistakes and begin to live a perfect life? If His innate divine personality did not make His life errorless, what produced the change from an imperfect to a perfect life? To say that the coming of the Holy Spirit at His baptism produced the change is merely to join hands with the first century heretics. What is the meaning of this very baptismal scene if it does not teach that Jesus had lived in His youth without sin? He denied any consciousness of sin in His discussions with the Pharisees. His youth is certainly included in the sweep of these declarations. The radical view that the youth of Jesus was entirely normal means nothing more than the ancient heresy that He was not the Son of God from eternity, but became the Son of God at His baptism. This view is even further from the New Testament than that held by the Roman Catholics. The New Testament View

Written in the boldest letters across the story of His birth in both Matthew and Luke, there is the word “unique.” After thirty years He began His public ministry and in a thousand different ways the Gospels affirm that His life during this period was “unique.” How shall the gap be bridged? What right has anyone to write “normal” across the youth of Jesus? The Scripture asserts that the life of Jesus was normal on the physical side both during His youth and public ministry and that His mental life was unique during both periods. We read that during His public ministry He hungered, thirsted, was weary, was tempted, suffered, etc.; and at times He expresses surprise or chagrin while at other times His mental life is unique — reading the hearts of others or the course of the future; but He did not share our experience in sins or mistakes or shortcomings. Luke says of the young child, “the child grew and waxed strong” (euxane, kai ekrataiouto —Luke 2:40). This denotes normal physical growth, for the same language is used of the child John the Baptist (“The child euxane” —Luke 1:80); but here comes a radical change in the description. He asserts of John: “He grew and waxed strong in spirit.” But he says of Jesus: “He grew and waxed strong, being completely filled [pleroumenon] with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.” This statement covers the period of His life prior to twelve years of age, for Luke 2:41 takes up the story at that point and illustrates by detailed account what kind of boy Jesus was. The important word in the passage is pleroumenon — “being completely filled.” Some illuminating cases of the use of this word in the New Testament are as follows: “The fish-net was completely filled with fish” (Matthew 13:48); “They completely filled both boats [with fish] so that they began to sink” (Luke 5:7); when Mary broke her box of ointment, “the house was completely filled with the odor of the ointment” (John 12:3). Again, on the day of Pentecost, “they were all completely filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:4). But now, most important of all, when Paul struggles to find words to express the mysteries of the incarnation, his favorite word is this verb pleroo in its various forms. “For in him dwelleth all the fullness [pleroma] of the Godhead bodily,” is a decisive passage (Colossians 2:9). Now, this is the same word Luke chooses when he says that even in the earliest days of His boyhood Jesus “was completely filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.” The

latter phrase Luke also reserves for reference to the Child Jesus, and points clearly to the word “unique.” This does not mean that all of the wisdom and magnificence of the ministry of Jesus is to be reflected back into His childhood. After Luke says that the child was “completely filled with wisdom,” he also says “He increased in wisdom.” In other words, Jesus developed, but His development was unique. At each stage, His wisdom was complete for the requirements of the occasion. In the Temple The scene in the temple proves that whenever extraordinary occasions arose God gave Him directly the necessary wisdom and power. Joining the two declarations (Luke 2:40 and Luke 2:52) and interpreting by concrete illustration his first declaration that Jesus “was completely filled with wisdom,” Luke presents a picture of the boy of twelve sitting in the midst of the most learned scholars of Israel, “both hearing them, and asking them questions: and all that heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.”

“And when they saw him they were astonished.” Joseph and Mary were astonished because Jesus had not been making an idle show of His wisdom and powers in the home or in the village of Nazareth. But He had the divine wisdom and power when the occasion demanded. The clinching evidence is this: In answer to their rebuke, Jesus says: “How is it that ye sought me? Know ye not that I must be in my Father’s house?” (or “about my Father’s business?”). Three conclusions are evident: (1) Jesus affirmed He was not bound to Mary and Joseph by the ordinary bonds of obedience as the normal boy. He went back, and was “subject to them in all things,” but here He was again “fulfilling all righteousness.” (2) He recognized, in some measure at least, that He occupied a unique relationship to God. Study the use of the words “my Father” in the mouth of Jesus during His ministry. Jesus corrected Mary. She, falling into the popular usage, had said, “Thy father and I.” Jesus said, “God is my Father.” (3) He recognized that He had a high and holy mission that set Him apart from the normal regulations of a home. Again He corrected Mary. She had set forth that He had not been faithful to the obligations of their home. He responded that He had been fulfilling a higher obligation in His Father’s house. How much He knew of His divine mission at this time, we do not know, but He certainly did not learn any of the above things in any schoolroom or from Mary. The scene proves His direct contact with God. God was filling Him completely with wisdom as the occasion of increasing years demanded.

Solitude

Amid the busy life in carpenter shop, home, and synagogue, were there not many hours and days of solitude? The scene in the temple at Jerusalem emphasizes His loneliness. Even Mary did not understand His nature and purposes. Hours of silent communion with God in mountain or desert formed a large part of His intensely active public ministry. How much more would we expect this while He waited at Nazareth for the coming of the Holy Spirit as the apostles waited in Jerusalem before Pentecost. From the summit of a mountain at Nazareth Jesus could sit overlooking the old Roman road and watch the caravans carrying the commerce of the Eastern world toward Egypt or Syria. Here or occasionally in the desert or by the lake shore, the Boy and the Man must have meditated on the needs of a lost world and engaged in constant communion with the heavenly Father.

Service A modern writer of fiction has furnished a most beautiful and satisfactory picture of the youth of Jesus. Ben-Hur lies in the dusty road at Nazareth, disheveled, exhausted, famished, and in chains. The Roman soldiers, halting for the moment, stand scowling at the villagers and none

dare help the unfortunate prisoner,

“Thereupon a youth who came up with Joseph, but had stood behind him, unobserved, laid down an axe He had been carrying, and, going to the great stone standing by the well, took from it a pitcher of water. The action was so quiet that before the guard could interfere, had they been disposed to do so, He was stooping over the prisoner, and offering him a drink” (Ben-Hur, p. 130). A gentle hand laid upon the shoulder of young Ben-Hur and a single look from wondrous eyes drive out of his heart the hatred and the feverish plans for revenge for the cruel wrong he has suffered. The hand of the young Nazarene is placed upon his head with a subdued blessing and the soldiers move on with their prisoner.

All of the miracles were compressed into His public ministry, but certainly not all of His divine understanding or His love and His deeds of kindness. Whatever else transpired during His youth at Nazareth, we can be sure that much of it was devoted to quiet and loving service.

031. Chapter 10 - Notes on the Youth of Jesus

Chapter 10 - Notes on the Youth of Jesus Herod and the Infants of Bethlehem

Herod was the second son of Antipater, an Idumaean (descendant of Esau). His mother was Cyprus, an Arabian. He became King of the Jews through favor of the Romans. Able and courageous, but jealous and cruel, he became half insane toward the close of his life and tried to murder everybody who seemed to threaten his throne. He killed his wife Mariamne and three of his sons. He killed his son Antipater just five days before his own death. He commanded a large group of the nobles among the Jews to be assembled and killed at his death in order that there should be a sufficient amount of mourning. All of this agrees perfectly with the brief picture as given by Matthew. Nevertheless, Keim, J. Weiss, Meyer, Pflieiderer et al. attempt to deny the account of the slaughter of the infants. Meyer says it is a myth because Herod would have sent a guard with the Magi. The perversity of unbelief! The story is not true because the foresight of Herod did not equal the afterthought of a modern German critic! Herod chose craft rather than force. He evidently felt the extraordinary devotion of the Wisemen would lead them to give up the search rather than expose the Child to danger, if soldiers or any show of force should arouse their suspicions as to his real intention.

Much is made of the silence of Josephus concerning this slaughter of infants. But his general silence concerning Christ destroys the force of this objection. Ryder remarks that it is not surprising that Josephus should not have made a catalogue of all of the evil deeds of Herod. Bethlehem was probably a small village so that not many children were slain.

Prophesies

Matthew calls attention to three Old Testament prophecies concerning the youth of Jesus. “Out of Egypt did I call my son” (Hosea 11:1) refers primarily to the leading of Israel out of Egypt. But Matthew points out that the word of the prophet is fulfilled in the return of Jesus from Egypt. How strikingly the words apply to Jesus! The prophecy of Jeremiah concerning Rachel’s weeping for her children is another example of a double fulfillment (Jeremiah 31:15). The primary reference is to the carrying away of Israel to Babylon. The prophet boldly represents Rachel as weeping over the destruction of her descendants. What a dramatic figure! It is as if Rachel were coming forth from her tomb near Bethlehem where she had been buried centuries before, robed in white and bowed in silent anguish! Matthew shows that in the slaughter of the infants there is another fulfillment of this same prophecy. There is nothing incongruous in a prophecy referring to more than one event and having more than one fulfillment. The third reference is the citation of “the prophets” that He should be a “Nazarene.” No such explicit prophecy is to be found in any of the prophets. Some hold that Nazareth comes from a word meaning “Watcher” or “Saviour.” But it is more likely that Nazareth comes from the Hebrew Netzer (root) which is used by Isaiah as referring to the Messiah. He speaks of the “root” that shall spring up out of the dry ground (Isaiah 11:1). A third suggestion as to what Matthew means by this citation is that all the prophecies which depict contempt and suffering for the Christ find their fulfillment in this despised place in which He

was reared. Either of the latter suggestions would explain the reference of Matthew.

Nazareth

Nazareth is sixty miles north of Jerusalem and twenty miles southwest of Capernaum. It lies on the slope of a ridge and is entirely surrounded by mountains. It is not mentioned in the Old Testament, the writings of Josephus or the Talmud. This is additional proof that it was an insignificant town. The population was small and the soil of the neighborhood very poor. European capital has built here in modern times the largest town of Galilee. The only source of water supply is from a spring underneath the floor of the Greek church. The little village, though so secluded, was close to Roman roads. The main artery of commerce over the mountains from Galilee to the Sea passed within two or three miles. Roman ruins are near the village.

McGarvey speaks of Nazareth as “a place whose inhabitants were of bad repute, but one whose poverty of soil naturally led to poverty of morals and intelligence.” The reputation of Nazareth is disputed among scholars. Some hold that “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” means only that the village was small and unimportant in the eyes of the citizens of the flourishing town of Bethsaida. The fact that Joseph and Mary were from Nazareth shows that not all the people were bad. However, the form of Nathanael’s question and the reception given Jesus during His ministry both argue strongly for an unsavory reputation.

032. Chapter 11 - The Youth of Jesus in the Apocryphal Gospels

Chapter 11 - The Youth of Jesus in the Apocryphal Gospels Nature of the Apocryphal Gospels

Apocryphal means “hidden.” There were afloat in the early church a number of so-called Gospels of uncertain origin. Some of them claimed to be inspired, using the name of an apostle as author, imitating the language and style of the New Testament writers. They attempted to give additional material which, on examination, turns out to be “harmless and ingenious fictions, intended either to gratify the fancy or to silence the enemies of Christianity.” Some books expounding heretical ideas are included in this group. The Dominican Fathers, Richard and Giroud (Bibliotheque Sacre), refer to the Apocryphal Gospels as “those which are not publicly read, although they may be read with edification in private.” While these Apocryphal Gospels were frowned upon by early Christian writers (the Apostolic Constitutions refers to them as “poisonous apocryphal books”), the ignorant masses enjoyed them immensely and Catholic writers adopted and revised them so that they grew into the “Golden Legend” of the thirteenth century which was translated into all the languages of Europe.

Summary of the Documents The Apocryphal Gospels are known through the decree of Pope Gelasius, quotations in early Christian literature, and extant MSS. A list of the principal Apocryphal Gospels is as follows:

Gospel of the Nativity of Mary. (Found in the works of Jerome a.d. 420. Probably written in second century. The basis of the “Golden Legend.” Contains eight chapters. Exalts Mary. Used by early heretics to prove that Jesus was not the Son of God before His baptism. Cf. citations in the chapter on Mary.) The Gospel of the Infancy. (Arabic and Latin Versions published by Sike 1697. Oldest extant MS dates 1299. Used by Gnostics in second century. It has twenty-two chapters. Mohammed seems to have used this Gospel and copied some of its legends. Extensive citations below.)

Gospel of Thomas. (Probably written by Gnostic. Published by Cotelerius. Contains four chapters. Gives legends concerning the infancy of Jesus.)

History of Joseph the Carpenter. (First mentioned in sixteenth century by Isolanis. Translation in Arabic now preserved in East.) The Protevangelium of James. (MS in Greek. Quoted by Tertullian, Origen, and many others. MS brought from the East and published in 1552 by Postellus. Contains sixteen chapters. Cf. citations in the chapter on Mary.)

Gospel of Marcion. (The heretic Marcion cut up the Gospel of Luke to suit his fancy and published it. Hahn has reconstructed this Gospel from quotations in Tertullian and Epiphanius.) The Gospel of Nicodemus or the Acts of Pilate. (Published by Grynaeus. Probably written in third century. Romance founded on New Testament account of death and resurrection of Christ.) The Greek Gospel of St. John. (MS of thirteenth century.) The Gospel of the Egyptians. (Written very early. Frequently quoted by writers of third century.)

Epistles of Christ and Abgarus. (Preserved by Eusebius. Purports to be brief letter from Abgarus, King of Edessa, to Jesus during His ministry and reply by Jesus. Popular among the common people of England as late as nineteenth century.)

All of this apocryphal material has been collected in a single volume by M. R. James (The Apocryphal New Testament — Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1924). The Gospel of the Infancy In order to give an idea of the character of stories told in these Apocryphal Gospels, the following summary is offered of the records given in The First Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus Christ. The author pretends to have his information from Caiaphas, the High Priest. As Joseph and Mary are going to Bethlehem to be taxed they stop outside the town in a cave. Joseph goes in search of a Hebrew woman to act as midwife, but returns to find the cave filled with great lights and the Infant in the arms of His mother. The old Hebrew woman is cured by touching the Child. The shepherds come and make a fire ready for the family. The heavenly hosts appear and sing. As an Infant in the cradle, Jesus informs Mary that He is the Son of God. The Wisemen preserve one of His swaddling clothes which proves indestructible. When Jesus is presented in the temple, He shines like a pillar of light and the angels stand around adoring Him. When the family flees to Egypt, they stop in a city, a great idol falls from its pedestal, and the son of the priest is healed of infirmity. They flee to the haunts of robbers who are frightened away by a miraculous noise. Water is supplied by springs bursting forth. All sorts of cures are performed by the afflicted touching the Child, His clothing, or by being sprinkled with the water in which He has been bathed. A young man who had been bewitched and turned into a mule is miraculously cured by the Infant's being placed upon his back, and is married to a girl who had just been cured of leprosy. Joseph and Mary pass through a country infested by robbers. Titus, a humane thief, offers Dumachus, his comrade, forty goats to let Joseph and Mary pass without giving the alarm. The Infant prophesies that the two thieves shall be crucified and that Titus shall go before Him into Paradise. Jesus works miracles in Memphis and they return to Nazareth. Here Jesus and other boys play together and make clay figures of animals. Jesus causes them to walk and also makes clay birds which He causes to fly, eat, and drink. He goes to a dyer's shop and throws all the clothes into the furnace, but brings them forth again unharmed and miraculously dyed. The king of Jerusalem gives Joseph an order for a throne. Joseph works on it for two years in the king's palace and makes it two spans too short. Jesus lengthens it by a miracle. He miraculously widens or contracts the gates, milk pails, or boxes not properly made by Joseph.

It is useless to record the many malicious deeds which are attributed to Him in these Apocryphal Gospels. He is even represented as striking dead, children who run against Him or who annoy Him while at play. The scene in the temple when Jesus was twelve years old is recorded with many elaborations, and here the author ceases his inventions with the statement: "Now from this time Jesus began to conceal His miracles and secret works and gave Himself to the study of law, till He arrived at the end of His thirtieth year." Then the book abruptly ends with a reference to the baptism of Jesus. This probably means merely that the author's imagination was exhausted and he had to quit. Their Origin

Such accounts bear their refutation on their own face to those acquainted with the New Testament. The writers took the materials of the New Testament and developed them with an imagination that is often coarse and perverted. It is hard to understand how any Christian could write such stories about Jesus' slaying children right and left in His youth. The astounding

differences between these stories and the beautiful and reserved accounts of the New Testament offer striking evidence of the divine inspiration of the latter. The romantic inventors who wrote the Apocryphal Gospels did not even take the time to read their New Testament with any care. For instance, the infant Jesus is represented as saying the robber Titus should go before Him into Paradise, whereas Jesus died before the robbers and their legs had to be broken to hasten their lingering death (John 19:32, John 19:33).

Critical Estimate

It may be possible that popular tradition should have handed down some information about the life of Jesus not included in the Gospels, but it is impossible to disentangle “the two grains of wheat from the two bushels of chaff” in the Apocryphal Gospels. The sayings of Jesus reported in all extant ancient literature outside of the New Testament have been carefully collected by Resch. Prof. J. H. Ropes of Harvard has given the entire collection a searching examination in his monograph Die Sprueche Jesu. He came to the conclusion that there is no extant saying of Jesus which is not recorded in the Bible or which did not take its rise from the Bible.

033. Chapter 12 - The Youth of Jesus in the Mind of the Modernist

Chapter 12 - The Youth of Jesus in the Mind of the Modernist The Modernistic Tendency The current tendency to deny the miracles of Jesus and so strongly emphasize His humanity as to destroy His divinity expresses itself in picturing the youth of Jesus as entirely normal. It has become the fashion even among men of sterling faith to fall in with this tendency so far as to attribute only moral perfection to Jesus in His youth and to suppose that physically and mentally He was as imperfect as any other boy. A very moderate statement of this view is as follows: “I can understand how that Jesus, when He was going to school, made mistakes in His lessons, as you and I did, while He was increasing His wisdom. I can even understand how He made mistakes in trying to learn the carpenter trade, in running errands for His mother, and in many other ways, just as you and I did. I can understand how He might have done these things if He was made in all things like unto His brethren and took upon Himself the likeness of our flesh.” This is coupled with a hair-splitting attempt to discriminate between mistakes and sins and the argument that such mistakes as described above would not be sins. The Perfection of Jesus That Jesus lived a sinless life is directly affirmed by the Book of Hebrews and is plainly intimated by Jesus Himself and the entire New Testament. The attempt to separate the life of Jesus off into air-tight compartments — physical, mental, and spiritual — is not very impressive. There is not the slightest suggestion that Jesus ever suffered any physical ailments or diseases. The very opposite is implied. He needed no physician. He was the great Physician for all the race. In the same way it is nowhere stated or implied that Jesus ever suffered from the mental ailments that cause errors and mistaken judgments. On the other hand He is set forth as the great and inerrant Teacher of the race. Did Jesus Go to School?

It is well to remember in reconstructing the youth of Jesus that not merely the Child Jesus but also the Boy and Man are included in any assertions as to mistakes or imperfections.

Some critics argue that since Christ “increased in favor of God” (Luke 2:52), He must have changed from a sinful to a sinless state at some stage of His development. They argue that the only thing that can win God’s favor is such a moral change. But the mere question as to when and how such a change took place in the character of Jesus explodes this theory. He evidently increased in God’s favor as He grew in stature and capacity. His steadfast and perfect use of the powers bestowed at each stage of development must have evoked God’s favor. The increasing power and achievements of His boyhood would be a reason for the increasing favor of God. It is not necessary to drag the youth of Jesus down into the mire of sin in order to see how God’s favor increased toward Him. It is a far cry from the picture that Jesus “when He was going to school, made mistakes in His lessons, as you and I did, while He was increasing in wisdom,” to the picture that Luke presents of the very young Child being “completely filled with wisdom.” And the scene in the temple at the age of twelve follows immediately and interprets the above phrase. The picture of Jesus clumsy of hand and foot in the carpenter shop, suffering the rebuke of the village schoolmaster or forgetting what His mother wanted Him to do on an errand is a complete contradiction of the records of Luke. Our previous study has shown that Jesus’ reply to His mother

in the temple proves that He was in direct touch with the heavenly Father. His words reveal, not the information current in a village synagogue, but rather a divine wisdom. Would God give Christ that wisdom to confound the learned doctors in Jerusalem and desert Him in the schoolroom at Nazareth, leaving Him nonplused and helpless before the village schoolmaster? The whole proposition that Jesus went to school in His youth is a figment of the imagination. The Gospel narratives never picture Him in the attitude of seeking information from men. His critics who found themselves unable to comprehend or withstand His teachings bore unconscious testimony to this. But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. The Jews therefore marveled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Jesus therefore answered them and said, My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me.

— John 7:14-16. The citation of Hebrews 2:17 that He was made “in all points like unto his brethren” must apply to the entire earthly career of Jesus. If this is cited to prove that Jesus was a normal boy making mistakes as other boys do, it must also be admitted to prove that Jesus made His mistakes during His public ministry just as other men do. This leaves neither certainty nor authority for His entire teaching and life. But nothing could be further from the mind of the author of Hebrews than this. His argument is that Jesus was not an angel, but a man. He shared flesh and blood with us. He was tempted; He suffered for us. But no author is stronger or clearer in specific assertions of the unique personality of Jesus and that He did not share the limitations of knowledge and power that cause us to err constantly. The Gospels represent that Jesus failed at times: the unbelief of the people of Nazareth caused Him to fail to do the mighty works there He had done elsewhere; the unbelief of the Scribes and Pharisees caused Him to fail to win them. But there is not the slightest suggestion that He ever failed when it was His own fault, when His own ignorance or weakness caused the failure. Jesus failed, but only in the sense that God fails when, through the exercise of the sovereign power of the freedom of the will, man in his perversity thwarts God’s plans. The Mystery of the Incarnation The fact that Jesus frankly admitted during His ministry that He did not know the time of His second coming does not impinge upon the perfection of His character for He declared that God had not revealed this to Him. In exactly the same way, the fact that He increased in wisdom during His youth does not mar the perfection of Jesus for Luke also affirms that He was completely filled with wisdom. Imperfection is sin, if perfection is possible. Any imperfection for which Christ was responsible would have been a sin. The fact that Jesus was subject to temptation does not mar His perfection. God can not be tempted of evil. It is impossible for God to lie or to commit any evil. Jesus was tempted. It was possible for Jesus to do wrong or temptation would have had no meaning for Him. This is part of the mystery of the incarnation. But the fact that Jesus could be tempted does not impair His character any more than the fact that He did not know the time of His second coming. These were limitations which God in His infinite wisdom had decreed His Son should endure while in the flesh. Temptation is not a sin; it is the yielding to temptation that is sinful.

Unbelief of the People of Nazareth The fact that the people of Nazareth did not recognize anything unique in His character and conduct during His youth is cited by modernists to prove that His youth was normal. It is well to examine these witnesses before they are permitted to take the stand in this case. Who were they? The unbelievers of Nazareth who are summoned by the unbelievers of the twentieth century to help them to sustain their case! If the unbelieving attitude of the people of Nazareth proves that Jesus was normal in His youth, then their testimony also proves that Jesus

never worked miracles in His ministry and that He was but a mere man. They rejected Him and His claims completely. If their testimony is valid, then it discredits not merely the perfection of Jesus' youth, but also the power and uniqueness of His ministry. Two conclusions may be drawn from their failure to recognize the unique character and conduct of Jesus in His youth. One is that their unbelief and callous indifference had utterly blinded them to the facts of His youth and to the miraculous facts of His ministry. The other is that Jesus had made no display of His virtue, wisdom or power during His youth at Nazareth. The visit to the temple at the age of twelve seems to be a single gleam of light which He permitted to shine forth during this whole period. He gave proof of His miraculous information on this occasion, but after this lapsed into utter obscurity as He made Himself subject to Joseph and Mary. At any further visits to the temple He probably did not engage the scholars in any further discussion; else the ministry of Jesus would have been pushed back into His youth and the attention of the nation focussed upon Him as a boy. When He came to the temple for other feasts, He doubtless was lost in the great crowd and attracted no attention. There is no reason why the people of Nazareth could not have overlooked His unique character. It is always easy for the world to overlook virtuous persons, if they are obscure. The selfish, wicked character of the people of Nazareth accentuated their blindness to the character of Jesus. Those who hesitate to affirm that Jesus had miraculous guidance in His youth need to ponder the prediction of the angel concerning John the Baptist: "He shall be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb." If John the Baptist grew up in the wilderness, without instruction from a village schoolmaster, but instructed and guided by the Holy Spirit, how much more is this miraculous guidance true of the Son of God? For of Him it is written: "But Jesus did not trust himself unto them, for that he knew all men, and because he needed not that any one should bear witness concerning man; for he himself knew what was in man" (John 2:24-25). The Uniqueness of Jesus When Jesus came to this world, He emptied Himself, says Paul, of His heavenly glory; but even as a young Child, asserts Luke, God "completely filled him with wisdom" — furnishing that measure of wisdom and strength which each stage of development and each occasion demanded. If Jesus had made a mistake, it would certainly have been a violation of His conscience. He would have failed to use the wisdom and power God was returning to Him and would have failed to do what was justly expected of Him. Jesus did not always attempt what was required of Him by His critics. He did not leap from the pinnacle of the temple, neither did He show a sign from Heaven. He only attempted that which could justly be required of Him. And His inspired biographers insistently represent His life as errorless. We cannot fill in the details of how Jesus spent His time during His childhood and during His early manhood. But we can be sure that His life was unique, free from sin, and absolutely full of divine wisdom and perfection at every stage of His development.

034. Chapter 13 - The Ministry of John the Baptist

Chapter 13 - The Ministry of John the Baptist Matthew 3:1-12;Mark 1:1-8;Luke 3:1-18;John 1:19-28 The Man

“Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist.” Such is the estimate of the man and his works pronounced by the Son of God. Yet his superlative greatness consists in the fact that he was the forerunner of Christ. For “he that is but little in the kingdom is greater than he.” This was because John was never in the kingdom. He preceded it. He is the connecting link between the Old and the New Dispensations. He is the thundering voice of judgment calling Israel to repent and prepare for their coming King.

Parentage and Birth

John was born of the priestly line. Both Zacharias and Elisabeth were descendants of Aaron. They were both pious and of exemplary life. They were lifted out of the commonplace by the birth of this great prophet. The visit of Gabriel to Zacharias in the temple, the affliction of dumbness, the extreme age of the couple, and the loosing of Zacharias’ tongue at the time of the naming of John all caused the friends and acquaintances of the family to treasure these events and to say, “What then shall this child be?”

Youth The youth of John is even more obscure than that of Jesus. His extraordinary birth reminds us of Isaac, Samuel, and Samson. Like the latter two, he was dedicated to the service of God from his birth. By command of the angel he was a Nazarite; his hair remained uncut and he abstained from all strong drink. The prediction: “He shall be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb” was fulfilled for “the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts until the day of his showing unto Israel.” This summarizes all we know of the youth of John. Did his parents live in the desert country or did they move there after his birth? Were they so old when the child was born that they died in his boyhood and left the child to grow up in the wild and barren desert country? Does the plural “deserts” indicate a nomadic life? One cannot answer these questions, but it is certain that he grew up unknown and unheralded just as Jesus did at Nazareth and that the years of his youth were spent in the desert where he was guided by the Spirit and stored daily in his soul the outbursts of fiery denunciation and prophetic grandeur that startled Israel and brought the whole nation to his feet.

Opening of Ministry

John’s ministry did not open in Jerusalem. The sacred city with all of its rich heritage of traditions, its assembly of leaders and teeming multitudes would seem the logical place for the forerunner of the Messiah to begin his ministry. But John’s whole personality and message were of the desert. In such a setting he spoke with a thousand-fold greater power. Transformed to a court setting later in his ministry, his bold denunciations brought the speedy end of his life.

Multitudes

How did John manage to get an audience in the desert? And such an audience! How did he begin? How many heard his first message? What caused their assemblage? What brought the pressing crowds? Isaiah had called him a “voice.” This is the high title he insistently claims: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness.” The Greek word Bo a on (crying), in the very pronunciation of the letters and in the root meaning, suggests one crying aloud in a tremendous and thrilling voice. Did that mighty voice with its startling message explain the swift assembly of the multitudes from “Jerusalem and all Judaea and the region round about the Jordan”? Was it the burning denunciation or the prophecy of the approach of the Messiah? Was it the eccentric, the wild, uncanny appearance and mode of life — the outward expressions of a towering personality? Was it the practice of such a unique rite as baptism? Was it the electric atmosphere surcharged with Messianic expectation which caused this meteor to set the whole nation ablaze? It took a great miracle to assemble the crowd on the day of Pentecost. The miracles of Jesus helped to assemble His crowds. This lonely and magnificent figure in the desert probably attracted the multitudes by a combination of personality, message, and expectant atmosphere.

Message

It seems a very odd thing to call a man “A Voice.” Yet is not every life a voice? Do we not all speak forth a message that is the epitome of our lives? Not always with the lips is this message spoken. “What you are speaks so loud, I can’t hear what you say. John’s whole being was expressed in his message: “Prepare ye the way of the Lord.”

Judgment on the Nation The foremost element in his message is a stirring prediction of judgment on the nation: “The axe is laid at the root of the tree” — that which is worth — less is about to be hewn down and cast into the fire. The wheat is to be separated from the chaff. The one will be preserved and the other destroyed. The heaviest of his thunderbolts are hurled at the rich, the arrogant and the hypocritical — the Scribes and Pharisees, the religious leaders of Israel. Their haughty pride is contrasted with the humble repentance of the multitude. “Ye offspring of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” This message dovetails into the closing words of the Old Testament. Malachi ends with a prediction of the coming of John and of fearful judgment. “For, behold, the day cometh, it burneth as a furnace; and all the proud and all that work wickedness shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up sayeth the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave neither root nor branch but unto you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness rise with healing in its wings….Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord come” (Malachi 4:1, Malachi 4:2, Malachi 4:5).

How this terrific message from John fits the desert background and his astounding personality! What courage it took to denounce the Pharisees themselves! Is anything more to be deplored in modern preaching than the lack of condemnation of sin? Scarcity of vision or courage has silenced many pulpits. The modernist holds there is no such thing as sin: it is just human idiosyncrasy — just good in the process of becoming better. The theory of evolution has dimmed the consciousness of sin and filled men with self-sufficiency and pride. John’s message is the message for our own time.

Repentance A second element in his preaching was the call to repentance. The imminence of the Christ and the kingdom is given as the urgent motive. John demanded that the people give practical evidence of their sorrow for sin by righteous living and generous service. The multitudes

who had been shut out of religious privileges by the highbrow Jewish leaders and were scorned as “sinners” hastened to obey the summons to repentance. But the Scribes and Pharisees held aloof in proud disdain. The multitudes gave proof of sincerity and zeal by asking what they must do and were told to share food and raiment with the unfortunate. The Publicans and soldiers were warned against the abuse of power; the former were told to avoid extortion and the latter to refrain from violence and false accusations and to be content with their wages.

Baptism

Another element in John’s preaching was a profound emphasis upon the impressive ordinance of baptism which he introduced. This was something new. Ceremonial cleansing was common among the Jews for it was much emphasized in the law, but in the Old Testament the man always plunged himself. Naaman is a good example. Proselyte baptism was practiced among the Jews at a much later period and was merely an imitation of Christian baptism. The ceremonial cleansing practiced among the Jews and especially among the Essenes was repeated from day to day, but the baptism of John was an act performed but once. Moreover, John represented that his baptism was “of repentance unto the remission of sins.” This is entirely different from a ceremonial cleansing. It gives a deep moral and spiritual significance to the ordinance. It must have created a sensation for John to have made himself the administrator of baptism to all who repented and heeded his message.

Those who are puzzled as to how baptism can be for the remission of sins need also to wonder how the death of Christ can be for the remission of sins. Those who scorn the idea that water can have anything to do with salvation need also to consider how blood can have any part in the divine plan of redemption. Is the mystery of the necessity for man’s obedience in baptism any greater than that of the necessity of Christ’s death on the cross? It is God’s prerogative to offer pardon and stipulate the means. It is ours to obey.

Messianic Message The climax of John’s message is the startling prediction that the kingdom of heaven is at hand and that the Christ is about to appear. This doubtless created the excited interest of all the nation. All Israel and especially the Galileans were on fire with Messianic hopes at this time. The atmosphere needed but the prediction of John to set it aflame. From all sides the question was flung at John: “Are you the Christ?” His denial was couched in such humble terms as to add to the fascinating vision of the greatness of the Christ. The Time of John’s Ministry The long introductory paragraph with which Luke begins his record of John’s ministry is very impressive. He attempts to establish the date of John’s ministry from six different starting points. This has often been compared to the introduction of the History of Thucydides. The six-fold effort shows the difficulty of dating events in that early time. It also shows that we have here an event of supreme importance. (As to the significance of the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, see the chapter on the Date of Jesus’ Birth.

Place

“All the country round about the Jordan.” “This expression covers a considerable portion of the Jordan Valley at least as far north as Succoth (2 Chronicles 4:17). The Baptist, therefore, moved north from the limestone desert on the W. Shore of the Dead Sea, and perhaps went almost the whole length of the valley to the confines of the Sea of Galilee….John was sometimes on one

bank and sometimes on the other, for we read of his working in Peraea. (John 10:40). His selection of the valley of the Jordan as his sphere of work was partly determined by the need of water for immersion" (Plummer on Luke 3:3).

Habits

John's habits partook of the fearful austerity of the desert. He roamed the wilderness. He is never pictured as being entertained in the home of a friend. Of him, it is literally true that he had "no place to lay his head." He was reared "in the deserts." During his ministry, he moved about as the necessity of securing deep enough water for immersion or as his desires dictated. The crowds followed him.

He wore a simple, coarse mantle of cloth woven from the hair of camels. This seems to have been the kind of mantle Elijah wore (2 Kings 2:8). A leather girdle completed his attire. The critics have had extended discussions as to whether John ate locusts. Cheyne thinks it impossible that a man should actually eat locusts. He thinks the original word in the Hebrew text meant "husks." He cites the prodigal son who would share the "husks" which the swine were eating. Some early Syriac commentators said that John ate the roots of plants and not locusts. The Gospel used by the Ebionites had egkrides (sweet cakes) instead of akrides (locusts). This would have John enjoying luxury instead of austerity and would give him a rather one-sided diet — sweet cakes and honey! It is strange that this should have caused such discussion or that a scholar should get so busy rattling dry bones in his study as to know so little about real life. The Mosaic law expressly provides that four kinds of locusts may be eaten and the poor people of Palestine still eat locusts. When the great swarms of locusts sweep across the Philippine Islands, making the air black, the natives go out and capture enormous quantities and have a great feast.

Some think that the honey he ate was secured from a plant, but there is still much honey of wild bees in the woods of Palestine. He lived in the desert, he wore clothing of the desert, and he ate the meager food of the desert — locusts and wild honey. His rigorous habits caused his enemies to say, "He hath a devil."

Message

John's condemnation of sin was particularly bold and incisive. Luke summarizes his general indictment while Matthew shows that his charges were directed particularly against the Pharisees and Sadducees. He called them "Generation of Vipers." Plummer notes that "John's metaphors, like those of the prophecy (ver. 5), are from the wilderness; — vipers, stones, and barren trees. It is from this stern, but fresh and undesecrated region, and not from the 'Holy', but polluted City, that the regenerating movement proceeds (Is. xli. 18)" (Plummer, Commentary on Luke, p. 89).

Why criticize the Pharisees and Sadducees when they were "coming to his baptism"? This phrase does not necessarily indicate that they were accepting John's baptism. The warning not to depend upon their kinship to Abraham suggests their scorn of his message. John 1:19 and Matthew 21:25 show that the religious leaders, instead of submitting to his movement, merely sent messengers to question John and to estimate its significance. The characteristic hypocrisy of the Pharisees is doubtless the cause of John's stern warnings not to accept his baptism as a mere religious form, but to bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

“The fan” (Matthew 3:12) is a wooden shovel with which the grain is thrown into the air so that the chaff may blow away while the heavier grain falls to the threshing floor.

Baptism in Fire The baptism in fire has been variously interpreted as (1) the tongues of fire at Pentecost; (2) trials and tribulations of the Christian; (3) the illuminating power of the Spirit; (4) the eternal punishment of the wicked. The first three explanations would make the baptism in fire and in the Holy Spirit one and the same thing. The last explanation sets forth that they are two different baptisms: baptism in the Holy Spirit for the righteous and baptism in fire for the wicked. This last explanation must be correct for John would hardly use “fire” with entirely different meanings in the same passage. In the preceding verse and in the next verse The chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire” refers without question to eternal punishment. This argues strongly for the same meaning in the preceding verse. This fits into the prophecy in the last chapter of Malachi where “fire” is used frequently, and in the sense of punishment.

Baptism in Holy Spirit The baptism in the Holy Spirit is interpreted by some to mean the common spiritual experience of all Christians. But the words of Jesus in Acts 1:5 make it plain that this refers to the miraculous baptism in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. This was shared by the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:44-48). Acts 1:5 declares that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is to take place “not many days hence,” but not the baptism in fire. There were some of each class before John as he spoke — some who would be baptized in the Holy Spirit; others, in fire. Christ is the administrator of both baptisms (John 16:7; Acts 1:1-8; and 2 Thessalonians 1:7).

John’s whole ministry was a flaming prediction and testimony concerning the Christ who was to take away the sins of the world. Jesus Himself seldom gave forth a more impassioned utterance than when He spoke in defense and in praise of John and declared, “Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist….And if ye are willing to receive it, this is the Elijah, that is to come” (Matthew 11:11, Matthew 11:14).

035. Chapter 14 - The Baptism of John and the Dead Sea Scrolls

Chapter 14 - The Baptism of John and the Dead Sea Scrolls Greek Mystery Religions

Those who have undertaken to deny the divine origin of the gospel and to reduce it to a process of evolution in which man discovers rather than God reveals have sought desperately to destroy the claims of the New Testament that the baptism of John was a new ordinance which had been directly revealed to John by God. Their attacks have followed three different lines. One of these has been the effort to connect the baptism of John with the practices of the Greek mystery religions (cf. discussion on pp. 94-95). But the ministry of John and that of Jesus and the whole history of the early church stand out in solid contradiction to any connection whatsoever with pagan religions. John's ministry was directed to the Jews. The same concentration of objective is seen in the ministry of Jesus, although there were occasional friendly contacts with Gentiles seeking Jesus' assistance. The gospel was to be for all the world and every creature, but it was revealed directly from God to the divinely chosen messengers. It was not concocted in imitation of pagan ideas and practices. The absence of any proof to show that there was any contact whatsoever between the origin of the church of Christ and Greek mystery religions as well as the failure to show any significant similarity between any practices in the Greek mystery religions and the baptism of John has caused this line of attack to suffer a general collapse. But it is still advocated by some radical writers such as Karl Barth (cf. pp. 94-96).

Jewish Proselyte Baptism A second effort to discredit the divine origin of John's baptism was based on the supposition that the Jews had begun to practice proselyte baptism in the period between the close of the Old Testament and the coming of John. John is supposed to have adopted a current Jewish practice of baptizing Gentiles as a ceremony inducting proselytes into the nation of Israel. This offered a means for unbelievers to deny the divine origin of John's baptism, for the Jews did not even claim any divine inspiration for their leaders after the close of the Old Testament canon with Ezra. But the most painstaking search of the literature of the period has failed to show any such practice as proselyte baptism among the Jews until the third century a.d. The Jews of this later period found themselves in strong competition with the Christians. They saw what a profoundly impressive ordinance Christian baptism was. They began a countermove of practicing proselyte baptism into Israel. In our own times the controversy over baptism which has taken place over so many years has led to the most careful search of all available material. Alexander Campbell in the debate with Nathan Rice cited the fact that there is absolutely no trace in extant literature of any practice of proselyte baptism by the Jews until the third century a.d. In our own century this diligent search has continued, but no evidence has been found to substantiate any earlier practice by the Jews. Jewish scholars eager to undermine the claims of the Christian gospel to divine origin have been particularly zealous to search in their own literature for such evidence. But it has been fruitless. Jewish writers have published three monographs attempting to prove that John borrowed his baptism from the proselyte baptism being practiced by the Jews before his time.

These writers rest their case on the same argument. They are unable to produce any evidence of Jewish proselyte baptism earlier than the third century a.d. But they declare that the fact the Jews practiced it at this date proves that the Christians borrowed it from the Jews because the Jews hated the Christians so much they would not have borrowed any practice from them; therefore the Christians must have borrowed it from the Jews some three centuries earlier. This attenuated argument is so feeble it hardly deserves discussion. The Jews hated the Egyptians who were grinding them into the mire of slavery, but where did the Jews get the golden calf they constructed at Mount Sinai except from the bull-god Apis of Egypt? Everywhere one turns in the Old Testament there is the evidence of Israel's turning away from the law to pagan idolatry in spite of the fact of the Jews' hatred of the Gentiles. In the second and third centuries a.d. we see the Jews imitating the Christians. The very effective use the Christians were making of the Septuagint caused the Jews to make a countermove in the production and promotion of the hostile translation of Aquila. In our own day the Y.M.H.A. is an imitation of the Y.M.C.A. No Such Ordinance in the Old Testament A doctrine of probabilities is offered by these Jewish scholars as an adequate contradiction of the known facts of history and the historic record of the New Testament. The fact that John was dubbed "the Baptist" or "the Baptizer" is clear evidence that here was something new and sensational in his ministry which set him apart from all around him or who preceded him. There is no such thing as baptism in the Old Testament. In the ceremonial cleansings the Jew was commanded t6 plunge himself in water, but this was entirely different from one person's baptizing another and God's making this a solemn, spiritual experience of surrender to God in which the forgiveness of sins was granted. The baptism of John was for the remission of sins (Matthew 3:6; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3) in the same sense that the Old Testament sacrifices were for the forgiveness of sins. Complete forgiveness was not possible until Jesus died on the cross for our sins. Up to this time the sins were rolled back until the final forgiveness was possible. Christian baptism began with Pentecost and delineated the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, even as it was the completing step in the divine plan of salvation by which actual forgiveness of sins was to be achieved.

Naaman was commanded to dip himself seven times in the Jordan River in order to be cleansed of his leprosy. But this was in no way parallel to the ordinance John initiated. The sensation which John's baptism caused at the capital led the Sanhedrin to send out a delegation to challenge John's right to initiate such a practice as baptism. The climax of the argument which ensued at the Jordan is seen in the question, "Why then baptizeth thou, if thou art not the Christ, neither Elijah, neither the prophet?" (John 1:25). John's answers to their questions rested on three foundations: (1) His direct claim to divine inspiration and specific revelation from God, "I am the voice." He declared that he was the fulfillment of the prediction in the Old Testament that God would inspire a messenger and send him forth in the desert to prepare the way for the Christ. (2) The Old Testament prophecies, whose divine inspiration had been declared, approved, and accepted, are the solid proof of his claims, even as he uses the very language they had declared. (3) The Christ, who is about to appear, will furnish the final proof of the truth of John's claim to be acting directly in obedience to the revealed will of God. All of this is set aside and denied if John merely adopted a practice already a current custom. The Essenes The third line of attack has been to associate John with the Essenes. This also is a very old attack. It was vying for favor among the radicals

back at the turn of the century. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls merely brought this theory back into the limelight: the theory that the Essenes had been practicing baptism before the time of John and that John borrowed the practice from them. Various attempts had been made for a long time to find some connection with the Essenes and to make out that the gospel is some sort of development of the Essenes' teaching and practice. Among the documents found in the cave at Ain Feska was a manual which evidently was one of the documents of the Essenes. A general description of this sect has already been given on pp. 45-50. The testimony of Josephus and Philo shows that this curious sect was concentrated in the wilderness west of the Dead Sea, although little colonies were found outside of towns in various parts of Palestine. Josephus claims special, intimate knowledge of the Essenes because he went to live among them for a time in order to secure firsthand information. The Dead Sea Scrolls

There has been violent argument among the scholars as to who put the scrolls in the cave at Ain Feska. There has been the theory that this was a library which belonged to the Essenes and that its extent shows that here was a great center of learning in Palestine. John the Baptist has been pictured as going to school here to the Essenes in his youth. Even Zacharias has been described as studying here under the instruction of the Essenes. Those advocating this theory declare that since the Essenes claimed to be the true teachers of Israel and to offer the true religion Zacharias naturally would have been enrolled in their school. One might as well argue that since the Pharisees claimed to be the teachers of the truth in Israel, Zacharias would have enrolled under them for study. But the New Testament is very emphatic that the baptism of John was from God and not from men.

John's Miraculous Inspiration The Gospel of Luke opens with the account of the direct revelation to Zacharias by the angel Gabriel in the temple. A most significant part of that revelation was the prediction that John "shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb." We are told by those who seek to show that John learned from Essene teachers and adopted their baptism, "If Moses was trained by pagan teachers in Egypt in all the arts and sciences of Egyptians, why not John by the Essenes?" But the Old Testament records that Moses received this early training when he was growing up in Pharaoh's court. On the contrary, Luke gives direct guidance by the Holy Spirit as the source of John's message and authority (Luke 1:15). As to his youth Luke declares, "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel" (Luke 1:80). Now if the truth of the matter is that he was studying under the Essenes at Qumran during these years and secured the practice of baptism from them, what sort of deceiver is Luke? Furthermore the Pentateuch certainly does not leave room for anyone to advance the theory that the Passover was a feast of the Egyptians which was taken over and revamped by Moses.

Fantastic Claims The extreme advocates of the dependence of Christianity upon the Essenes, notably, A. Dupont-Sommer, have published a great amount of discussion claiming that they have discovered in the Qumran manual the secret of Jesus' teaching. There is reference to a teacher in the Essene colony. They say this must have been the great man of the ages from whom Jesus learned His wisdom. On the contrary, every community has a teacher and that the manual should refer to the teacher in the midst who is leading them is most natural. Dr. Millar Burrows, whose volumes, The Dead Sea Scrolls (1950) and More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls (1955), are standard works in the field, was in charge of the American School of Oriental Research in

Jerusalem at the time the first of the scrolls came to the attention of the scholars. He ridicules the many fantastic theories which various archaeologists say they are able to prove from the findings (see section “Wild Theories”). Burrows says: Not only John the Baptist but even Jesus himself has sometimes been thought to have been an Essene. This is quite out of the question, as all competent historians now recognize (The Dead Sea Scrolls, p. 329). Many scholars hastened to point out that Dupont-Sommer’s interpretation of the Habakkuk Commentary produced closer parallels with Christian faith and practice at some points than could be substantiated by exact exegesis. His statement that the teacher of righteousness was God’s Elect and the Messiah, for example, is not borne out by the text of the commentary or any of the scrolls. As we have seen, the term ‘elect’ probably refers to the community, and there is no indication that the teacher of righteousness was believed to be the Messiah or the Redeemer of the world.

There is nothing unique or new in the hostility of the priests to the teacher of righteousness — or in his martyrdom, if that is actually implied by the Habakkuk — “for so persecuted they the prophets.” It is true that both Jesus and the teacher pronounced judgment on Jerusalem; so did many of the prophets. The assertion that the teacher of righteousness was expected to return and judge the world depends upon questionable interpretations of passages in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Damascus Document. The covenanters expected a Messiah, as all Jews did; indeed, they expected two Messiahs. They expected also a prophet, as other Jews did. That they looked for the return of the teacher of righteousness himself has not been demonstrated (The Dead Sea Scrolls, p. 330). For myself I must go farther and confess that after studying the Dead Sea Scrolls for seven years, I do not find my understanding of the New Testament substantially affected. Its Jewish background is clearer and better understood, but its meaning has neither been changed nor significantly clarified. Perhaps I simply cannot see what is before my eyes. When visiting archaeological excavations, I have sometimes been unable, with the utmost good will, to see things pointed out by the excavators. It is true that a trained eye can often see what is invisible to the uninitiated. It is also true that scholars, being human, sometimes fail to distinguish between trained perception and uncritical imagination (The Dead Sea Scrolls, p. 343).

Burrows cites the following from the Catholic scholar:

J. Bonsirven, eminent authority of post-biblical Judaism, accused the Sorbonne professor (Dupont-Sommer) of sowing Christianity all through the Dead Sea Scrolls and then being amazed to find it there (ibid., p. 51). The curious flight of the imagination that Jesus was an Essene is matched by a recent book, We Jews and Jesus (1965), by a Jewish writer, Dr. Samuel Sandmel. His position, as he seeks to assail Jesus from an opposite angle, is that Jesus was a Pharisee. He represents that Jesus was such an obscure and insignificant person, He never even came to the attention of the Jewish people until later centuries, when Christianity became the prevailing religion in the Roman Empire. This needs to be put alongside the standard position of the Orthodox Jews that such a person as Jesus of Nazareth never lived. All history is to be denied and rewritten in one sweep of these two theories. The position of Dr. Sandmel is that since the Talmud does not mention such a great man as Philo, the philosopher of Alexandria, then it is not surprising that it does not discuss such an obscure and unimportant person as Jesus of Nazareth. The strange thing is that persons with a desire to be considered scholarly would publish abroad such inaccurate statements. A discussion of the references to Jesus in the Talmud has been offered in the section “The Talmud.” The argument for Jesus’ having been a Pharisee is that He held to the

same two central tenets which the Pharisees advocated: (1) certainty of the life after death; (2) a strong reverence for the Old Testament Scriptures. But neither of these originated with the Pharisees; they are an integral part of the Old Testament itself. And the central proposition of the Pharisees, as Jesus pointed out many times, was their reverence for their own traditions, which they set above the Word of God. The exclusiveness and separatism of the Pharisees was the very opposite of all that Jesus was and did. The conflict between Jesus and these haughty, self-righteous leaders was constant and fierce. The argument that Jesus certainly was not a Sadducee or an Essene and therefore He must have been a Pharisee has as its transparent objective the denial that He is the Son of God. The farfetched imagination which seeks to make John an Essene and holds that he secured his baptism from them is set forth to deny the divine inspiration which the New Testament writers, and John, and Jesus declare to be John's source of truth and authority.

Essenes vs. Zealots

There is bitter warfare among the radical scholars as to the nature and significance of the scrolls found at Qumran. The majority think the settlement was Essene, but some very vigorous opponents argue that it was a military center of the Zealots. This places it at exactly the opposite extreme from the ascetic, pacifist Essenes. The discovery at Masada in 1963 of a document similar to the Qumran manual furnished more fuel for the controversy. Masada, on the western side of the Dead Sea, was the last-stand fortification of the Jews. After the disastrous defeat by the Romans in the Fall of Jerusalem in a.d. 70, the remnant of the fighting Jews fled to this stronghold at Masada where they were annihilated. The presence of this new document at Masada is hailed by some as additional proof that Qumran was Zealot, while the opposing scholars respond that there must have been a fighting Essene in the last stand at Masada. The Apostate Essenes: Sun Worship The Essenes were an apostate sect which rejected many of the central teachings of the Old Testament. There is no evidence that the Essenes ever practiced baptism. They had the ceremonial cleansings of the Old Testament. They had an exotic ceremony in which with a sacred implement they dug a shallow trench in the earth, crawled into it, and covered their body with dirt, after which they took a bath. This was evidently a part of their worship of the sun, for Josephus says: "...that they may not affront the divine rays of light" (Wars II:VIII:9). The most distinctive doctrine and practice of the Essenes was this pagan worship of the sun, Zoroastrianism from Persia.

Josephus says, "Before sunrise they speak not a word about profane matters, but offer up certain prayers, which they have received from their forefathers, as if they made a supplication for its rising" (Wars II:VIII:5).

Philo says that they "stand with faces and their whole body towards the East, and when they see that the sun is rising, holding out their hands to heaven they pray for a happy day" (Vita, Cont.II, II, p. 485). The Encyclopaedia Britannica declares, "The most singular feature, perhaps, was their reverence for the sun." "Above all, they offered prayers to the sun, after the manner denounced in Ezekiel 8:16" (Article, "Essenes").

J. B. Lightfoot, in his famous essay on the Essenes in his commentary on Colossians (pp. 349-419), declares that Josephus "says plainly that they addressed prayers to the sun, and it is difficult to suppose that he has wantonly introduced a dash of paganism into his picture; nor

indeed was there any adequate motive for his doing so." Lightfoot also points out that Epiphanius calls them "Sun worshippers" (Haer., XIX, 2 XX. 3). It may be added that the fact of Josephus' having lived among the Essenes and observed most carefully their practice gives added weight to his testimony. The Gospel vs. Essene Apostate Doctrines

There is not a single item of evidence to connect John, Jesus, or the apostles with this apostate sect of Jews. There is not in the gospel of Christ a single distinctive doctrine of the Essenes. Observe how they repudiate the Old Testament in their teaching and practices. The central religious proposition of the Old Testament was sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins. The Essenes rejected and denounced the sacrifice of animals. Witness John's testimony in contrast: "Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29, John 1:36). The Essenes repudiated the central social proposition of the Old Testament, marriage and the home. The only method they had of perpetuating their sect was proselyting, since they forbade the marriage relation. This is seized by radicals who suggest that their custom of securing young orphan boys to train for recruits in their sect would have led them to lay hold upon this lonely boy in the desert, whose father and mother are now dead. But there is a God and He had a purpose in John. No one was able to seize John till his ministry was complete. The fact that John remained unmarried is cited by the Essene theorists. But John did not oppose or condemn marriage (Luke 3:10-14). The scene of Jesus at the marriage feast at Cana and His continual use of a wedding feast as a symbol of heaven is sufficient refutation of any similarity in position. The Essenes rejected the central economic proposition of the Old Testament, the right to private property. They had everything in common and were communists in doctrine and practice. John and Jesus constantly recognized the right to private property and stewardship — responsibility to God for one's possessions. The action of the Jerusalem church at the beginning was not communism. Peter made it very plain at the condemnation of Ananias and Sapphira that the property they owned had been theirs to keep or use as they deemed best. They were not compelled to give it up. There was nothing wrong in the possession of the private property. It was because they had lied to the Holy Spirit as to what they had given, that their lives were forfeit. This practice was not repeated in the other early churches. God permitted the Jerusalem church to put all of its possessions into liquid form so that when the storm of persecution fell upon the Christians and scattered them, they had the financial means for travel. There was no loot for the persecutors: no houses, lands, or other such property to be seized and confiscated. The Pools at Qumran

What is the sum total of evidence for the Essenes' having practiced baptism? There is only the fact that artificial pools have been excavated at Qumran. The National Geographic Magazine published impressive colored pictures of Essenes baptizing one another in these pools trying to prove that John borrowed his baptism from the Essenes. These imaginary photographs were à la the theory of evolution — Pithecanthropus Erectus pattern, so as to make the uninformed think there was solid basis for the pictures and the theory. They suppressed the information that every city and village in Palestine, not situated by a perennial stream or spring, had pools. The six months' dry season compelled it. The Critical Challenge In the Great Day of Questions at Jerusalem when Jesus met the Pharisees and Sadducees in final combat and made His last appeal to the nation, He staked His deity upon the proposition that the baptism of John was from God and not from men (Matthew 21:23-27). The piece of imagination that John borrowed his baptism from the Essenes supposes the scholars in Jerusalem were so stupid that they did not

think to answer, “The baptism of John was from men. He went to school to the Essenes at Qumran and learned it there.” The Pharisees and Sadducees did not say this, because they could not. The people would have known instantly that it was false. They feared the people. The absence of any mention of the Essenes in the Gospel accounts is somewhat remarkable, but the reasons are obvious. They were a small group, and, being isolated from the nation, had slight influence upon its life. They did not undertake to combat the ministry of Jesus — a constantly recurring situation as far as the Sadducees, Pharisees, Zealots, and Herodians were concerned. They were so far off in their fanatical apostasy they did not offer much prospect for evangelism. There is no record of Jesus’ carrying on a ministry in the wilderness of Judaea or in any of their small groups. John preached nearby, but there is no indication that the Essenes came out of their isolation to hear him.

036. Chapter 15 - The Baptism of Jesus

Chapter 15 - The Baptism of Jesus Matthew 3:13-17;Mark 1:9-11;Luke 3:21-23 The almost complete silence of the Gospel writers concerning the first thirty years of Jesus' life causes the reader to focus his attention on the first public appearance of Jesus. The scant but startling information furnished concerning the birth and infancy of Jesus and His visit to the temple at the age of twelve add profound emphasis to the question — How will Jesus begin His great work? What will be the first significant act which biographers will record?

Call of Old Testament Prophets

One cannot but compare Jesus' first appearance from the seclusion of Nazareth to the way in which the Old Testament prophets began their life-work. How many of them saw a wonderful vision and were given explicit instructions: Abraham's call, Jacob's ladder, Gideon's fleece, the vision and call of Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Our whole acquaintance with the great leaders of the Old Testament concentrates attention on this scene in the Jordan where Jesus was baptized and received the Spirit. The Baptism Not a "Call" The baptism of Jesus was not a "call" in the sense of the miraculous commission given to the Old Testament prophets. It is rather the calm and deliberate beginning of One who needed no commission — of One whose course was already set before Him plainly. Even in infancy He is represented as "filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon him." At the age of twelve He knew enough of His future to say: "Knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" Now at the age of thirty, He comes to begin His ministry. His remark to John, "Suffer it now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness," shows a calm conviction whose depth cannot be sounded. The prophets all expressed timidity, consternation, a sense of awe and unworthiness that they should be "called" to such a high and holy task. But none of this is seen in Jesus as He comes to be baptized. The timidity and unworthiness are expressed by John instead of Jesus. The prophets commonly asked for proof of the reality of their call, or special blessing to fit them for their work. But the Christ does not express either doubt or sense of need. There seems to be that intimate understanding of the Father's will which leads Him to the waters of baptism to "fulfill all righteousness."

Brevity of the Account The New Testament offers exactly ten verses as the historical record of the baptism of Jesus. Luke tells the story in two verses, Mark in three, and Matthew in five verses. John does not describe it, but alludes to it by presenting the impressions of John the Baptist concerning it. The history is so plain and simple that no explanation seems necessary. And yet the interpretation of the event — its significance in the life of Jesus — is supremely difficult.

Significance of the Baptism The question which troubled the early church profoundly and which is still current is: How reconcile the personality of Jesus ;with this act of humiliation? How harmonize the virgin birth with the baptism? How could Jesus be begotten of the Holy Spirit and yet need here the descent of the Spirit? Why should He, who was and is God, submit to John's baptism? How relate this humble action with His claims of absolute pre-eminence? How reconcile the great mission of Jesus as Saviour with this acceptance of baptism at the hands of another religious

figure as if He Himself needed salvation? How reconcile the claims of Jesus and the New Testament writers that He lived a sinless life with His deliberate acceptance of this baptism of John which was “of repentance unto the remission of sins”?

John the Baptist felt the strain of this question. Even though he did not realize that Jesus was the Christ, yet he knew by prophetic insight that Jesus was without sin and did not need his baptism. “I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?” John had not been baptized. It was evidently necessary that his beginning be independent. The question is often asked whether or not the Twelve Apostles were baptized with Christian baptism before they began to baptize the 3,000 on Pentecost. We have no such record. Like John, they instituted a new era. As founders and charter members, they started the movement. John knew that Jesus had no sin and did not need his baptism. It caused him to recall how much more fitting it would be for Christ to baptize him. Jesus agreed with John that He had no need of a baptism “of repentance unto the remission of sins” but nevertheless asked to be baptized in order “to fulfill all righteousness.”

Relation of Jesus to John

John was the forerunner. It was his mission to announce the coming of the Messiah and prepare the people for His appearance. John had no forerunner. He was a voice lonely and majestic crying out concerning the mightier One. When and where did these two great leaders meet? In the waters of Jordan. This is the only place we find the two lives joined. John announced the presence of Jesus among the multitudes. He later pointed Him out to his disciples. He expressed gratification at the great following gained by Jesus in the early months of His ministry. He finally sent from prison a doubtful inquiry. But here in the Jordan and here only does the New Testament place the two alongside.

John did not present Jesus publicly to the multitudes as the Messiah. He left Jesus to pursue His own methods of self-revelation. He directed some of his chosen and trusted followers to Jesus as the “Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world”; but they, too, were left to do their own investigating and make their own acquaintance with Jesus. John did not furnish Jesus with His message. Jesus took up the proclamation where John left off and proceeded to unfold His gospel. John did prepare the hearts of the people to hear the Christ. But could anything be more fitting than the actual juncture of these two lives in the ordinance of baptism? For baptism, with its profound spiritual significance, summed up the whole message and ministry of John. The Priests and Levites, sent from Jerusalem, questioned John insistently (John 1:19-28) and finally asked: “Why then, baptizeth thou, if thou art not the Christ, neither Elijah, neither the Prophet?...I baptize in water; in the midst of you standeth one whom ye know not, even he that cometh after me, the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to unloose.” This shows that both John and the Jewish leaders accepted baptism as the concrete summing up of his ministry. And John joined hands with Jesus in baptizing Him. In what finer fashion could the two lives have been linked? The baptism of Jesus with the accompanying descent of the Spirit revealed Jesus to John as the Christ. To the multitudes he said: “In the midst of you standeth one whom ye know not.” To his disciples he declared: “I knew him not; but that he should be made manifest unto Israel, for this cause came I baptizing in water John knew that Jesus was without sin and did not need his baptism (Comest thou to me?) but he did not fully realize that He was the Christ (I knew him not). And God had arranged that Jesus should be revealed to John in the act of baptism and the descent of the Spirit

in the form of a dove. In the moment after His surrender to the watery grave, He was revealed in glorious fashion as the Christ, so that John, by this infallible sign, might identify Him, direct his followers to Him, and further aid His ministry.

Relation of Jesus to the Multitudes Was Jesus baptized in the presence of the multitudes? Alfred Plummer (Commentary on Luke, p. 98) sets forth the interesting idea that this was a private baptism. How else could it be that the multitudes were not excited by the descent of the dove and by the voice? How could it be they were so slow to recognize Him as the Messiah if they were present at this scene? He offers as proof Luke 3:21 which he renders: “After every one of the people had been baptized He says: ‘Possibly Jesus waited until He could be alone with John. In any case, those who had been long waiting their turn would go home soon after they had accomplished their purpose.’” The American Standard Version translates: “Now it came to pass, when all the people were baptized, that, Jesus also….” Plummer insists the Greek must be rendered “After all the people had been” and not “while they were being.” He is evidently correct. But his rendering “every one of the people” is rather rigid. This phrase is probably a generalization — expressing the press of the multitude. McGarvey and Pendleton suggest, this may mean that, on the day of His baptism, Jesus was the last candidate, and hence His baptism was the most conspicuous of all; but it more probably means that Jesus was baptized in the midst of John’s work — at the period when his baptism was in greatest favor” (The Fourfold Gospel, p. 84). It is doubtful whether the Greek permits the latter interpretation. It either means at the close of the particular day He was the last candidate or that He came after the climax of John’s ministry had been reached. “After all the people had been” cannot but be a generalization in the light of the fact that we find John baptizing much later (John 3:23; John 4:1). If this be the meaning, then the greater part of the multitudes had come and gone. Doubtless, there were still crowds but not so dense. Jesus did not rush in first and make a show of His obedience. Neither did He hide it in a corner. But in the lull after the first great storm of excitement, He came — at the psychological moment as it were — when John would begin to wonder when the Christ was going to present Himself. At any rate, the baptism could not have been private. This runs counter to the whole career of Jesus. He did not seek to hide His moments of humiliation in a corner. All of the beauty and sublimity of Jesus’ obedience to the Father’s will in this act suddenly drops out if we imagine Jesus calling John aside for a private baptism.

If the crowds, then, heard the voice and saw the descending dove, how did it happen that they did not identify Jesus as the Christ immediately? “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” That announcement should have been sufficient to have stirred all the people. The Gospels represent Jesus as withholding public announcement of His Messiahship until He had opportunity to instruct them as to the kind of Messiah to expect. How does this scene match these records? McGarvey and Pendleton disagree but few times in their work (Fourfold Gospel). This is one of the points: McGarvey argues that the descent was plain to all; Pendleton, that the vision was seen “only by the two inspired parties, Jesus and John.” The latter holds that the opening heavens and descending dove were hidden by a miracle from the multitudes. McGarvey argues, “The object of the Spirit’s visible appearance was to point Jesus out, not to himself, but to others.” But one finds no such result achieved among the multitude. Certainly the visible appearance must have played some part in the experience of Jesus as did the appearance of Moses and Elijah on the Transfiguration Mount. But the Gospel of John sets forth that the explicit purpose of the “visible

appearance” was to point Jesus out not “to others” but to one other — John. It seems that both Jesus and John heard and understood the voice and that the multitude heard it, but did not understand what was said. So in John 12:28, John 12:29 — “There came a voice out of heaven, saying, I have glorified it and will glorify it again. The multitude, therefore, that stood by, and heard it said that it thundered. Others said, An angel hath spoken to him.” Again, when Christ addressed Saul on the way to Damascus, “Why persecutest thou me?”, it is evident from comparing the two recitals offered in Acts that those with Saul saw the light and heard the voice, but they did not understand what words were spoken. At the baptism of Jesus it is probable that the multitudes saw the dove descending out of the opening heavens and heard the voice, but they did not understand the significance of the descending dove or perceive what was spoken by the voice. The descent of the dove did not necessarily signify anything Messianic even to John for it was necessary for him to have a direct revelation from God that this was to be the sign by which he could identify the Christ. The profound spiritual experience of Jesus in receiving the Holy Spirit was hid from the multitudes and doubtless even from John except in such fashion as His glorified countenance may have revealed it. At any rate the descent of the Spirit need not have disturbed the relation of Jesus to the multitudes. He was still free to teach and instruct them and reveal Himself gradually as He desired. The miraculous features would have made an impression, which, although not understood at the time, would return with powerful significance when they began to understand His true nature and mission.

Relation of Jesus to God

Jesus was baptized in obedience to the will of God. “To fulfill all righteousness” can well be rendered, “to leave nothing undone that had been revealed as the righteous will of God.” John had been instructed by special revelation that the Messiah would come to offer Himself for baptism and would then be revealed to him. The baptism, which could not mean to Him what it did to the multitudes, was accepted as part of the will of God in regard to His ministry.

God’s good pleasure in Jesus finds very beautiful and fitting expression as He rises out of the waters of Jordan. The voice from heaven said, “In thee I am well pleased.” Does this mean the eternal pleasure of God in Christ or His delight over this particularly humiliating act of obedience? Both probably are signified for the former is contained in the latter. The descent of the Holy Spirit denotes a closer relationship a more complete identification and understanding which results from this act of obedience. This does not mean that Jesus did not possess the wisdom and power of the Spirit before this. But now He comes in His fullness. The apostles had been granted the presence and power of the Spirit during the ministry of Christ. They were sent out to perform miracles, teach, etc. They had the knowledge of His ministry, His death, and resurrection; they were scarcely able to contain themselves they were so anxious to tell the great news, yet they were not permitted to set up the Church on Pentecost until the Spirit had taken possession of them — until they had been baptized in the Spirit. So Jesus, who had been led and guided by the Spirit before baptism, did not enter upon His public ministry until here at the scene of His baptism the Spirit joined Him in the great task before Him.

Relation of Jesus to His World-Wide Mission

It is extremely significant that the baptism of Jesus occurred at the very beginning of His ministry. As our baptism marks the dividing line between the old life of sin and the new life in Christ, so the

baptism of Jesus is the dividing line between His quiet life of seclusion at Nazareth and His public ministry. At the Jordan Jesus took the decisive step leaving behind Him home ties and setting forth with “no place to lay His head” but with His great mission before Him. The baptism marked the complete dedication of Jesus to His task. Baptism is a complete surrender of body, mind and soul — a burial and a resurrection. It set forth His absolute devotion to His lifework. The baptism of Jesus is an important factor in the complete example He has given to us. “To fulfill all righteousness” is His motive. He humbled Himself to give us a complete example. It is not enough to know that the bread and wine symbolize His broken body and shed blood when we keep the Lord’s Supper. Our hearts reach back to the upper chamber as well as Calvary and we delight to remember that He Himself shared that first Supper with the little group of Apostles. And so in His baptism He joined hands not merely with John, the multitudes, and God Himself, but also with all of us. When we come to obey our Lord in Christian baptism our hearts go back to the Mount of Ascension whence the Great Commission was given, but also to the Jordan where He gave the example. Is there a heart that does not quicken as he sees Jesus, the Son of God, humble Himself in the waters of the Jordan? Is there a timid soul hesitating on the edge of the baptismal waters, who, when he remembers that scene, cannot take up his cross and follow after? The first act of Jesus’ ministry was, by His deliberate choice, one of humiliation. It reveals the soul of Jesus. How He loved us and shared our lowly obedience! See Him as He is buried in the waters of the Jordan. Behold the Son of Man! But Jesus also shared God’s nature. As the resurrection followed and completely eclipsed His death on Calvary, so here in the very moment of His humiliation He is uplifted and glorified as He rises from the burial in the Jordan. See Him as the Spirit comes upon Him and the gracious voice from heaven claims Him. Behold the Son of God! Is it any wonder that after this scene John exclaimed: “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world”?

037. Chapter 16 - Essays on the Baptism

Chapter 16 - Essays on the Baptism (1) The Baptism of Jesus in the Apocryphal Gospels Apocryphal Additions The popular writings of the early Christians with their more or less foolish legends about Jesus show how strongly they felt the problem as to why Jesus was baptized. Jerome quotes this passage from the Gospel according to the Hebrews: “Lo the mother of the Lord and His brethren said unto Him, John the Baptist baptizeth for remission of sins: let us go and be baptized by him. But He saith to them, Wherein have I sinned that I should go and be baptized by him? Except perchance this very thing which I have said is ignorance.” The Pauli Praedicano is represented as saying: “Christ, the only man who was altogether without fault, both making confession respecting His own sin, and driven almost against His will by His mother, Mary, to accept the baptism of John Both of these fragments are ridiculous and contradict the Gospels. Note the growing importance of Mary — the beginnings of Mariolatry. And we find no “except perchance” admissions of ignorance and sin on the part of Jesus in the New Testament. The author of the second fragment adopts the extremely interesting way out of the dilemma of asserting that Jesus was sinless, and yet made confession of sin by acceptance of John’s baptism; but that He was not responsible for the performance because He was driven to do it by His mother, Mary, “almost against His will”! All of this shows how the baptism of Jesus had impressed at least certain sections of the early church. They were struggling to harmonize it with the personality of Jesus. But the Gospel of Matthew plainly shows that both John and Jesus recognized that a baptism “unto the remission of sins” was not needed by Jesus. It was a baptism “to fulfill all righteousness” which was administered, and Jesus knew it had an essential part in His lifework. The Voice The impression this scene made on the early church is evidenced by other stories which are found afloat in early Christian literature. Epiphanius quotes the Gospel of the Ebionites as follows: “And as he came up from the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God (the Holy Spirit) coming down in the form of a dove and coming unto him. And there was a voice from heaven saying: Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased. And again: This day have I begotten thee. And immediately a great light shone about the place. John seeing it, said to him: Who art thou, Lord? And again the voice from heaven said to him: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” This heretical gospel confuses the baptism of Jesus with the conversion of Saul. Note the heresy creeping in that Jesus became the Son of God at baptism — the adoptionist heresy. This writer also attempts to harmonize the differences in Matthew 3:17, “This is my beloved Son” and Mark 1:11, Luke 3:22, “Thou art my beloved Son” by supposing that the voice from heaven spoke twice — once as recorded in Mark and Luke and again as in Matthew. But it is evident that the difference in the records is merely the manner of stating the testimony of God. Mark and Luke doubtless record the exact words. Matthew records them in the third person, as John the Baptist would quote them. The Light Is the Gospel of the Ebionites the source of the idea in the early church of “a great light” appearing in the water or about the place, or does it have some other origin? The Pauli Praedicaijo is quoted thus: “Also that when he was baptized fire was seen on the water which is not mentioned in any gospel.” Justin Martyr and the Gospel according to the Hebrews also tell of this but do not say it was recorded by

the Apostles. Two cursive manuscripts of the New Testament (a, g) have: “And when he was baptized a bright light shone about on the water so that all those who had come together were frightened.” This reading seems to be a reflection of the account of Justin and the others. The idea of a great light was evidently added from the account of the conversion of Saul. This report of a great light seen in the Jordan River at the time of the baptism of Jesus, if it has historical verity, may have the following factual content. By tracing the chronology back from the first Passover when Jesus cleansed the temple the first time, we can establish the fact that it was the rainy season when Jesus was baptized. Luke says: “the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form, as a dove” (Luke 3:21, Luke 3:22). If it was a cloudy day when Jesus was baptized, a sudden, miraculous parting of the clouds would have caused the sun to shine upon the surface of the river with a startling, blinding light. This dazzling light may have seemed to many as if the Jordan River was on fire with an amazing light. They would have been unable to face the light on the surface of the river momentarily. The Purpose

Ignatius says that all water was purified by the baptism of Jesus. Other Christian writers and liturgies state that Jesus consecrated the element of water for perpetual use by His baptism. “ ‘By the Baptisme of thy wel beloved sonne Jesus Christe, thou dydest sanctifie the fludde Jordan, and al other waters to this mystical washing away of synne’ (First Prayer-Book of Edward VI, 1549, Public Baptism): which follows the Gregorian address, ‘By the Baptism of Thine Only-Begotten Son hast been pleased to sanctify the streams of water’ (Bright, Ancient Collects, p. 161)” (Plummer on Luke 3:22).

(2) The Youth of John and of Jesus The Problem The baptism of Jesus raises the interesting question: Did Jesus and John know one another intimately in their mouth? We have no definite information. The visit of Mary to Elisabeth causes us to wonder if such visits were frequent. We do not know exactly where the home of Zacharias and Elisabeth was in the hill country of Judah (tradition says they lived at Juttah, S.E. of Hebron), but the journey from Nazareth would have been considerable — perhaps 75 miles. Immediately upon the announcement of the angel Gabriel to her, Mary hastened to Elisabeth, but this does not necessarily mean that their homes were near at hand or that such visits were common because the angel had connected his announcement of a son to Mary with that of the birth of a son to Elisabeth. The amazing character of the whole series of events would lead Mary to go to Elisabeth for consultation. The fact that she remained until the birth of John seems to indicate, however, close relationship.

(3) The Descent of the Spirit The descent of the Spirit is represented by Luke as taking place “bodily in the form of a dove.” This should end the discussion as to the visible character of the descent. But critics who attempt to discredit the supernatural object to this account. They must then explain the appearance of the dove or at least show why a dove is mentioned in the New Testament records. Some argue that a dove just happened to fly down and light on Jesus’ head the moment He came up out of the water! What God’s power cannot accomplish, a happy accident, always awaiting the ready call of the critic’s imagination, never fails to achieve! Others regard the account as fiction, pure and simple. But how then explain the fact that a dove and not some other creature figures in the account? They have searched the Old Testament in vain for proof that the dove is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The Jews used the dove to symbolize Israel. Tongues like as of fire appeared at Pentecost, as the dove at the baptism: the outward symbols of the Spirit’s descent. Does the one symbol suggest the gentleness and humility of Him who walked

the way of the cross, and the other, the sweeping, invisible power of His church that conquers the world?

038. Chapter 17 - The Temptation of Jesus

Chapter 17 - The Temptation of Jesus Matthew 4:1-11;Mark 1:12,Mark 1:13;Luke 4:1-13 Historical Setting The temptation occurred at the very opening of Jesus' ministry. The Messiah must be thoroughly tempted and tested before He enters upon His mission to save a world which has succumbed to such temptations. In the lonely desert all the temptations, vexing problems and alluring offers which His public ministry is to afford are concentrated in one furious attack which Satan hurls against Him. The temptation followed immediately the baptism. In the Jordan He received the Spirit and into the wilderness He was immediately led by the Spirit. The first decisive leading of the Spirit was to bring Him face to face with the devil. Having received the Spirit, He immediately faced the temptation to use His miraculous powers in ways not pleasing to God. Through the long years of His youth and early manhood there had been the growing consciousness of His great mission in the world. Calm and determined He came to the waters of baptism. Here He received recognition from heaven of His Messiahship. How shall He fulfill the great task? Shall He allow Himself to be lured away from the deep-set plans of His soul? "Thou art my beloved Son" said God at the baptism. "If thou art the Son of God" mockingly repeats the devil in the wilderness. Will Jesus measure up to the title conferred? From the waters of baptism straight into the wilderness He goes for this test. Pere Didon, a French commentator, points out in a striking paragraph the inseparable connection between the baptism and the temptation and how they stand in vigorous contrast and form the real prelude to the life of Christ. The one is the manifestation of the Spirit of God; the other, that of the spirit of evil. The one shows us the divine sonship of Jesus; the other, His human nature rising up to face struggle and temptation. The one reveals the infinite force by which He conquered; the other, the obstacles which He overcame on all sides.

Geographical Location Where did the temptations occur? Tradition points out the wild and barren region near Jericho. This is the section where John was probably carrying on his work. Plummer thinks the scene of the temptations lay somewhere to the north in the wilderness beyond the Jordan. Gould says: "Inasmuch as it was from the wilderness into the wilderness and as Mark adds He was with the wild beasts, it must mean that He penetrated still further into its solitudes." Luke says He was "led in the wilderness" and this suggests that He spent the forty days in wandering about from place to place. Since He had nothing to eat and no place to rest at night, His anguish of soul would most likely express itself in restless wandering. Some scholars object strenuously to the thought of Jesus' being actually led to the summit of a "high mountain." But why should Jesus have remained in one place during the forty days? As to whether He left the wilderness and stood on the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem and then returned to the wilderness, it would be hard to improve on McGarvey and Pendleton's brief note: "Whether naturally or supernaturally, 'Whether in the body or out of the body' (2 Corinthians 12:2-4) we cannot tell." There is nothing so startling or impossible about being on the wing of the temple or the summit of a mountain. On the other hand, the temptations might have been just as graphic and powerful if symbolic and presented from the depths of the wilderness.

Danger or Loneliness

Mark's assertion that "He was with the wild beasts" raises the question as to whether he means to suggest danger or loneliness. McGarvey (Lands of the Bible, pp. 72-73) mentions the jackal and gazelle as common in sections where the population is not dense. "The lion was once known in the country, but has long since disappeared. A few bears yet remain, and the author saw a large one on top of Mt. Hermon. Hyenas are not unknown. The wild goat is sometimes seen, as also the wild boar. Porcupines and hares are not uncommon, and mice are abundant." Gould says: "The desert of Judea is in parts wild and untamed, and abounds in beasts of the same description such as the leopard, the bear, the wild boar, and the jackal" (Commentary on Mark, p. 13). Thompson, in a very beautiful passage, insists that not danger but loneliness is meant and he pictures the bleak, blistering desert with the lizards and vipers creeping over the stones and a jackal skulking in the distance. There is no doubt that the loneliness of Jesus is emphasized by the words of Mark. No human being could enter into and share His experience. "He was with the wild beasts." And the fact that Mark immediately adds "and the angels ministered unto him" rather sets the wild beasts in contrast with angels and suggests that the wild beasts were dangerous but God's protecting care through it all is seen by the hovering angels. The Time of the Temptations Did these three temptations occur at the close of the forty days or was Jesus tempted through out this period? Matthew does not assert that these temptations occurred only at the end of this period, but this might be inferred from his record. Mark and Luke affirm, however, that He was tempted during the period of forty days so that these temptations were either extended over a long period or else they are typical of temptations which ran the whole gamut of possible allurements to Jesus. Luke says, "And having finished every kind of temptation, the devil left him." This suggests continual testing throughout the whole period. The three temptations that are described evidently are representative or sum up in a dramatic climax the peculiar power of them all. Both Matthew and Luke state that It was toward the close of the period of forty days that the pangs of hunger began to be pressing. This suggests complete absorption; the torture of soul was so terrific that He did not notice the passing of time or the lack of food until He approached the point of complete physical exhaustion.

Order of the Temptations Did the temptation on the pinnacle of the temple precede in time the one on the mountain or vice-versa? Matthew gives the order (1) stones into bread; (2) pinnacle of the temple; (3) on the mountain. Luke records them: (1) stones into bread, (2) on the mountain, (3) pinnacle of the temple. Since neither lays claim to a chronological arrangement, there is no contradiction. Luke probably presents a geographical arrangement — giving the two temptations in the desert and then the one on the temple. Matthew probably presents the temptations as they occurred in time for they represent a natural climax and he, alone, gives the decisive "Get thee hence, Satan," which closes the period of temptations and sets the seal of finality upon the temptation on the mountain top. The Significance of the Temptations. Physical or Symbolical? The records of the temptations of Jesus possess a profound simplicity. The most uneducated person finds himself fascinated by the luminous gleams of the graphic recital. And where is the scholar who has fathomed the complete meaning of these temptations? At first sight, the first temptation appears to be physical in character and the second temptation has something of the same appearance, but the third temptation is evidently symbolical and this causes us to retrace our steps to discover if they all are not symbolical. Jesus was on the verge of collapse, the stress of suffering from hunger was acute, the stones lying about in the desert closely resembled loaves of

bread and the suggestion of Satan would appeal strongly to the physical appetite. But the suggestion to fall down and worship Satan has nothing of the physical; it is purely symbolic. If the last is symbolic, this increases the possibility that the other two are of the same kind. But it is hard to see the grounds for the insistence of so many commentators that the temptations are all either the one or the other. Why should this be affirmed of any of the temptations? Does human experience set the temptations of life off into air-tight compartments of the physical and the spiritual? Could not the first temptation of Jesus have been both? Did not Eve see that the fruit was good to eat as well as have the spiritual temptation of gaining divine knowledge? Is it not true of our daily temptations that they are many-sided and often attack body and soul at once? One can hardly avoid quoting “the world, the flesh and the devil” as somewhat parallel to the three temptations (on the pinnacle of the temple, stones into bread and on the mountain). In the final analysis, the temptations would seem to be many-sided and to include the physical; but the most subtle power comes from the spiritual side. The interpretation should stress the symbolic significance. If symbolic, they were evidently Messianic.

Stones into Bread The records combine to emphasize the physical side of the first temptation: the long period of fasting, the express statement of Jesus’ hunger, the nature of the devil’s suggestion and of Jesus’ reply. How many crimes have been committed in human history because men were driven by hunger! But it is hard to believe this sounds the depths of this temptation. The devil said: “If thou art the Son of God”; at the root of this temptation lies the question of the very life of Jesus. Should He perish here in the desert? Why suffer such torture if He was the Son of God? Did He not have the right to live — to create food for the continuation of His life? How should He use this miraculous power? Should it all be reserved for others or should it be used to smooth His own pathway? The Temptation to Doubt

Plummer, in a vigorous paragraph, argues that the first temptation was neither physical nor symbolic, but that it was a temptation to doubt God. “If thou art the Son of God” is usually taken to mean that the devil tried to create doubt in the mind of Jesus of His own Son-ship and to tantalize Him by that little word “if” to give proof by turning stones into bread. Plummer, however, argues that the following is the meaning: If Jesus is the Son of God (as both admit), then He has a right to live. Why should He perish here in the desert? God has deserted Him. Death is at hand. Why not take matters into His own hands and create food to save His life? This would make this parallel to that on the cross — “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Jesus does not respond to this by affirming that He is the Son of God and that God will take care of Him. He ignores the reference of Satan and reveals an even wider trust in God. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” “Man” — all men and not merely the Son of God — should trust in God and live according to the Word and will of God rather than their own physical appetites. His trust is unshaken. God has led Him into the wilderness. God will end His fast at the proper time. At all events, God will care for Him. He will not doubt God and rebel against Him in breaking His fast by a miracle. He will await God’s pleasure. The Temptation Many-Sided This is a very attractive interpretation. But what conceivable conflict between this interpretation and the realization that there must have been the tug and pull of physical hunger combined with this temptation to doubt? And why assert that both of these ideas exhaust the force of the temptation? It is hard to believe that the temptation is not also symbolic — typifying the temptation current throughout His ministry to use His miraculous power to relieve His own distress. Plummer,

in his anxiety to make out his case for a new interpretation, holds that Jesus did use His miraculous power thus during His ministry. But he oversteps himself in this and fails to make out his case. He asserts that Jesus used His miraculous power for His own safety when He escaped out of the hands of His enemies during His ministry, and for His own comfort when He walked on the water instead of walking around the lake or securing a boat. This latter idea misses entirely the point of the desperate need of the disciples as He came to them walking on the water. The escapes from His enemies seem miraculous only in the sense of the inevitable and overpowering impression made by a divine personality. His purpose was the fulfillment of His mission rather than His own safety, for He did not evade death in the end. This first temptation has, at least in its background, the question: What sort of Messiah? Shall He use His miraculous powers as an Aladdin's Lamp to procure purple and fine linen and sumptuous fare for Himself, or shall He go out seeking the lost in the dark corners of the land and give Himself without reserve for mankind? On the Pinnacle of the Temple Does the second temptation contain any of the physical element? Does the dizzy height of the pinnacle with the yawning abyss below suggest aught of human weakness to lose one's poise and good judgment and cast oneself off regardless of the consequences? This is uncertain. The element of doubt is present here as in the first, but not so strong. The devil imitates Jesus' first reply by quoting Scripture in his second assault. Even the devil can quote Scripture. He quotes correctly but misapplies it. And he omits part of the quotation, "He shall guard thee (in all thy ways) lest." Is this purposed? Some suggest that casting Himself from the pinnacle would not have been "in his ways" but out of them. "The disobedient prophet was slain by the lion, the obedient Daniel was preserved in the lion's den." He is urged to hazard His life deliberately and thereby prove His confidence in His Sonship and His complete trust in God. But it would have been doubting God to have cast Himself down. God had not required it. It would have been a presumptuous trial of God. The symbolic element is plain in this temptation. If there had only been the suggestion to throw Himself from some lofty height, any precipice in the desert would have been a fitting situation. But it is on a pinnacle of the temple; below are the crowded courts and streets. It is the problem: how shall He convince this people of His Messiahship? They are expecting a military Messiah to lead against Rome. They are longing for just such a "sign from heaven" as Satan suggests on the pinnacle of the temple. Shall He attempt the short cut to success and overwhelm the wills of the people by leaping, as it were, from the midst of heaven into the courts of the temple unharmed? Or shall He take the slow, irksome, and thorny way of healing, teaching, preaching, and the daily fellowship? The problem of His mission to the world is evidently uppermost here. On the Summit of the Mountain The last temptation is plainly Messianic. "In a moment of time" the kingdoms of the earth are shown from the lofty mountain peak. The Greek reads "in the twinkling of an eye" — the Greek root means to "pick or sting." Supernatural vision is evidently presumed. Here is the object of His earthly life plainly in view. How shall He establish His kingdom? Of what kind shall it be? Shall it be spiritual — according to God's desires? Or shall it be a mixture of the heavenly and the worldly? Pere Didon says of the traditional scene of His temptation that before His eyes lay the road from Jericho to Jerusalem which He must travel one day with His disciples, going to His death. This is the heart of this temptation: to avoid the agony of the cross. The deadly element in this last temptation is the subtle offer of Satan to compromise. Satan says, in substance, "Why struggle any longer? We have both contended for forty days with no avail. It is unpleasant for us. The world is big enough for us both. Our plans are not so different. I will not abdicate but I will share the rule with you. We

will compromise matters. The world has been delivered over to me but I will give it to you, if you will fall down and worship me." Did the devil really have control of the world? Over the evil portion by God's permission to tempt men and by men's failure to resist, his power was and is tremendous. But the world was not all his. There are always more than 7,000 faithful. The fact that he so persistently seeks to tempt and mislead men shows he does not yet possess them. The Power of the Last Temptation The answers of Jesus to the first two assaults are calm and unruffled. But the text suggests that the devil has gone too far this time. He has become intolerable in his insulting affronts. "Get thee hence" ends the temptations. The suggestion to compromise was the most deadly of all. It has always been the chief weakness of the church. Stalker notes that Mohammed made this compromise in attempting to extend his religion by force and the Jesuits followed suit in baptizing the heathen first and instructing them later. If Jesus had combined His high religious idealism with the material ideas of the Messianic kingdom which prevailed among the religious leaders of Israel, how easy the path would have seemed! What kind of a kingdom? Compromise? A mixture of heaven and hell? Never! There was no middle ground. He could not make friends and cooperate with Satan. Bitter and relentless warfare was the only possibility. How slow the church has been to learn this! The devil failed in the wilderness, but how soon he vanquished the church by the way of compromise with heathenism and brought forth Roman Catholicism. No greater weakness is evident in the modern church than the tendency to walk "in the middle of the road." Emblazon on her banner: "No compromise with Satan!" Let infidelity and sin everywhere and always meet unyielding opposition!

039. Chapter 18 - Some Problems Concerning The Temptation

Chapter 18 - Some Problems Concerning The Temptation (1) How Was it Possible for the Holy Spirit to Lead Christ Into Temptation?

“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man; but each man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed” (James 1:13, James 1:14). Is that which is denied God in the Epistle of James attributed to the Holy Spirit in the Gospels? It is well to remember that the Holy Spirit did not tempt Jesus. The devil did that. So while it is true “He himself tempteth no man, yet He permits us to be tempted by Satan. In this case the Spirit took time by the forelock and began the battle by selecting the time and place where it should be fought. It was inevitable that the devil would assail Jesus immediately after His baptism as He was beginning His campaign to overthrow Satan’s kingdom. The early days of His public ministry would have been the terrific battleground, but by the choice of the Spirit, Jesus faced the devil in his lair. Jesus did not seek to be tempted. This is the very sort of temptation He met and conquered. But led by the Spirit, the decisive struggle is fought to a victorious conclusion before the public ministry begins. These problems are now clearly and finally settled. He does not waver or change His program. He goes straight forward to their execution. Can anyone read the words: “Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil” and not see a new significance in the instructions of Jesus to pray: “Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one”? Testing and trying form an inescapable part of our lives. But should we not pray for the guidance of the Spirit when the dark hours come? Should we not commit ourselves to His guidance before they come? Should we not pray constantly that God shall so lead us that no temptation too strong for us shall assail us? And that we may be delivered from that bondage to the evil one which results from continual moral failure?

(2) Why Was it Necessary for Christ to be Tempted?

Man was not made a machine, but given the divine gift of a will and made the arbiter of his own fate. With this came the choice between good and evil. He fell. But by the stormy path of temptation the nobility of those who overcome is achieved. Jesus did not need to face temptation in order to develop character. His character was already perfect and sinless. The very fact that He came to share our earthly experience would seem to compel the facing of temptation. At any rate, Hebrews makes it plain that He came unto that fullness which was necessary in His Messianic work by the path of temptation and suffering: “For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need” (Hebrews 4:15, Hebrews 4:16). “Wherefore it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted” (Hebrews 2:17, Hebrews 2:18).

(3) How Could Jesus Be Tempted, if He Was the Son of God?

God is perfect. “God cannot be tempted with evil.” How then could Jesus, if He shared God’s perfection, experience temptation? This is a part of the mystery of the incarnation. He was tempted because He is the Son of man. He conquered every temptation because He is the Son of God. It is not a sin to be tempted. But it is sin to fail to resist the temptation. The experience of temptation is part of the earthly burden He assumed when “He humbled Himself to be born of a virgin.”

“Each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed.” It comes from within. “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23). “The things which proceed Out of the man are those that defile him” (Mark 7:15). This is the rule for mankind. But Jesus was unique. There was no sin — no hidden lust in the heart of Jesus. Just here we see something of the significance of the virgin birth. If Jesus had had a human father and mother, how could He have escaped the contamination of sin? Does a stream rise above its source? But He was the Son of God. He was begotten by the Holy Spirit. He took upon Himself the form of a man, but He did not succumb to the sins of the flesh. The temptation which came to Him came from without. His soul was absolutely pure; hence He thrust the temptations away. Did Jesus then feel the full power of temptation? Did He really share our experience if the temptations came from without and if He had no background of moral failure in His life? He did not share our experience completely for He was sinless. “Tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). His experience was unique, but it does not follow that He did not feel the full power of temptation, or that He cannot completely sympathize with us in our trials. “Sympathy with the sinner in his trial does not depend on the experience of sin, but on the experience of the strength of the temptation to sin, which only the sinless can know in its full intensity. He who falls, yields before the last strain” (Westcott on Hebrews 2:18). “The force of temptation depends, not upon the sin involved in what is proposed, but upon the advantage connected with it. And a righteous man, whose will never falters for a moment, may feel the attractiveness of the advantage more keenly than the weak man who succumbs; for the latter probably gave way before he recognized the whole of the attractiveness; or his nature may be less capable of such recognition. In this way the sinlessness of Jesus augments His capacity for sympathy: for in every way He felt the full force of temptation” (Plummer on Luke 4:1-13).

(4) Were the Temptations of Jesus Confined to this Experience in the Wilderness? The particular emphasis which the Gospel writers place upon this experience of Jesus in the wilderness and the absence of any further records of personal encounters between Jesus and the devil have given to this account the title of “the temptation” and might lead to the inference that here and here only was Jesus tempted. But the significant statement of Luke points to the continuance of these struggles. “And when the devil had completed every temptation, he departed from him for a season” (Luke 4:13). The preposition in the Greek means “until” as in the marginal reading of the American Standard Version. Plummer suggests the rendering “until a more convenient season.” This plainly indicates the continuance of temptation throughout His ministry.

After the feeding of the 5,000 the multitude (John 6:15) “were about to come and take him by force, to make him king.” This is the same sort of temptation which lurked in the approaches of the devil on the pinnacle of the temple and on the mountain top: the temptation to become a worldly Messiah. It is significant that after this wildly enthusiastic attempt of the crowd Jesus withdrew and

spent the most of the night in prayer. It is not suggested that Satan approached Him in person, but the same temptation is put forward through the multitude. At Caesarea Philippi, Peter, filled with amazement and grief at the prediction of the approaching death of Jesus, began to rebuke Him saying, “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee.” This was a repetition of the temptation on the mountain — to find some way to save the world without dying on the cross. It drew from Jesus the stinging rebuke, “Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art a stumbling block unto me: for thou mindest not the things of God but of men.” This clear-cut reference to the last temptation (“Get thee behind me, Satan”) makes it evident that the temptations continued and that this particular one was so full of power as to call forth this sharp rebuke from Christ. The continual suggestions that Judas was in league with the devil and the statements of Jesus just before His betrayal indicate that He felt the presence and sinister power of Satan and his seductions. “The prince of this world cometh: and he hath nothing in me” (John 14:30). “This is your hour and the power of darkness” (Luke 22:53). Just before the scene in the garden He said, “Ye are they that have continued with me in my temptations” (Luke 22:28). He twice counseled the disciples to “Pray that ye enter not into temptation,” and upbraided them thus: “What, could ye not watch with me one hour?” The author of Hebrews, in pointing out that our great High Priest has been tempted and suffered like as we, makes a most beautiful reference to this scene in the garden (Hebrews 5:7, Hebrews 5:8). This, together with the nature of Jesus’ prayers and His anguish of soul, makes evident another assault of Satan. In His moments of agony on the cross Jesus heard the scornful invitations of the Scribes and Pharisees which combined the allurements of all three of these temptations in the wilderness: “If thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross” (Matthew 27:39-44). “The evil one seems to have accumulated attacks at the beginning and the end. In the wilderness he employed the attractiveness of painless glory and success; in the garden he tried the dread of suffering and failure. All human temptation takes place through the instrumentality of pleasure or pain” (Plummer on Luke 4:13). But through it all He could say, “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

040. Chapter 19 - The First Disciples

Chapter 19 - The First Disciples

John 1:29-51 The Actual Opening of Jesus' Ministry

Elijah stepped forth from obscurity and electrified Israel with his prediction of the drought. Elisha swept up Elijah's mantle and smote Jordan, and as he passed over on dry land, the school of young prophets at Jericho cried out that the spirit of Elijah had fallen upon Elisha. Amos and many of the other prophets leaped upon the stage with breathless and portentous revelations of coming doom. But the actual beginning of Jesus' ministry was humble and unpretentious. It had nothing of the spectacular. The method pursued by Jesus was the very opposite of that suggested by Satan when he tempted Him to leap from the pinnacle of the temple. The crude and excited notions of the multitudes as to the appearance of the Messiah to assemble an army made necessary this quiet beginning, if He would gain opportunity to instruct the multitudes and change their ideas of what the Messiah should be before they came to rally about Him as their leader. Jesus, in the most quiet and unobtrusive manner, came from the scene of the temptations back to the Jordan and began to mingle with the crowds about the Baptist. Many of the people had doubtless returned to their homes after accepting John's baptism, but new throngs kept coming and the most eager and zealous gradually sifted out of the changing crowds and remained with the Baptist. Christ came back to the center of John's work, for here was the high tide of Messianic expectation; here were rallying the choicest young spirits of Israel; and here was His forerunner. The ministry of Jesus thus connects up with that of John. The First Step The first step of Jesus' ministry was to assemble a group of personal followers. Kent notes that this is the method of a teacher and cites the example of Hillel and other rabbis. But this is also the method of all leadership. There must be a well-trained group of subordinates to carry Out any great program and lead the people in its fulfillment before the program can be fully launched. These personal followers must have meant much to Jesus during His ministry. How lonely His earthly life was and how much He needed a little group who might share some of His deeper thoughts and heavier burdens! The quiet evenings in camp or private homes with these sturdy followers gave Jesus the fellowship for which He longed and caused a new species of life to spring up in the hearts of His disciples. But these followers were gathered not merely to minister to the personal needs of Jesus. They were to become the trained messengers to carry the good news and the authorized representatives to set up His kingdom and to fulfill His work. The Method of Jesus

Something of the importance of the call of these personal disciples is seen by the division of Gospel history urged by Godet: (1) period of loose association with His disciples beginning here at the Jordan and continuing through the early Judaean ministry; (2) period of constant fellowship beginning with the definite call of the four disciples by the Sea of Galilee; (3) period of full apostleship beginning with the formal selection of His twelve apostles. During the early ministry of Jesus they were sent forth independently and trained incessantly. It is certain that in His choice of these immediate followers and the patient and tireless instruction offered to them we have one of

the most fundamental and deep-set purposes of Jesus' ministry. This training began on the very first day of His actual ministry and it was not concluded until the very last, on the Mount of Ascension.

John and Jesus

It is from the Gospel of John that we learn that Jesus did not make the first approaches in securing His first disciples. In the Synoptics we are told that Jesus walked by the seashore and called His disciples peremptorily to leave their homes and occupations and follow Him. They obeyed Him without question. It would be rather difficult to understand this startling procedure if it were not for this passage in John which describes the beginning of the association of Jesus with His disciples. Neither did John the Baptist command them to depart from his company and join themselves to the Christ. They were evidently some of his closest and most earnest followers. They came from a section which had long since been touched by the message of John, but they were still remaining at his side. John did point Christ out to his followers in very solemn and dramatic fashion. But they were left to their own resources as to what course they would pursue. What caused these first two disciples to follow Jesus? On the first day after Jesus' return John saw Him coming and exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." He did not appear to speak to any one in particular, but the good seed found some soil for a hundredfold harvest. On the second day John is represented as "standing" — what a striking representation of patient waiting and overwhelming awe in the soul of the Baptist — and "looking" — a penetrating gaze full of devout ecstasy — upon Jesus as He was "walking" amid the crowd. The devout reverence of John would lead his followers to realize the supreme character of Christ. The Messianic expectations fired by the repeated predictions of John stirred these first two disciples to follow Jesus. Once in His presence they were enthralled by His personality.

John's Testimony

Some suggest that back of John's testimony "Behold the Lamb of God" lies the fact that the Passover was near at hand and that great flocks of lambs were probably being driven by on their way to be sacrificed at Jerusalem. But it seems impossible that so profound and significant a testimony should have arisen from such a conjunction of circumstances. The reference is, of course, to the Passover lamb: "Christ our Passover sacrificed for us." Westcott says that the truth confessed by John has three elements. (1) The Lamb symbolizes self-surrender and redemption — "Vicarious suffering endured with perfect gentleness and meekness." This is an ominous figure. It is like the sword that shall pierce the heart of Mary foretold by Simeon. John has a prophetic insight into a truth that the disciples were slow to understand (Matthew 16:22). (2) A peculiar relationship to God is suggested. It is not a lamb but the Lamb — not of man's providing, but the Lamb of God. (3) The universality of Christ's mission. The sins of the whole world are to be taken away. Here again his prophetic vision leaps forward to the world-wide extent of Christ's mission.
The First Disciples

Two disciples heard the testimony of the Baptist. One of these was Andrew and the other was evidently John or his brother James. They both followed Jesus. The frank fashion in which Jesus turned and inquired why they were following Him afforded relief to a rather embarrassing situation. "Master, where dwellest thou?" The reply, "Come and see," is the eternal challenge of Christianity. This was about ten o'clock in the morning. They spent the day with Jesus. And where was Jesus

staying? In the home of some friend? Was He camping out in some quiet spot in the mountains? And what were the topics of discussion? Did their “hearts burn within them” that day as when He opened the Scriptures to the two with whom He walked to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)? How striking these extended conversations with two disciples at the opening and close of His ministry! And the result was the same — faith in Him and the eager desire to tell the great news to others. The decisive and vivacious statement, “We have found the Messiah,” gives the key to the conversations of the day. Here were two young men impatient for the appearance of the Christ. They had listened for days to the sensational predictions and testimony of John concerning the near approach and presence of the Messiah. And now the fellowship of the day had brought conviction to their hearts and they rushed back to tell the great news.

Personal Evangelism The passionate evangelism of Christianity has here its first moving example. How many times the word “find” occurs in this first chapter of John! “What seek ye?” This reminds us of “Seek and ye shall find.” “He findeth first his own brother.” This is the very method and spirit of Christianity. Such a search leads in ever-widening circles to the ends of the world. “We have found the Messiah.” This is the substance of the Christian message. “He brought him to Jesus.” And what a man was this whom Andrew brought to Jesus! Jesus read the soul of each of the men He met in this chapter. He saw the latent possibilities in Simon and traced the course of the future with His prophecy that he “shall be called Cephas or Peter” (a rock). “He findeth Philip Follow me.” Christ allowed His first disciples to seek Him, but on this third day He encouraged a fifth disciple to follow by a direct invitation. “The Lord saw each man’s most secret heart, whether, being too forward, he required warning of the cost, or too backward, he required to be summoned or encouraged (Matthew 8:19-22)” (Sadler on John 1:43). Here as elsewhere the consummate tact of Jesus is evident. The Method of Philip

John explains how it happened that Philip accepted the invitation of Jesus. He was from Bethsaida which was also the home of Andrew and Peter, James and John. Doubtless these four had discussed with him their remarkable experience of the preceding day. “Philip findeth Nathanael….We have found him….Jesus of Nazareth.” This chapter is full of the zeal of those who seek and the joy of those who find. Again the challenge “Come and see” is issued. This saying is the key to this chapter. “One has said that the best thing in the world came out of Nazareth.” But Bethlehem was the place where the Christ should have been born. Philip is as yet ill-informed. He calls Jesus the “Son of Joseph.” He evidently does not know that Jesus was born in Bethlehem instead of Nazareth. After a while he will be able to preach a full gospel with convincing power, but he cannot now answer the objections of Nathanael. He knows one thing, however, that if Nathanael ever comes into the presence of Jesus and realizes His personality, then further argument will be unnecessary. It is essential for us to understand and believe the historic facts concerning Jesus Christ, but when we come to “know Him whom we have believed,” our faith cannot be shaken. The disciples were brought to Jesus by personal evangelism. They were finally won as His followers by their actual experience of His love and power and His divine personality. The Winning of Nathanael The presentation of Nathanael to Jesus brings forth some beautiful, hidden references to Jacob. “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” Jacob’s name had been changed to Israel on the night he struggled with the angel. Were these disciples and their Master standing near the Ford Jabbok just now? “Here is a young Israelite — a descendant of Jacob — but his heart is free from the duplicity and deceit which was Jacob’s in his youth” is the

gracious fashion in which Jesus welcomed Nathanael. The quick, impulsive reply, “Whence knowest thou me?” parallels his doubting query to Philip, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” The answer, “I saw thee under the fig tree” overcomes his doubts. If Nathanael had been full of guile himself, he might have suspected deceit in Jesus’ reply. Jesus might have secured the information by chance or deliberate purpose and now used it as if He had actually seen him under the fig tree before Philip called him. But Nathanael is convinced and hails Jesus as “Son of God and King of Israel.” It is not likely that Nathanael got this conception from Psalms 2:1-12 where the Messiah is called a “King set upon the holy hill of Zion” and where are found the famous words: “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.” For John’s Gospel has at considerable length outlined the fact that John the Baptist had testified to his disciples concerning the dove and the voice from heaven: “Thou art my beloved Son.” He must have talked these matters over continually with his immediate disciples during the period that Jesus was being tempted in the wilderness. All this was a preparation for this recognition by Nathanael. But the disciples did not at this time realize the full significance of the term “Son of God” (cf. Matthew 16:13-23). The Angels and the Son of Man

Jesus commends Nathanael for believing on such slight evidence and calls Himself the Son of man. This emphasizes His human nature and His fellowship with all mankind as the title given by Nathanael had pointed out His divine nature. Nathanael’s phrase “King of Israel” seems to voice the current Messianic hopes for a temporal ruler. But Jesus pictures His future as full of spiritual rather than temporal glory: “The angels ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” This is a plain reference to Jacob’s ladder and his vision at Bethel. In what sense did Nathanael witness the fulfillment of this prophecy? The angels sang at Jesus’ birth and ministered to Him in the wilderness, but these were of the past. They came again in Gethsemane and at His resurrection, but these appearances hardly seem to satisfy the prophecy of Jesus. Perhaps He means to suggest the whole work of His saving ministry rather than a single visitation. Christ has reconciled man to God and by His death has opened heaven so that the very angels of God ascend and descend upon Christ as the ladder or means of communication in their errands of mercy. This record of the actual opening of Jesus’ ministry is full of victory. He does not declare Himself in spectacular fashion to the multitude, but a little group of select and eager men begin to have an insight into His glorious personality. They recognize Him as the Lamb of God, the Messiah, the Son of God and the King of Israel. He declares Himself the Son of man and opens up an absorbing vista of His coming ministry.

041. Chapter 20 - Messianic Titles

Chapter 20 - Messianic Titles The Name of Jesus The first chapter of John abounds in Messianic titles which are applied to Jesus by others or by Himself. The Hebrew word “Messiah” and its Greek equivalent “Christ” mean “Anointed One.” “Jesus” is the personal name of our Lord and “Christ” is the customary Messianic title. But the personal name and the official title soon lost their strict significance and were used separately or together in interchangeable order. Paul says either “Jesus Christ” or “Christ Jesus.” The “Messiah” meant to the Jews all that “Moses in the law and the prophets” wrote concerning the great Redeemer who was to come. Some of the most important passages in the Pentateuch are: “The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head” (Genesis 3:15); “All nations of the earth shall be blessed in him” (Genesis 18:18); “Until Shiloh come” (Genesis 49:10); “Scepter shall rise out of Israel” (Numbers 24:17); “God shall raise up unto thee a prophet” (Deuteronomy 18:15). The prophets with increasing clearness, in numerous passages, wrote of the Messiah. Isaiah 7:1-25; Isaiah 9:1-21; Isaiah 11:1-16, and Isaiah 53:1-12, and the Son of Man prophecies in Daniel are the most famous. Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Malachi and other prophets also wrote of His coming.

King of Israel The title “King of Israel” given by Nathanael expresses the popular idea of the Messiah. There are two evident lines of prophecy in the Old Testament. One line represents Jesus as the suffering Servant, humble, despised and dying for the sins of the people. The title “the Lamb of God,” which has already been discussed, expresses this view. The popular conception completely overlooked or set aside these predictions of humility and suffering and followed the line that represents the Christ as a King in all His magnificence coming on the clouds to judge the nations of the earth. These predictions evidently refer to the second coming of Christ. But, of course, the Jews did not understand this. “King of Israel” suggests the grandeur of David and Solomon, the overthrow of the Roman power and the increasing dominion of the Jews over all nations.

Son of David

“Son of David” is also a Messianic title hot it does not occur in this chapter. The genealogies have as their purpose to prove that Jesus is the Son of David. Blind Bartimaeus, the Syrophoenician woman, and the crowd at the triumphal entry use this title. It comes out in Jesus’ discussions with the Pharisees. When Jesus asks, “What think ye of the Christ, whose son is he?” they are able to answer immediately, “The Son of David.” Then Jesus silences them with the question as to why David called the Messiah “Lord” if He is his son. They either could not or would not answer His challenge. Either they did not understand or would not admit that Christ was also the Son of God.

Son of God The title “Son of God” occurs in this first chapter of John — at the very opening of Jesus’ ministry — and is repeated throughout the Gospels in this or other forms which carry the same general meaning. God called Jesus His Son at the baptism and on the Mount of Transfiguration. The devil used this title in the temptations: “If thou art the Son of God.” John the Baptist testified to the descent of the Spirit and called Him the “Son of God.” The early use of this

among the disciples must have been produced by the testimony of John. The demoniacs applied this title to Jesus (Mark 3:11). The disciples called Jesus the “Son of God” (Matthew 14:33; Matthew 16:16). The Gospel writers use the title (Mark 1:1; John 3:18; John 20:31), while Thomas calls Him, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). The crowd rails at Jesus under this title: “If thou art the Son of God” (Matthew 27:40). The centurion, taking it from the mouth of the multitude, repeats the title. It is evident that Jesus Himself used it (Matthew 27:43; John 5:25; John 9:35). It also appears constantly in another form wherever the words “My Father” are used by Jesus (Matthew 7:21; Matthew 10:32; Matthew 11:27; Matthew 15:13; Matthew 16:17; Luke 10:22 etc. and throughout the Gospel of John). Sanday calls Matthew 11:27 “the classical passage in the Synoptics for the correlative use of ‘the Father’ and ‘the Son.”

Meaning of the Titles The “Son of God” has always been a favorite Messianic title in the mind of the church. The chief reason is that it expresses so clearly the divine nature of Jesus. The confession of Peter uses this title and the express approval of Jesus at that time is impressive. The repeated use of the title in the Epistles and the place of the “good confession” in the early church made this a favorite title when the word “Christ” lost its strict significance and became a part of the personal name of Jesus. The usual question of scholars is, “What did these terms signify to the people — the scholars and the unlearned?” This involves a painstaking study of the Old Testament and all the other Jewish writings of the period. But this question is of secondary importance. The chief question is, “In what sense did Jesus use or accept these titles?” This must be the true sense. This must be the sense which He tried to reveal to those who had only a partial understanding. The central passage of the Old Testament for this title is Psalms 2:7. A revolutionary change in the opinion of the radical critics, who have long denied the Messianic character of the passage, is shown by Wellhausen’s statement: “The Messiah is the speaker and the whole psalm is composed in his name.” He tends toward identifying the “Messiah” and “Israel” in the passage since the Messiah embodies so completely the hopes of the nation, but this does not destroy the startling character of his assertion of what the conservatives have always held: that the passage is Messianic. The Talmud gives but few examples of the use of the title “Son” for the Messiah. The Book of Enoch uses it once and IV Ezra uses it frequently. This shows that it was a Messianic title among the Jews. The readiness with which Nathanael uses it and the fact that the New Testament shows that the scribes and the common people alike understand it as Messianic prove that this title was current. Jesus, however, puts a new content into the term and it can only be understood, in the light of His pre-existence, virgin birth, sinlessness, resurrection, ascension, and His clear affirmations of Son-ship, as “attributing to the Son a coequal Godhead with the Father” (Sanday). The Son of Man The favorite title in the mouth of Jesus is “Son of Man.” How this suggests His humility and His kinship with the whole human race! His divine nature and claims shine out as the noonday sun in His teaching and miracles. And even in this title of humility it is plain He is not a son of man, but He is the Son of man. In His very kinship with us He is unique. He was not the Son of a man, but of all men — of the whole human race — in that He shared flesh and blood with us and came to redeem us. The title is used about eighty times in the Gospels. “Whereas the other titles are used by others of Him this is used only by Him and of Himself” (Sanday). The familiar Old Testament passage which furnishes the origin of this title is Daniel 7:13. The “Son of man,” a superhuman personality coming to judge the world, figures largely in the Similitudes of Enoch which is held by many to have been written in the early part of the first century b.c. but may be a post-Christian document. It may be that the “Son of man” in Daniel was

being interpreted as a Messianic prophecy. Critics attempt to prove that the Aramaic original of this phrase means man" or "mankind" and thus destroy its personal and Messianic significance in the New Testament. But even Wellhausen admits that the "Son of man" is used by Jesus as a personal title to designate Himself. Sanday sees in this generic meaning of the Aramaic ("mankind") not a denial of its personal use as a title for Christ, but an assertion that He is "the ideal of humanity" — "the representative of the human race."

It is interesting to note that Jesus associates this title with the idea of His suffering and death (Mark 8:31, etc.). This harks back to Isaiah 53:1-12. Sanday holds that this ministry of suffering is "embodied in the character of the Son of Man as conceived by Jesus, but not exactly in the name." Passages like Matthew 16:27 use the "Son of man" in connection with His glorious return on the clouds of heaven. Thus the two extremes of His ministry — His humiliation and glory — are associated with this title, the "Son of man." Its use in this first chapter of John suggests the resplendent heavenly associations — "the angels ascending and descending on the Son of man." "As Son of God, Jesus looked upward to the Father; as Son of man, He looked outwards upon His brethren, the sheep who had no shepherd." (Cf. Sanday, Hastings Dictionary of the Bible, article, "Son of God" and Outlines on the Life of Christ, pp. 91-98.)

042. Chapter 21 - Critical Essays on John 1:19-51

Chapter 21 - Critical Essays onJohn 1:19-51 (1) Christian Experience

“Come and see.” This word of our Lord and of Philip strikes deep into the needs of the human heart. One cannot study this chapter without a lasting impression of the importance of Christian Experience. Of what value would the miracles of Jesus be, if it were not for the actual redemption of the soul through His ministry? Of what significance is the truth that He is the Son of God, if our daily fellowship with Him does not lift us out of the mire and “into the heavenly places”?

Extremists Old and New

It has seemed impossible to maintain a sane view of the place of Christian Experience in the gospel, as it has of the personality of Jesus. Men have swung from one extreme to the other, either considering Christian Experience everything or nothing. How much should an evangelistic sermon appeal to the emotions and how much to the understanding? A hundred years ago (and in belated sections even today) Christian Experience often completely overshadowed a simple and intelligent presentation of the gospel. The emotionalism of that day passed to the most ridiculous extremes. An example of so-called Christian Experience was seen when people ran around on all fours barking like dogs supposedly under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Today we are witnessing the intellectual extreme in the appeal to Christian Experience. The “Inner Conscience” masquerading under the title “Christian Experience” has become responsible for similar excesses. It has become the Alpha and Omega and the all-sufficient and final source of authority. Present-day rationalists hold that belief in the New Testament records of the life of Jesus — a confession of faith in Christ as the Son of God in the sense in which these terms are used in the New Testament — is immaterial. It is all a question of Christian Experience. They hold that “Christ may be either little or much according to our experience of Him.” In other words, if our experience of Christ dictates the view that He is the Son of God — well and good. But if it dictates the view that He was merely a man, then no rebuke or correction is possible for it is merely a matter of one’s “inner conscience.” Thus, “Christian Experience will prevent the formulation of any final orthodoxy.” The line of discrimination between this view and the doctrine of Christian Science is well-nigh indefinable. The Modernist attempts to derive Christ out of Christian Experience instead of deriving our Christian Experience from Christ.

Modernists’ Use of Christian Experience

Philip said, “Come and see.” He appealed to actual experience. But is it possible for us to make this appeal in the same way Philip did? Philip was not familiar with the facts of the life of Christ that are plain to us. He could not preach a full gospel. All he could do was to lead Nathanael into Christ’s presence. There Nathanael could question for himself and secure the information as well as the experience which would convince him. Christ lives and reigns today. We come to know Him and feel His presence by our daily walk with Him. This is a most precious possession. But what folly to try to use Christian Experience as the basis for a denial of the New Testament records

about Jesus! Is our experience, which is purely spiritual, more to be trusted than that of His chosen disciples who were actually with Him in the flesh? It means every man could write the biography of Jesus out of his own imagination and arrange a gospel to suit his fancy.

Spiritualism and Modernism

Here is the crux of the matter. What new revelation can these radical extremists bring to us through the realm of Christian Experience by means of which to destroy the gospel? The theory of evolution? Christ reveals to them, personally, the fact that He was badly mistaken when on earth? Wonderful! Those who dethrone Christ in order to enthrone the “inner conscience” face the dilemma Professor James of Harvard flung at the Spiritualists. What new message has Spiritualism brought concerning eternity? “I am well and hope you are the same” and similar foolishness! Professor James said that judging by the messages sent back from eternity through the Spiritualistic medium, the intelligence of the folks over there is about on a par with that of the people we lock up in institutions for the feebleminded over here. And what of the Modernists? What have they added to the sum total of facts concerning Christ? What new truth have they ever enunciated in religion and morals?

Finality of the New Testament

Paul pronounced anathemas on even an angel should he preach a new gospel. Christian experience will always have its high place in the life of Jesus’ followers. But it cannot supplant or be used to destroy the only exact information which we have of the life and will of Christ. The New Testament still remains the final revelation of God. Christian Experience must always respond to the eternal norm — the Christ, the Son of God — as revealed to us by His inspired biographers. There never can be any conflict between the historic Christ and the Christ of experience.

(2) The Unnamed Disciple For several decades a furious controversy has raged over the authorship of the Fourth Gospel. The testimony it offers to Jesus as the Son of God is so strong that it can only be shaken by proving that the author was not John the apostle, an eyewitness, as the church has always held. Space forbids any lengthy discussion, but a very interesting point of evidence occurs in this first chapter of John. The name of John is not to be found in the entire book, but the titles, “The disciple,” “The beloved disciple,” “The disciple whom Jesus loved” are applied to a person who holds the place we should expect John the apostle to occupy and who can be no other. This can only be explained by the modest retirement of the author which caused him to withhold his name. The twenty-first chapter speaks of seven apostles together, two of whom are the sons of Zebedee. The “beloved disciple” is one of the group. This, together with the postscript at the end of chapter 21, makes plain the identification of the “beloved disciple” as John the apostle and as the author of the book. This first chapter offers the following evidence concerning the authorship. In John 1:35 we see two disciples follow Jesus. The name of one was Andrew (John 1:40). What was the name of the other? Why was it omitted? Andrew found his brother first, and what did the other disciple do? It is evident when taken in connection with the strange silence throughout the book that the other disciple is John the apostle or else James his brother and that he also goes and finds his brother. This fits into the picture of the Synoptics where the two pairs of brothers are called by the lake shore at the same time. It agrees with the fact that all four were from Bethsaida and that Philip also was from this town. Since the Fourth Gospel gives such accurate information concerning the disciples of Jesus, we should expect some definite

statement concerning this other disciple. “But our wonder is increased when we read John 1:41. According to the correct reading which is to be accepted more because of its originality than because of strong external testimony, it is stated with marked emphasis that Andrew, the first of the two disciples, finds his own brother, which implies that after Andrew the other of the two disciples, whose name is not mentioned, also finds his brother, whose name is likewise unmentioned. To everyone who can read Greek it is perfectly clear between the lines that in addition to the two brothers Andrew and Peter there must have been two other brothers who left John and became disciples of Jesus” (Zahn, Introduction to N. T., Vol III, p. 209).

043. Chapter 22 - The Wedding Feast at Cana

Chapter 22 - The Wedding Feast at Cana

John 2:1-11

Jesus chose to begin His public ministry at a wedding. Immediately after the forty days of temptation Jesus returned to the Jordan, where John was baptizing. Here He quickly won six disciples — two pairs of brothers who were fishermen from Bethsaida and a pair of friends, Philip and Nathanael. With these disciples, He departed into Galilee, arriving at Cana on the third day after His appearance at the Jordan. The location of Cana is disputed. Cana el Gelil, about twelve miles north of Nazareth, is favored by most scholars. Kefr Kenna, four or five miles northeast of Nazareth, is favored by tradition. The Greek Catholics have built a church here.

Traditions

Like many other weddings, this one became famous because of certain guests who attended. The names of the bride and groom are unknown, but from the earliest times there has been much speculation. One guess was that Alphaeus and Mary, the sister of Jesus' mother, lived at Cana, and that this was the wedding of one of their sons or that of Alphaeus and Mary themselves. An old Mohammedan tradition says John the apostle was the bridegroom. Simon the Canaanite is also named. But all this is idle. The significant fact is that Jesus and His disciples and mother were present. The fact that Jesus' mother was already there and was conversant with the intimate needs of the household seems to indicate that she was a close friend or relative. Whether Jesus was invited through Nathanael, who was a native of Cana, or in His own right as a friend has also been argued. The proximity of Cana to Nazareth is certain, and is sufficient explanation in itself. The absence of Joseph from the narrative here and throughout the rest of the Gospels seems to indicate that he had died during the time since the visit to the temple when Jesus was twelve years old.

Contrasts of John and Jesus The fact that Jesus' disciples were present was significant. It must have thrilled His mother to see Him return with this group of followers. It seemed to indicate the opening of His ministry. And this scene must have made a powerful impression upon them. These men had been disciples of John the Baptist until a few days before. From the desert and the stern manner of life of John, who subsisted on locusts and wild honey, Jesus led His disciples straight to a wedding feast. The contrast between the two leaders must have been vivid. Jesus once drew such a contrast Himself. He pointed Out that the perverse Pharisees would follow neither John, who they said had a "demon," nor Jesus, whom they called "a gluttonous man and a winebibber." Of course, this is nothing more than slander in both cases. Jesus was no glutton nor a winebibber. But He did not even stoop to deny the charge. He did not have to do so. His life furnished sufficient denial. His teaching placed profound emphasis upon the supremacy of the spiritual over the physical. In the Sermon on the Mount, He warned the disciples against being anxious about such matters as food, drink and clothing. Trust in God. Do His will. He will take care of all who do their

part. Once they were starting across the lake, and the disciples, hearing His warning about “the leaven of the Pharisees,” remembered with dismay that they had forgotten to bring any provisions for the journey. But Jesus corrected their misapprehension. He was not speaking of physical food — that was an insignificant matter — but of the corrupt influence of the Pharisees. And Jesus’ life matched His teaching. His joy was not in meat and drink. Once we find Him expressing hunger, but, when the fig tree was found to be barren, the opportunity to teach a great lesson by withering it forced the mere physical hunger into the background. At Jacob’s well, Jesus’ need of food evidently stirred His disciples’ apprehension. Hear their anxious appeal: “Master, eat.” And the reply was typical: “My meat and my drink is to do the will of him that sent me.” No, this Man was no glutton nor a winebibber. We find Him occasionally at the banquet-table, but always the scene reveals a great spiritual leader.

Jesus at Cana

Here He is at a wedding feast; but He is not represented as enjoying a sumptuous feast. The physical side again appeals so little to Him, and is so far overshadowed by the spiritual opportunity which the feast offers, that it is not mentioned. We do not even find Him in the picture seated at the festive board. We find Him rather a majestic figure proceeding among the guests, surrounded by His devoted disciples. We find Him in the outer court helping to supply the needs of others. But everywhere He goes there is dignity and spiritual atmosphere in His presence. The contrast with John impressed the disciples, but there was no suggestion of revelry at Cana. They were to find the new Leader would demand that they take up a cross and follow Him to the extreme of self-sacrifice.

Joy and Sorrow

Nevertheless, it is still true that Jesus was entirely at home at this joyous festival. This tells much of His character and attitude toward the wholesome joys of life. “He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” This is the fundamental experience of His earthly ministry as revealed by the loneliness, the misunderstandings, the opposition, the rejection, betrayal, and death. Yet there was joy, great joy, in His earthly life. Can there be great joy without great sorrow? or day without night? Do not trials and sufferings deepen the capacity of mankind to experience great joy? Is a person at his best when he is sorrowful or joyful? Do the most profound experiences, the noblest impulses and the greatest heights of sacrifice come with sorrow or with joy? The sorrow of repentance as we come to confess the name of Christ is contrasted with the joy of forgiveness when we are buried with Christ in baptism. If sorrow is the noblest mood of life, then heaven will be a very sorrowful place, for we shall be at our best there. The promises are all: “Enter into the joy of thy Lord.” “Rejoice in that day, yea, exult and leap for joy.” “He shall wipe away all tears.” “No more pain or sorrow or crying.” “Blessed are ye. The Joy of Jesus The attempt to translate the Beatitudes “Happy are ye” is rather lame. The spiritual content of the promises is paramount: “Blessed are ye.” Yet it is a joyous vista Jesus opens. Jesus expressed constant joy at the evidence of nobility and faith in the people He met and in the growth of His disciples’ faith and understanding. Hear His joyous cry: “Blessed art thou, Simon.” “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.” “O woman, great is thy faith!” “My joy therefore is fulfilled.” “That my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be fulfilled.” “Rejoice with me, I have found my

sheep." Jesus "endured the cross" itself for "the joy that was set before him" of saving lost humanity (Hebrews 12:1.). As we see Jesus at the wedding feast, we accept His presence as holy sanction of all joys that are for our profit. But we should remember that there is no suggestion of His seeking worldly pleasure. The contrast with John is, after all, only one of method, and not of fundamental principle. His joy is in things spiritual. And at the wedding feast a profound sense of His mission rules. This feast is not only famous because of its guests, but because of an embarrassing need which arose. The wine gave out. In the light of Eastern hospitality, with its extravagant courtesy to guests, this was a disgraceful calamity. How typical of human frailty and limitation that, in this hour of joy, such weakness, impotence and humiliation should arise, and that even here Jesus should hear the call of human sorrow and need. Jesus at the wedding feast? Yes, hut not at the head of the table as master of the feast, nor even the chief guest of honor, but in the outer court as One who serves! The suggestion of some that the wine ran out as the result of the unexpected arrival of these seven guests from the Jordan is without the slightest support in the text, and is ludicrous in the light of the amount of wine Jesus made. Jesus was not the cause, but the solution, of the distressing dilemma. The supply of wine ran out as the result of the great crowd.

Jesus and Mary The scene in the courtyard furnishes a most interesting dialogue between Jesus and Mary. All sorts of discussions have been stirred by the coming of Mary with her simple plea: "They have no wine. Paulus, the German skeptic, takes the prize with his absurd suggestion that, of course, Mary was not asking a miracle, but merely passing a surreptitious signal to Jesus and His disciples not to ask for refreshments. But Mary was not asking Jesus to leave or restrain His group of disciples; she was appealing to Him to help. The following considerations prove she was expecting a miracle: (1) She had treasured in her mind the miracles surrounding His birth and the miraculous foresight He had shown at twelve years. (2) Something of the wonderful happenings at His baptism must have been known to her. (3) Jesus' disappearance for so long a time would have worried her. (4) His reappearance with a group of followers suggested He was about to begin His ministry. (5) If she expected the supply to be replenished by natural means, why approach Him at all rather than the servants?

Jesus' answer, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come," was not discourteous. The Greek word gune was a title of respect. It is so in the classics. Hear Him on the cross: "Woman, behold thy son." Literally, His remark was: "Woman, what to me and to thee?" "What is there in our earthly relationship which would give you the right to interfere or dictate when my first obligation is to do my heavenly Father's will?" This reply utterly destroys the contention of radicals that Mary was trying to get Him to go or send for more wine. "Mine hour is not yet come" does not seem to mean here the hour of His death, but the hour of the public revelation of His Messiahship and divine nature. This is what Mary was on fire to see Him do. It meant vindication of her past and the fulfillment of all her dreams through the years. There is no inconsistency in His performing the miracle after such a remark, for the miracle was semi-private and without the least effort to thrust Himself into the limelight or make public declaration of His Messiahship. Moreover, while no great time elapsed between this remark and the miracle, yet the spiritual atmosphere had undergone great change through the quiet work of Mary. With a most remarkable faith and insight, she quietly accepted this rebuke from Jesus, and proceeded to go among the servants and prepare the way for a miracle if Jesus should decide, in His own wisdom, to perform it. The

Amount of Wine The motives behind the miracle were sympathy for the embarrassing dilemma of the host, and the desire to produce faith in the hearts of His disciples. They had accepted Him at the Jordan, won by John's testimony and by Jesus' personality and teaching. But now they were to have miraculous evidence to reinforce their faith. The jars of water were used for ceremonial cleansing such as washing of hands. There were six jars, and they held between two and three firkins apiece. A firkin is nine gallons. Thus the amount of wine made was between 108 and 162 gallons. This would indicate a great crowd at the wedding. Again, the water-jars were at hand, especially fitted for the miracle, and His power matched the occasion. If He had only used one or two of them, it would have suggested a limitation of His power. Moreover, God's gifts are always in abundance (John 6:1-3; Matthew 14:13-21; Luke 5:1-11; John 21:6-11). Some suggest that the surplus of wine was left as a gracious gift to the bridegroom, but there is nothing of this in the text. The miracle was semi-private, but of course must have become known. The servants and the household, in general, could testify that no more wine was to be had. The servants were witnesses of the miracle, and could testify that only water was placed in the vessels. The jars were filled to the brim with water so that the miracle could not be questioned. Both guests and servants could testify as to the quality of the wine. Mary and the disciples were also witnesses.

Implications of the Miracle

Radical critics object strenuously to this account because in it John records a "nature miracle." They feel that they can explain any cases of healing, but a miracle of this type which runs counter to the regular course of nature is the subject of especial attack. But when once the human heart fastens upon God, then one miracle is no more difficult to believe than another. The laws of nature represent the way God usually works, but who can say that He cannot work in an unusual way — by miracle? It is all the work of God's power. The only difference in this case is the method. Sadler points out that God causes the grapevine to grow by means of soil, sunshine, moisture, and its own inner power. We gather the grapes, but we cannot fathom the power or the process. In this miracle Jesus achieved instantly what God's power, plus man's labor, ordinarily brings about through a long process. Since we cannot doubt the one which is accomplished before our eyes, even though we cannot explain it, we should not doubt the other which rests upon irrefutable testimony. Was It Intoxicating Wine?

Another line of attack is to charge Jesus with immoral conduct in making intoxicating wine. The modernist delights to point out this alleged flaw in the conduct of Jesus and boast anew of the glorious process of evolution which has brought us up so far above Jesus that we realize it is wrong to make, sell or use intoxicating liquors. The first point to be proved before the indictment can stand is that Jesus did actually make intoxicating wine. Did He? Who says so? His slanderers, not His biographers. John does not state nor indicate that the wine was intoxicating. It may not have even been fermented. There is no drunkenness recorded against this wedding feast. The ruler's remark cannot intimate this. "Every man setteth on first the good wine, and when men have drunk freely, then that which is worse: thou hast kept the good wine until now." He was not drunk. He recognized the different flavor instantly. His is a facetious remark: "You are not proceeding according to custom. At the feasts I have heard about, they furnish the good wine when the taste is keen; and when it is dulled by much drinking, the poor wine; and they tell me they are not able to discern the difference." If Jesus made intoxicating wine here, then this is the only time He ever used His power to furnish to man that which is destructive of his nature and powers. Why, then,

gratuitously accuse Jesus of this when it is not even hinted in the record? The Greek word omos (wine) does not necessarily mean intoxicating wine. The wine of the miracle had a delightful flavor which excelled anything the ruler had experienced, judging by his emphatic comment. The Methods of Jesus Where did the critics of Jesus get their idea and impulse against intoxicating liquors? From the Bible and from Jesus! He did not attempt to start a sudden social or political revolution of any kind to abolish slavery, the sale of alcohol, or even tyranny. To do this would have meant such bloodshed and world upheavals as would have defeated His very purpose. But He preached the great heavenly message which finally brought about these reformations by gradual processes. While He did not preach a bloody revolution to free the slaves, He did not join in the cruel work of enslaving man, but gave the true freedom and set forth the principles upon which the social reformation finally was achieved. The same principle applies to the crime of strong drink. The account of the wedding feast at Cana does not controvert the principle. This scene presents Jesus, even in the midst of earth’s most joyous occasion, meeting human distress and using the power of heaven to make glad the hearts of men.

044. Chapter 23 - The Cleansing of the Temple

Chapter 23 - The Cleansing of the Temple

John 2:18-22 Jesus in Capernaum

After the wedding feast at Cana “Jesus and his mother and his brethren and his disciples” went to Capernaum. Peter had a home in the city which became a sort of headquarters for Jesus and His disciples. The fact that His mother and brethren followed Him to Capernaum seems to indicate that they either had relatives here, or their intense interest in Jesus, to see what further miracles He would perform or what course He would follow, led them to move to Capernaum for a time, when He went there instead of returning to Nazareth. John’s Gospel does not indicate how Jesus spent this brief period of residence at Capernaum. The miracle at Cana would have been noised abroad, and it may have been that He began in a quiet way to teach and heal the people during this period. But a tremendous event was at hand which completely overshadowed these quiet weeks at Capernaum. The real opening of His ministry was to be in Jerusalem, and in such dramatic fashion as to stir the entire nation.

Jesus in the Temple The Passover is at hand. All the nation throngs the capital city. At the age of twelve, Jesus had startled the great scholars of the nation in His discussions with them in the temple. But now He comes in the fullness of divine authority and power. The outer court of the temple is filled with a motley crowd. All is hubbub and confusion. Merchants and worshipers in holiday attire present a riot of color. The lowing and bleating of the animals mingle with the raucous cries of the drivers. The holy temple of God has been changed into a market-place! Into this scene a lone figure enters carrying a whip, the symbol of authority and of punishment. A little group of bewildered disciples follow at a distance. Suddenly He mounts to a place where all can see, and, with a single fearful gesture, commands the startled attention of the entire multitude. The divine wrath of the Prophet from Galilee electrifies the multitude and drives them headlong from His presence as He hurls His thunderbolt of denunciation at their prostitution of God’s house. The boldest slink away with smoldering defiance in their faces. Wielding the whip, Jesus drives the dumb animals, the sheep and the oxen, before Him and peremptorily commands those who had charge of the cages filled with doves to take them out. With indignant sweep, He overturns the tables of the money-changers and scatters their coins over the temple pavement. The disciples, standing apart in an awed group, suddenly are reminded of that notable prediction concerning the Messiah found in the sixty-ninth Psalm: “The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.” Surely Jesus will be consumed by the jealous fires of hatred He has stirred this fearful day. Yet it is His zeal and devotion for God’s house which have led Him thus to boldly challenge the hypocritical leaders of the nation and publicly denounce their corrupt management of the temple. These leaders gather for an assault, and demand of Jesus a miraculous sign to prove He has the right thus to override the high priest and all the legal overseers of the temple! A single man with whip in hand drives a whole multitude out of the temple! What greater sign could be had than this? Yet they ask a sign. Blind leaders of the blind, they ask “a sign of a sign.” Jesus answers their demand with an

enigmatical prediction which they cannot fathom or overturn: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” They understand Him to predict the destruction of the temple and deny His ability to erect it in three days. But He spoke of His crucifixion — the inevitable tragedy which this day’s work presages. The Temple Cleansed Twice The Gospels describe two such cleansings of the temple. John tells of Jesus’ driving Out the merchants and multitude at the very opening of His ministry; the Synoptics represent Jesus as opening the final week of furious combat with the Pharisees and Sadducees in this manner. The gratuitous charge of the modernist is that there was but one cleansing, and that the Gospel writers got tangled up as to the time it happened. But, laying aside the question of inspiration, it is impossible that eyewitnesses could have been so confused as to such a thrilling and all-important event. Why, then, if there were two cleansings, are they not both recorded by all the Gospels? This is because Matthew, Mark, and Luke omit entirely this early Judaean ministry to abbreviate their account, and so could not introduce this first cleansing into their biographies, while John omits many of the events of the last week, such as the cleansing of the temple and the institution of the Lord’s Supper, because these have already been recorded by the Synoptics. The accounts of the two cleansings are quite different. The one comes as a bolt out of a clear sky and starts the terrific conflict with the religious leaders. The other comes at the close of Jesus’ ministry as another incident in the controversy which is gradually growing more bitter and deadly. In the first cleansing, Jesus “made a scourge of small cords,” which He used in driving out the animals. This is not mentioned in any of the accounts of the second cleansing. In John’s account, Jesus bases His action on the fact that His Father’s house is being made a place of merchandise. In the last cleansing He makes the charge that they have turned the temple into a lair of robbers. There is nothing incongruous in the fact that Jesus cleansed the temple twice. The priests and their follow mg would be likely to fall back into such traffic, since it was tremendously profitable. Edersheim figures they made as much as $300,000 a year from this market. The Sadducees would be glad to show their contempt for Jesus by re-establishing the market during His long absence from the city.

Modernistic Attack An instructor in an Eastern university offers the following explanation of why Jesus cleansed the temple: “Jesus was a poor, country yocum who had been raised in the sticks up in Galilee, and had never been to the city before in his life, and did not know that this market was necessary for the temple worship. Therefore, when he saw the traders in the temple, he became indignant and drove them Out.” This explanation, with its malicious delight in attempting to belittle Jesus, has the same shallow and flimsy foundation which is characteristic of modernism. The reasons why this theory cannot hear investigation are numerous: (1) The statement He had not been to the temple before falsifies the Gospel of Luke, which tells He was there at the age of twelve. He might have been there many times during His youth. (2) Galilee was a province, but even the most ignorant provincials could see at a glance that while the market was necessary for the worshipers, it was not necessary to have the market inside the temple. The city itself could furnish numerous suitable locations. (3) If Jesus was a poor, country yocum,” why did the Jewish leaders yield to Him? The professor did not pause to explain how a poor, young ignoramus from Galilee managed to drive the whole multitude, including the leaders of a nation, from the temple with nothing hut a whip in His hand.

Declaration of Deity

Back of this scene lies the principle that right makes might. The fact that Jesus was right, and that the Sadducees and Pharisees were wrong, tended to enfeeble them and give Him power. But among so many there were those who were utterly depraved and cared only for profit and graft. Nobler motives would not count for much with them. Why did they not kill Him on the spot? It is impossible to understand the scene except as an exhibition of the supernatural power of Jesus. His assumption of authority proclaims it and His amazing feat proves it. Right at the outset of His ministry He assumed divine authority and declared by His action: “Behold, a greater than the temple is here.” He towered above the Sadducees and Pharisees and condemned their commercialized management of the temple on the ground that they had defiled “my Father’s house.” A clearer assertion of His divinity would be hard to find. The Jews realized He was making claim to be Messiah by His action. This is the meaning of their challenge to Him to show an overpowering sign from heaven. However, they refused to see or believe His supernatural character.

Results of the Cleansing

What were the results of this cleansing? The reformation in the practices of the temple was not permanent. They drifted hack again into the old ways. But their greed and lack of reverence had been publicly denounced and the mind of the common people must have been deeply impressed. A new ideal for God’s house had been set up in the mind of the nation. Jesus’ action was like a charge of dynamite which started to shake loose the strangle hold which these false leaders had on the hearts of the multitude, and was the first step in trying to wrest them free from such corrupt leadership.

One of the very apparent effects was the sudden impetus given to the inevitable controversy which loomed between Jesus and the religious leaders of the nation. It is customary to declare that the controversy which led to the death of Jesus had its inception in discussions over Sabbath — breaking and failure to keep the traditions of the elders. But here in the cleansing of the temple it took its rise. The scorn of the Jewish leaders for John the Baptist was in itself a rejection of Jesus in the person of His forerunner. The struggle between Jesus and these leaders was in a sense inherited from John’s ministry. The Sadducees were in charge of the temple, but the Pharisees must have been in sympathy with their policy as to the market, for they raised no objection. And now the undying hatred of these malignant foes was raised. They were cowed, but not convinced. They had been publicly rebuked, but were not repentant The scene gives an insight into why Jesus spent so little time in the temple during His public ministry. He was in the temple more during the last week of His ministry than all the rest of the years combined. And His death followed immediately this protracted week of instruction in the temple! He is never pictured as going up to the temple to pray. He went to the desert, sea, and mountain; to the fresh and unsullied world of nature for communion with God, and relief to His overburdened soul. The ungodly hypocrites, who had gained possession of the temple and the whole machinery for the government of the nation, had developed such an atmosphere of selfishness, greed, and dishonesty that Jesus would not bow His neck to their yoke, but rather threw this thunderbolt into their midst and departed into the free air of the provinces. How His deep devotion for His Father’s house, defiled and turned into a den of robbers, contrasts with their pious, hypocritical use of the temple to fill their own greedy purses!

Revelation of the Character of Jesus The revelation of the character of Jesus in this dramatic opening of His ministry is so startling and decisive that it is strange that it can have been so overlooked. The artists' pictures of Jesus are so often effeminate in character, and the word — pictures of the pulpit often follow suit. "The sweet spirit" of Jesus is often emphasized so exclusively that His absolute and complete manliness, as shown in this moment of fearful wrath, is overlooked. Our Christ endured personal insult and injury; yes, even death "as a lamb that is led to the slaughter dumb," but for the outraged house of His heavenly Father He dared to issue a thundering challenge which shook the whole nation to its foundations.

045. Chapter 24 - The Conversation with Nicodemus

Chapter 24 - The Conversation with Nicodemus John 2:23-25;John 3:1-21 The Judaean Ministry An indication of the fragmentary character of our knowledge of Jesus' ministry is seen in the fact that the Synoptics omit all mention of the early Judaean campaign, and that John, while clearly showing that it was of considerable duration and over much territory, limits his records of details to two incidents — the cleansing of the temple and the conversation with Nicodemus. This ministry at first centered in Jerusalem, and then launched out into an evangelistic tour of Judaea (John 2:23; John 3:22). It was marked by a striking succession of miracles (John 2:23; John 3:2). It so stirred Judaea that it completely eclipsed John's following, and led the Pharisees to plot against the life of Jesus (John 2:24; John 4:1, John 4:2). It is noteworthy that, in spite of the tendency of the Gospels to emphasize the miracles of Jesus, John passes over any delineation of these early miracles, to record the opening clash between Jesus and the leaders of the nation, and this intimate conversation with a famous Pharisee which gives momentous revelation of the character of His kingdom.

Friend and Foe The biographical method of John outlines the general movement of Jesus' early ministry: its visible effects in the open and desperate hostility of the hypocritical Sadducees and Pharisees, and its invisible effects in the quiet investigation and meditation of the more sincere leaders. The first two chapters of John show something of the effect of Jesus' personality and teaching upon the earnest, but untrained, Galileans whom He invited to assist in His ministry; the next two chapters show the impact of Jesus' meeting with the scholars and political leaders in Jerusalem. The bold and fiery denunciation of the corrupt leaders is contrasted with His kindly reception of an earnest enquirer after truth. The effort is made today to show that Jesus was unfair and excessively bitter in His attitude toward the Jewish leaders. This quiet conference of Christ with Nicodemus proves how generous and friendly His attitude was whenever the opportunity offered. John shows in rapid-fire contrast the two attitudes of Jesus and the two types of Jewish leadership. How many Pharisees were comparable to Nicodemus in character we cannot tell. Occasionally we find Jesus in the home of a Pharisee, enjoying the hospitality and offering friendly instruction or commending publicly a splendid answer by some Pharisee. The full weight of His condemnation in cleansing the temple fell upon the Sadducees who had charge of the temple management. But it was the Pharisees who took up the gauntlet and attempted to drive Jesus from the stage of action, because they, too, were implicated in the corruption of the temple, and they were, by scholarly training and religious conviction, better qualified to combat the movement of Jesus. We never find Jesus engaged in friendly conversation in the home of a Sadducee, or in public agreement with them. They, with their skepticism and their corrupt politics, were separated from Him by a far wider chasm.

Character of Nicodemus The narrative furnishes an interesting character study of Nicodemus, and makes evident that he was (1) a ruler of the Jews; (2) a distinguished scholar; (3) one who was interested to investigate, but who came by night; (4) willing to admit the validity of Jesus' miracles, but not yet convinced that He was the Christ; (5) full of questions and the desire to know, but slow

to learn. Nicodemus appears in the Gospel on two later occasions: he attempts to argue the cause of Jesus in a semiofficial assembly of the Sanhedrin, and is accused of being in sympathy with Jesus (John 7:50); he boldly assists Joseph of Arimathea in embalming and burying the body of Jesus (John 19:39). Every synagogue had “rulers” — the most scholarly and influential men of the community — who directed its religious life. But “ruler of the Jews” evidently means a member of the Sanhedrin — one of the great men of the nation. This is confirmed by the courage and force with which Nicodemus protests against the illegal and corrupt procedure of the Sanhedrin (John 7:50). His conduct on that occasion, as well as the rebuke of Jesus, indicates that he was a distinguished teacher (John 3:10).

Why by Night? The reasons which caused him to come to Jesus by night have provoked much discussion. Did he come thus merely to avoid the interminable interruptions of His daily ministry among the multitudes — in order to have sufficient quiet and leisure for scholarly discussion? Or was it because he lacked courage to speak out among the crowd, being doubtful of the attitude of Jesus and fearful of the wrath of the Sanhedrin if he revealed a friendly approach to Christ? The Scripture seems to imply that he came by night because he feared the consequences. (Cf. John 19:38, John 19:39 : “Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews,” and “Nicodemus, he who at first came to him by night.”) Scholarship and Prejudice The Christian world has pondered through the centuries the unfathomed depths of this conversation. Jesus was talking with a scholar. Nicodemus’ first remark indicates the philosophic turn of mind — a careful weighing of the evidence Jesus had submitted and a logical conclusion. It is to be expected that Jesus’ replies to such a questioner would he profound. He had a way of giving mysterious and perplexing teaching in order to stir His hearers to persistent mental effort in apprehending the truth. He pursued such a course in addressing uneducated persons such as the Samaritan woman. This method reaches its profoundest character in discussion with scholars. Such formidable replies as Jesus gave would fascinate the hearer, and cause him to meditate on the meaning for years, and the whole church in turn to ruminate and find here an increasing understanding of the truth. Nicodemus was in a measure equipped for such discussion, but his great learning caused him to be slow to learn. False premises encumbered his path. That which a Galilean fisherman or a Samaritan woman might quickly seize by intuition or direct faith, the scholar must reach by the laborious path of premise and conclusion. But when a great scholar such as Saul of Tarsus came to believe in Christ, his mental endowment increased the depth of his faith and the power of his life. Is it surprising that even though many of the Pharisees must have accepted Christianity, the leadership of the church, with the exception of Paul, remained with the Galileans Jesus had trained?

Nicodemus’ Problems

There were apparently two problems in the mind of Nicodemus: the personality and work of Jesus and the character of the Messianic kingdom. He spoke concerning the first. Jesus brushed aside his inadequate tribute and answered the second problem. The closing verses of chapter two declare the ability of Jesus to read the hearts of all men. This account immediately offers an illustration. Jesus read Nicodemus’ heart, and, instead of answering the remark of his lips, replied to the real question in his heart. After all, the two questions were inseparable. The Jews were expecting a material Messiah. The ministry of John, with its announcement of the immediate approach of the Messiah, had stirred the whole nation. The Jerusalem leaders had investigated

and repudiated John's ministry. Then Jesus suddenly appeared in Jerusalem, and, instead of rallying the Jews for an attack on the Roman masters from whom the Messiah was expected to give relief, He turned on the Jewish leaders themselves with a fierce, public condemnation. Stunned by His action in cleansing the temple, they demanded miraculous proof that He was really the Christ (John 2:18). After the heat of the controversy abated, Nicodemus came to question Christ concerning Himself and His unexpected manner of inaugurating His Messianic movement. As if wrested by tremendous effort from the mazes of his life-long study and anticipations, he offered what seemed to him the ponderous conclusion that the miracles of Jesus proved that He was a "teacher sent from God." The conclusion of Nicodemus fell so far short of the actual truth of Jesus' personality, and his understanding of the spiritual character of the kingdom of God was so limited, that Jesus went directly to this, which was the heart of the whole problem of His questioner.

Nicodemus and the Rich Young Ruler

There was something about Pharisaism which tended to breed self-complacency. It was evident in two of the most admirable and distinguished members of the sect who appear in the Gospel narratives: Nicodemus and the rich young ruler. One was burdened with great learning, and the other with great riches — both of the worldly variety. But the flame of genuine goodness was not completely smothered out in their hearts. They still longed to know, to do and to be. They were both fascinated by the personality of Jesus. In each case Jesus swept aside their words of praise to lay bare to them their own shortcomings. How quickly the Master forced Nicodemus to change his assured manner, "Teacher, we know," to a halting "I do not know; I cannot understand." And the rich young ruler likewise was shaken from his confident "I have kept" to an implied "I cannot keep. Farewell." Neither was able to meet the daring program of Jesus. Nicodemus finally came Out of the shadows of Pharisaism to walk in the sunlight with the risen Christ. The Kingdom of God The third chapter of John is the only place in this Gospel where the term "kingdom of God" is used. When on trial before Pilate, Jesus used the parallel phrase "My kingdom" (John 18:36), and throughout the Gospel of John Jesus discussed the kingdom under various figurative titles, but the solitary character of the discussion with Nicodemus concerning the kingdom of God adds to its importance. In just such fashion the use of the word "church" in Matthew 16:18, when Matthew continually reports the discussion of the term "kingdom of God" or "kingdom of heaven," enhances the importance of this central passage. In only one other place does Matthew use the word "church" (Matthew 18:17). A study of both John 3:3. and Matthew 16:18. leads to the same conclusion: that the church and the kingdom are identical. There is an earthly and a heavenly phase to this great organization concerning which Jesus constantly talked. There is the church militant and the church triumphant; the kingdom of God unfolded on earth and glorified in heaven. The Epistle to the Hebrews describes in the following beautiful language the heavenly consummation: "Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven" (Hebrews 12:22, Hebrews 12:23). The more one studies the New Testament the more apparent it becomes that Jesus proclaimed one great organization which was set up on the day of Pentecost and which finally shall find its consummation in heaven: the church of Christ — the kingdom of God.

Conversation with Nicodemus and with Peter In the conversation at Caesarea Philippi and the one at Jerusalem, Jesus spoke to Peter and to Nicodemus of a church, a kingdom, an organization that was to be established and of the manner in which it was to be entered. He promised to make Peter His spokesman when the kingdom was established and through him to open the gates as he proclaimed the means of pardon. Jesus declared to Nicodemus that a man must be born again — born of water and the Spirit in order to enter the kingdom. Peter had a material kingdom in mind and had to receive severe correction as to the misconception under which he labored. Nicodemus was under the same false impression which became more apparent as Jesus answered his amazed rejoinder about the impossibility of a physical rebirth. Before the conversation was over, in each case, the relationship of Jesus and His death to the kingdom was set forth in a sublime statement.

Effect of Jesus' Reply

Jesus' abrupt reply "except one be born anew [or from above] he cannot see the kingdom of God" fastened the attention upon the individual, the necessity of such a change of the whole being that it is compared to a birth, and upon the spiritual character of the kingdom. This answer startled Nicodemus as much as did the final response of Jesus to the rich young ruler. Nicodemus doubtless felt he had conceded much in coming to Jesus and in so frankly stating his favorable conclusion about Him. But Jesus broke his complacency of spirit by warning him that everyone, even a learned and pious Jewish scholar like Nicodemus, must be born anew if he would see the kingdom of God. Not by a flattering word or half-hearted devotion, but by a complete transformation and dedication of the life is discipleship to be achieved. The New Birth When Nicodemus uttered his astounded protest of the impossibility of a second birth physically, Jesus responded with a reaffirmation and further definition of the new birth: "Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." There is but one preposition "of" and no article in the Greek with either "water" or "spirit." It refers to one single action — the redemption of the individual soul. The birth of water evidently means baptism — the completing step in the rebirth of the individual. The birth of Spirit suggests the whole spiritual transformation which takes place in the spirit of the individual as he turns through faith and repentance to solemnly dedicate himself to God in the act of baptism. The primary reference is evidently to the Spirit of God and hence the revisers inserted a "the" and capitalized the word "Spirit." The Holy Spirit comes into contact with the spirit of man in the preaching of the Word and man comes from the world into the glorious kingdom of God through the new birth which is a change of mind, heart and life (faith and repentance) and a change of state (baptism). The Greek verb translated "be born" means either "to beget" or "to bring forth"; hence man is begotten of the Spirit of God and is born of water. The reference to immersion is inescapable. In the act of baptism the whole man — body, mind and soul — is buried and comes forth a new creature in Christ.

Campbell-Rice Debate

It is interesting to notice, in reading through the vast wilderness of discussion with which commentators have encompassed this passage, how little anyone has added to the positions advanced in the Campbell-Rice Debate. Mr. Rice has summed up the case for the paedo-baptist position as has Alexander Campbell for those who believe Jesus commanded immersion as the final step in entrance to the kingdom.

Mr. Rice followed several lines of argument. He held that Christ did not refer to the church, because Nicodemus would not have understood Him. “Christian baptism had not been instituted. Now we are certainly safe in presuming that the Saviour intended that Nicodemus should understand Him. But if He alluded to an ordinance not then in existence and of which Nicodemus could know nothing, how was it possible that he could understand Him? and how could He consistently reprove him for not understanding Him?” (C.-R. Debate, p. 448). But Christ used exactly the same method at Caesarea Philippi and on various other occasions to give His hearers instruction which would challenge their reflection through the years. Peter did not understand about the establishment of the church, nor the death of Jesus, but he was instructed and rebuked for slow understanding when he made the good confession. Again Mr. Rice argued that the reference of John 3:6 cannot be to the church because of the kind of lives some of those in the church live. He says: “Now, my friend tells us the meaning of this language is — unless a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the church. I presume this is not the true meaning. It cannot be so; for multitudes who are not born of the Spirit, do enter into the church. Observe, the Saviour says, that they must be born of water and the Spirit. Now, the fact is undeniable, that many enter the church who are not born of the Spirit, as their conduct afterwards abundantly proves” (C.-R. Debate, p. 487). This argument has the flavor of the Calvinistic error, “Once in grace, always in grace”; as if a person could not exercise freedom of the will and leave the church as well as enter it; as if he could not have his name written on the Lamb’s book of life and also have it blotted out of that book. Moreover the argument overlooks the fact that the Lord adds to the church day by day those who are being saved. When man presumes to say who is in the church and to use his declaration as the basis for setting aside the divine plan of redemption, it is well to remember that the only exact record or “church roll” of those who are in the church, mentioned in the Scripture, is the “Lamb’s book of life” which is kept by Almighty God and not by man. It is our business to preach the Word, to lead men into fellowship with Christ, and it is God’s place to judge the hearts and lives of men.

Baptism for Remission of Sins When Mr. Rice undertook to differentiate between the kingdom and the church he was forced to state what he thought Jesus said to Nicodemus and in so doing yielded the whole point of the debate on the design of baptism. He says: “The idea which the Saviour intended to convey, is, that a man must be born again, or he cannot possess the blessings, present and future, of His kingdom. He cannot enjoy pardon, salvation, and eternal life, unless he experiences the new birth, in a change of heart” (C.-R. Debate, p. 487). This is a flat admission of the point under discussion: that baptism is essential to the remission of sins, with the exception that Mr. Rice deliberately and arbitrarily leaves out the word “water” when he explains the passage. This constituted his third line of attack upon the evident meaning of John 3:5. One of the most incisive paragraphs of Campbell’s argument on this passage uncovers the “preposterous” nature of Rice’s position which is in general that of all present-day paedo-baptist writers. Mr. Campbell says: “Since we began to plead for the ordinances of Christ, a new method of evading the force of this passage has been discovered, and very extensively adopted. It is, to make it half literal and half spiritual. Water, say they, means the Spirit, and the Spirit means the Spirit. But might not any one say, if water means Spirit, Spirit means water — and thus make it all water and no Spirit? Certainly this is as rational as to make water mean Spirit and thus make it all Spirit. But the great Teacher said neither the one nor the other. He did not say, ye must be born of Spirit and of the Spirit; nor did he say, ye must be born of water, and of the water — but of water

and Spirit" (C.-R.Debate, p. 481).

Timothy Dwight

One of the most telling passages in Campbell's argument is his quotation of Timothy Dwight. Campbell had quoted the Westminster Confession of Faith and pointed out that "all the Greek and Latin fathers, without one single exception" agreed that John 5:5 refers to baptism (C.-R. Debate, p 256). He quotes Dwight as follows: "I have a few scraps here, giving the words of two of our most distinguished theologians, to wit: Timothy Dwight, president of Yale, who said, 'To be born of water here means baptism, and in my view it is as necessary to an admission into the visible church as to be born of the Spirit is to our admission into the invisible kingdom. It is to be observed, that he who understands the authority of this institution, and refuses to obey it, will never enter into either the visible or the invisible kingdom" (p. 481). A further quotation of like force is from Dr. Wall, the famous Episcopal writer: "There is not one Christian writer of any antiquity, in any language, but who understands the new birth of water (John 3:5) as referring to baptism; and if it be not so understood, it is difficult to give an account how a person is born of water, any more than born of wood" (History of Baptism, Vol. I, p. 119).

"Wind" or "Spirit"?

Jesus continued His explanation to Nicodemus by pointing out that the physical birth to which His questioner referred and the spiritual birth of which He spoke are two separate and distinct things. The possibility of God's bringing a man forth into a new, spiritual kingdom should not have amazed Nicodemus any more than the very forces of nature which are controlled by God, but surpass human understanding. "The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knoweth not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." The marginal reading in the American Standard Version is "The Spirit breatheth." The translation, "voice," fits this rendering as does "sound" (Authorized Version) the rendering, "The wind bloweth." The word pneuma is used 285 times in the New Testament, and 284 times it is translated "spirit," but here it seems to mean "wind." Liddell and Scott give three general definitions for the Greek word: (1) wind; (2) breath; (3) spirit. The verb translated "blows" also has the meaning "breatheth" in classical Greek, although it is never so translated in the New Testament. The word phone means either "sound" or voice in both classical Greek and the New Testament. Thus, either translation of the passage is possible, but the context favors "the wind bloweth" for this is an "earthly thing" which exceeds man's understanding as to whence it comes or whither it goes, and the workings of the Holy Spirit "a heavenly thing" still more mysterious. The Death of Christ

Having opened the spiritual character of the kingdom to Nicodemus in such profound language, Jesus proceeded to discuss the second element of the conversation: His own personality and work. This was the question with which Nicodemus began. The two questions are interwoven in the closing discussion of Jesus. If Nicodemus could not understand that the kingdom was to be spiritual and to be entered by a new birth, he would be slow to apprehend and believe that Jesus was the Christ in spite of the fact that He was to die. He was to be lifted up as Moses had lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. Notice how Jesus still used language which both revealed and concealed His deity and approaching death, and left Nicodemus with material for long hours of reflection. There is no indication that the conversation closes before John 3:21, although many presume this later section to be the words of John rather than of Jesus. The redemption of the

world was to be accomplished and God’s glorious kingdom established by the humiliation and death of His Son and not by any military leadership or earthly pomp and glory such as the Pharisees anticipated. The Deity of Christ

Jesus seems at the first of this great conversation to have avoided the implied question of Nicodemus, and to have turned from the problem of His own personality to that of the kingdom, but in the closing words He gave such a beautiful and fascinating delineation of His person and work that it has been called “the Golden Text of the Bible”: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have eternal life.” The revelation of Himself was still veiled and profound as were His declarations concerning the kingdom, but He opened the door of a mighty vista to Nicodemus and challenged him to come forth “to the light, that his works may be made manifest.” What hours of agonizing indecision and meditation must have passed in the life of Nicodemus before he stood forth in the light of day to help lift the body of his Saviour from the cross!

046. Chapter 25 - The Baptism of John and Christian Baptism

Chapter 25 - The Baptism of John and Christian Baptism John 3:22-36;John 4:1-3 The question is often asked as to the difference between the baptism which John practiced and that instituted by the apostles at the establishment of the church on Pentecost. John's baptism was practiced by the disciples of Jesus early in His ministry, but they seem to have discontinued this after a time. The simultaneous campaigns of Jesus and John are thus described: "After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there" (John 3:22, John 3:23).

John's Baptism and the Ministry of Jesus The message of Jesus in the early stage of the Galilean campaign continued the proclamation of repentance, and the near approach of the kingdom just as John had proclaimed. To this Jesus began to add an unfolding of the gospel (Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:14; Luke 4:15-19, Luke 4:43, Luke 4:44). In the Judaean ministry, which preceded this, His message was doubtless the same. It was (luring this campaign that He joined John in practicing the baptism which John had inaugurated. The great extent of this ministry, as well as the fact that Jesus concentrated on preaching and had His disciples do the baptizing, is seen in the following passage: "When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples), he left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee" (John 4:1-3). Between these two passages is recorded John the Baptist's comments on a controversy between John's disciples and a Jew "about purifying," which evidently was a discussion as to the character and purpose of John's baptism, and as to the fact that Jesus was attracting more disciples than John.

John's Baptism Discontinued

Shortly after this, John was cast into prison, and his disciples seem to have abandoned any further public ministry and to have given themselves to the task of comforting their imprisoned leader. Jesus and His disciples likewise ceased the practice of John's baptism as Jesus plunged into the hectic days of His great campaign in Galilee. When John was beheaded, his disciples came to Jesus and his movement was completely superseded by that of Jesus. Sporadic efforts of isolated and uninformed followers of John may have caused the baptism of John to be continued in some fashion after this. This is suggested in Acts 19:1-7, where Paul found twelve men in Ephesus who were disciples of John the Baptist, and, after giving them further instruction, baptized them with Christian baptism. We do not know who had baptized these men. The fact that Apollos had been preaching the gospel of Jesus at Ephesus, but was in ignorance as to the difference between John's baptism and Christian baptism until further instructed by Aquila and Priscilla, suggests that he may have been the preacher who administered the baptism of John to these twelve men (Acts 18:24-28). The fact that they had never received the Holy Spirit, and that they had not been baptized in the name of Jesus, and that John's baptism was preparatory to the coming of Christ, is emphasized by Paul (Acts 19:2-5).

Purpose of John’s Baptism

One phase of John’s baptism is still under considerable discussion. Did it, when preceded by a spiritual reformation, have a part in the procuring of forgiveness, or was it only unto repentance? Matthew says: “They were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins” (Matthew 3:6). Mark uses the same phrase, and also “baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4, Mark 1:5). Luke uses the latter phrase (Luke 3:3). Paul says: “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him who should come after him, that is, on Jesus” (Acts 19:4). Some hold that the connection between repentance and forgiveness is inseparable, and, if it was a baptism unto repentance, then it must have been a baptism unto forgiveness of sins. But it is plain that there could be no forgiveness of sins without the death of Christ and the fulfillment of His ministry. John’s baptism was a baptism of preparation for the coming of Christ, and was to bring the whole nation to repent and change its life in order to be ready for the Christ. As far as individual forgiveness of sin is concerned, it was like the sacrifices in the temple which looked forward to the complete forgiveness in Christ. They, too, were for the forgiveness of sin,” but the final redemption of the Jews from their sins awaited the fulfillment of God’s plan of salvation for man unfolded in the death of Jesus.

Responsibility on Basis of Opportunity The situation of Jews who obeyed John’s baptism, and died before the proclamation of the full gospel and the institution of Christian baptism at Pentecost, is exactly parallel to the situation of those who obeyed any preceding phase of the Old Testament dispensation: they were responsible only for the light they had. From the fire which Abel obediently lighted on the altar of sacrifice (Hebrews 11:4), on through the increasing light of the revelations and commandments offered during the Old Testament period, in every case the people were expected to be obedient to the revelation granted. The program and institutions continually pointed forward to Christ, and to the actual and final redemption to be achieved by Him.

Christian Baptism Contrasted with John’s Baptism

Those, however, who heard Peter on the day of Pentecost were not instructed at the close of the sermon to divide themselves into two groups: those who had already been baptized by John and did not need the baptism which Peter proclaimed, and those who had never been baptized by John’s baptism and hence needed to obey this command of the Christian gospel. The great multitude who heard Peter preach must have contained both those who had yielded to John’s preaching and those who had never heard him. No distinction was made between them; the same command was given to all (Acts 2:38). The baptism of John had prepared the hearts of the people for the coming of Christ, but it was not parallel to or a substitute for Christian baptism. The following series of parallels states the difference between John’s baptism and Christian baptism:

John’s baptism was preceded by repentance. (Belief in God is, of course, implied in this.) Christian baptism demands explicit faith in Jesus as Son of God and Saviour, as well as repentance.

John’s baptism was on the general authority of God — no known formula. Christian baptism is in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

John’s baptism was a temporary measure, preparing for the appearance of Christ. Christian baptism is permanent, remaining in force to the end of time.

John’s baptism was for the Jews only. Christian baptism is universal — “all the nations” and “every creature.”

John’s baptism was in preparation for the coming kingdom. Christian baptism inducts one into this kingdom, into Christ.

John’s baptism was unto repentance, to produce a reformation so that those baptized should be ready to accept the supreme blessings at Christ’s hands. Christian baptism is “for the remission of your sins.”

John’s baptism was not connected with the gift of the Holy Spirit. The descent of the Spirit on Jesus at His baptism was unique, but suggestive of the coming of the Spirit into the heart of the Christian when he is baptized into Christ. Christian baptism is followed by the gift of the Holy Spirit. Were the Apostles Baptized? A related question, arising from the text that represents the disciples of Jesus as continuing John’s baptism under Jesus’ supervision, is whether these apostles themselves were ever baptized with Christian baptism. They had evidently received John’s baptism at his hands and now were practicing it. But there is no record of their receiving Christian baptism before they began to administer it on Pentecost. Some would draw the conclusion that baptism is inconsequential — a sort of unnecessary appendage to Christianity — if the apostles themselves were not baptized with Christian baptism; this, too, in the face of the solemn commission of Jesus and teeming references in Acts and the Epistles. In the following keen paragraphs, Alexander Campbell shows that the apostles were commanded of God to inaugurate Christ’s ordinance of baptism, and that they therefore were not subject to it themselves: “Who says John’s baptism is identical with Christian baptism? Who teaches so? They are indeed much more nearly identical than the Jewish and Christian religions. They are, however, precisely identical in two or three grand points. First, the action in both is immersion in water. Second, the subject of both is a professed believer and reformer. Third, in the intention of the subject — his reformation of life, his subordination to law — in all these they are similar, and identical. There are some points, however, in which they are not identical. John’s baptism was not administered in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This revelation was not yet given; nor were the facts believed in both cases the same. The Messiah and His kingdom were coming in the first. They have come in the second. Was John Baptized?

“My friend asks me who baptized those in the previous — the intercalary — dispensation. Who baptized John? Who baptized the first Baptist? Should I not be able to show who baptized these, what then? What will the gentleman infer from our ignorance in this case? Are we to infer that they never were baptized? What does that prove or disprove? No person who, in any age, sets up an institution, was himself a subject of it. An executor was to be appointed. When a person is appointed by God to set up an institution, he is not himself to be regarded as a subject of that institution. In the style of Mr. B., we might ask: Who consecrated Moses? Who put the miter upon the head of Aaron? Who poured the consecration oil upon his head? Who anointed Melchizedek? What a sage question! Who married Adam? The gentleman will find a satisfactory answer to his difficulties in these cases.

“Who baptized John? God bade him baptize. My friend asks, ‘Was he in the Christian church?’ No; because there was no Christian church at that time. The Messiah was not yet slain — the corner stone was not yet laid. Meantime, I ask: What was John to do? What was Jesus to do? What were

the holy twelve to do? They were to prepare a people for the new institution: some stones must be quarried out; some materials for the building must be gathered. The proper time and place for erecting the building was ordained by God Himself. The twelve were baptized by John; they were amongst those prepared for the Messiah's kingdom. Some one must commence the institution, there must be some one to commence Christian baptism: that could not be done till Jesus had died, was buried, and rose again: because Christians are said to be baptized into His death, they are said to be buried with Him, and to rise with Him...

"They began to immerse into Christ on the day of Pentecost. Those prepared for the kingdom of heaven, and commissioned by the Messiah, had the same authority to administer baptism that John the Baptist had; the same divine warrant from the great King. Read the commission; will not that suffice?" (Campbell-Rice Debate, p 256).

Baptism Unique and Profoundly Significant

John's baptism was new and startling. Nothing like it had been practiced in the Old Testament. Men had been commanded to immerse themselves, but the institution John promulgated was different. The complete dedication of the individual to John's great movement of preparation for the coming of the Messiah was solemnly and beautifully shown in the act. The people were prepared for the more profound significance of the act of obedience to Christ in baptism

047. Chapter 26 - The Woman at the Well

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John 4:1-42 Facing Difficult Situations

Jesus resting on the curb of the historic well at Sychar in the hostile Samaritan country! A lone woman comes with her waterpot. The Son of God finds no rest, for He reads the degradation and shame, the agony, the unspoken and even the unconscious longings of every human heart. Every approaching footstep is a call for help. The scenes of this early ministry might be given the caption: “Facing Difficult Situations.” Jesus in His Father’s house, which is filled with corruption, faces the leaders of the nation who are responsible for its management. The great Teacher meets the questions of one of Israel’s scholars concerning Himself and His kingdom. The Saviour finds, by a lonely wayside well, a Samaritan woman of fascinating personality, but questionable past, and reaches out to save a lost soul.

Reason for Leaving Judaea

Jesus has been campaigning in Judaea for some eight months. The death struggle which immediately develops from His public condemnation of the Jerusalem hierarchy at the Passover causes the capital to hesitate, but when Jesus moves out into Judaea His movement begins to develop momentum. The excited throngs following Jesus begin to exceed those about John the Baptist. This is no longer a secondary movement. John has hurled his thunder-bolts at the Pharisees and Sadducees from his desert pulpit, but Jesus comes into the temple and casts down His challenge. And He proceeds to campaign intensively in the territory about the capital. Excitement grows apace. The hierarchy now perceives a real peril. During the Passover, Christ “did not trust himself” to all who believed on Him, for “he knew all men.” And now, “when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John. . he left Judaea and departed again into Galilee.” Are they already plotting to assassinate Him? If He remains here, at any rate, His ministry will come quickly to its final crisis at the cross. He must preach to the rest of the nation before this comes to pass. Whenever the excitement began to reach fever heat, Jesus usually changed His location and started a revival in some other locality. The people were so intent on a Messiah who would lead them in battle against the Roman legions that excitement had to be kept within bounds while He broke down their false conceptions of the Christ and taught them the spiritual character of the kingdom. Political revolution and bloodshed, never very far beneath the surface in Judaea during the Roman occupation, must be restrained.

Why Go through Samaria?

“And he must needs pass through Samaria.” Why so? Because of the enforced exit from Judaea, He must go on north through Samaria, or else go back through the capital with its seething plots. Or must He go through Samaria because it is God’s will that this benighted people shall now hear something of the good news? The disciples will be warned later not to take this triumphant

campaign at Sychar as warranting a general evangelistic movement in Samaria during His ministry. They must concentrate on Israel, for the time is short (Matthew 10:5). But the Samaritans shall at least hear the Christ these few days; and when, after Pentecost, Philip will come here with the gospel, the good seed sown years before will blossom forth into a glorious harvest.

Jesus by the Well

“Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.” “Sat thus”? How was that? How eloquent is that word “thus”! John the apostle, and the other five disciples with Jesus, had watched their Master as He sat down upon the well-curb while they went out to buy food. Something of the posture of Jesus burned itself into John’s mind, as his heart was filled with pity for his wonderful Master, despised and rejected in God’s Holy City and worn with His incessant labors for the eager, needy crowds and with the trying journey. If the Fourth Gospel uses the Jewish method of counting time — sunrise to sunset — the sixth hour was 12 Midnight. But if it uses the Roman method, which is quite evident, the sixth hour was either 6 a.m. or 6 p.m. Jesus, weary from a long journey at 6 a.m., suggests a forced march through the night; 6 p.m. suggests a more ordinary journey through the day.

Ministry among the Samaritans This ministry among the Samaritans stands distinctly apart from the regular current of Christ’s labors. He did not attempt a ministry to the Gentiles. Only twice is it recorded that He was outside of Palestine — once when, as an infant, He was taken to Egypt and, again, when He visited the Phoenician territory seeking retirement. We wonder if the Jerusalem leaders heard of this work in Sychar and what they thought of it. They accused Him of being a Samaritan in one of the heated exchanges which occurred later (John 8:48). Did this charge arise out of this association with them? The Origin of the Samaritans The Samaritans were a hybrid race which had arisen out of the intermarriage of the remnants of the ten tribes left in Israel with the colonies of heathen nations brought in when Samaria fell (722 b.c.) before the assaults of the Syrians in the reign of Shalmaneser. The Assyrians skimmed the cream off Israel and deported the intellectual and political leaders of the nation. They were scattered in groups over the Assyrian Empire, and the feebler elements of the nation who were left in Israel intermarried with the colonies of heathen among them, and lost their identity. It is uncertain as to what the attitude of the Samaritans was toward the Old Testament — as to how far they accepted and attempted to follow it. The bitter hostility between Jew and Samaritan began during the reconstruction of Jerusalem (Ezra 4:1-24 ff.; Nehemiah 4:1-23 ff.), and continued until the destruction of the Jewish nation by the Romans in the first and second centuries a.d. The action of the Samaritan village which refused to allow Jesus to spend the night was typical, although another village seems to have received Him (Luke 9:51-56). His reception at Sychar was achieved through the help of the woman He met at the well.

Character of the Woman The character of this woman emerges in general outline from a study of the conversation. She gives evidence of remarkable brilliance of intellect. The avidity with which she followed the subtle argument of Jesus and the swift, skillful turns which she occasionally gave to the conversation reveal mental acumen. An outcast by race and shut out from educational advantages by virtue of being a woman, she shows amazing ability to struggle for comprehension of the deeper meanings of Jesus, and shrewd intuition in arriving at the truth. Her past life seems to have shown disregard for the law of God and for social conventions, although the Old

Testament gave utter freedom of divorce (Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12). In this conversation Jesus was either seeking to set up the higher standard of divorce for the cause of adultery alone, or else the whole history of her life would not bear investigation. Undoubtedly both of these underlie the conversation. The woman's conscience was not entirely hardened. Her sense of spiritual need was quickly awakened. John has chosen to record, out of the multitude of incidents of this early ministry, conversation with two striking individuals — the Jerusalem scholar and the woman of Sychar — and in each case great principles of Jesus' teaching were revealed. The Situation As the woman approaches with her waterpot, self-sufficient and carefree, possibly humming a melody as she walks, Jesus sits at rest on the curb. It is a most embarrassing situation. Jew and Samaritan! A lone man and a woman — strangers — at a well! And such a woman! Will He stoop to friendly conversation with such a person? A vast chasm of social and religious prejudice separates them. "For Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" is the succinct explanation which John inserts into his narrative so that his Gentile readers will understand the dramatic possibilities of the situation. The amazement of the disciples on their return that he was speaking with a woman" is suggestive of the fact that Jesus has also overstepped the social customs. "Never speak to a woman on the street," and "Burn the words of the law rather than teach them to a woman are Jewish maxims which reveal the ancient degradation of woman even in Israel. How can Jesus cross such a chasm? What can He say which will give no offense to the woman, or which will not be misunderstood and draw a flippant reply? Jesus flings the bridge of human need across the chasm. What would this world be like but for the call of human suffering? How selfish and cruel we would all grow if we heard no appeals for help. The tact of Jesus is consummate. "Give me to drink." She could take no offense at that. She could not misunderstand it. She might churlishly refuse it or she might grant it in contemptuous silence. Either course would thwart the purpose of the Master. But the woman is so impressed by His personality and so amazed at His friendly words that she neither refuses nor grants His request, but utters a quick reply that is half protest and half question The Problem of His Personality

"How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a Samaritan woman?" "You certainly are a Jew? I am not mistaken in that. Your appearance, dress, speech, indicate it. I am a Samaritan. You surely are not mistaken? Then I must tell you. How is it you have thus broken the age-old social and religious conventions?" Notice how the personality of Jesus arouses inquiry in a moment. Wherever He went, "He could not be hid." Nicodemus, after intensive observation and study, came saying, "We know who thou art...[but who are you really?]." This woman hears but four words and her whole heart is full of questioning. All desire to secure water for herself and all thoughts of drawing water for Him are lost in the puzzle of His personality and conduct. More evident human suffering in Jesus would have stirred her pity and moved her to grant His request. Less evident majesty of person would have left unstirred her wonder and interest. All the ages find themselves, like the woman of Sychar, continually moved to ask, "Who is this? Why this conduct?"

"If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." The reply of Jesus immediately turns the discussion toward God. To the implied question of the woman, "Who are you?" He gives a response which conceals the answer, "the gift of God." He had told Nicodemus finally, "God gave his only begotten Son," and here He speaks to the woman of the supreme "gift of God." This

elusive revelation of Himself redoubles her interest. He had turned the conversation with Nicodemus from Himself to the kingdom of God; He makes a similar turn here to “the gift of God,” and adds a most beautiful and stimulating comparison of salvation to the water of life. Nicodemus, proud of his birth as a Jew, was given pointed, but mysterious, instruction as to the similarity of salvation to a new birth. The woman, seeking water, hears of wonderful “water of life.” In such fashion did the great Teacher uncover the deep mysteries of God through the means which were at hand, and stir the intellectual activities of His hearers to the maximum. A simple and matter-of-fact revelation would have been unimpressive and would have robbed the seeker after truth of the joy and growth of conquest. It would have been like a teacher furnishing the student with all the solutions and answers to the problems instead of insisting on independent effort in their solution.

“Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank thereof himself, and his sons and his cattle?” The teaching of Jesus fills her with perplexity as it had Nicodemus. Great scholar and unlearned toiler alike are as primer students in music, playing unawares in the presence of a master musician, who begins to play musical scores and furnish harmonies which they cannot fathom. They are enthralled and uplifted by that which they cannot fully comprehend, struggle as they may. The woman gropes for His real meaning as she reminds Him of His recent request for help (He has nothing to draw with), of the great depth of the famous well, and of the fact that He is presuming to claim to be even a greater benefactor than their ancestor who had dug the well. The Woman’s Need Revealed

“Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life.” The all-sufficiency of Christ again is magnificently revealed. The self-complacency of the woman, as she came to the well equipped to secure water and found Him without these means, vanishes in the realization of human helplessness. Nicodemus had come in the same mood. But how quickly the assurance of “Rabbi, we know” was changed to “I don’t know. How can these things be? I can not understand.” So the woman changes from “Thou askest drink of me” to “Whence bast thou that living water?”; “Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come all the way hither to draw.” She does not yet perceive the depth of His meaning, but her sense of need is profoundly stirred. His words are as the shining, limpid waters of the well in which she now peers and sees her image: “The well is deep, whence hast thou?….Sir, give me.” She is thinking of physical water, but unconsciously she is sounding the depths of the misery of life without God, the futility of earthly existence without “the water of life.” “I thirst,” “I come all the way hither to draw,” are poignant outbursts of a burdened human heart as yet half awakened. But before she can come to herself and return to the Father’s house, her conscience must be stirred. It is for this purpose that Jesus suddenly brings her past life into view.

“Go, call thy husband, and come hither.” The shaft pierces her heart. Does she start back, change color, and with uplifted hand to her bosom utter a half-stifled, inarticulate cry? Does He know? How can He know? How much does He know? Or is it a mere chance remark? Her conscience long smothered suddenly leaps up into a blazing, searing flame. She beats a hasty retreat from this new battlefield. She draws the curtain of a quick, defiant denial over her past. What right has this mysterious, awe-inspiring stranger to inquire into her life? This has gone far enough. Discuss

the water of life with Him? Yes. But allow Him to probe her past? No. But He must be answered! All of this in the flash of an indignant eye! But her gaze falls and she stammers, “I — I have no husband.”

“Thou saidst well, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: this hast thou said truly.” Oh, the majesty and the power of this slashing blow with which He cuts the bonds which still fetter her conscience! Does she peer again into the well to hide her embarrassment — only to see again her image, the startled semblance of her sullied soul? Or does she turn and cast a furtive glance at Sychar, calculating an escape? And what can He mean now: “Thou saidst well.” “This hast thou said truly.” Is this sincere praise or is it veiled sarcasm? Had she told the truth? Had she meant to confess the truth, or throw out a hasty denial to hide the truth? Did not the law of Moses give absolute freedom of divorce? Does He mean that her answer is much more truthful than she intended or realized? Through the maze of it all her conscience thunders that her whole past is known to Him and cannot be bid.

Ancient Controversy Invoked

“Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” Now she has come to the same conclusion with which Nicodemus began his conversation. Every turn of the conversation has unfolded His wonderful personality. Even when the searchlight is turned on her life, it is done in such a way that it reveals His divinity. And does not the consideration of His personality offer welcome relief from a too intimate and embarrassing survey of her own life? Is she changing the topic to avoid consideration of a past which she cannot defend, or is this a sudden surging of pent-up longings for God and a higher life? She cannot resent His condemnation of her life. She admits the truth of what He says and of the much more which He implies. But what hope is there for her? The Samaritans at best are a rejected and outcast people. How can she approach God with such a checkered past and with such confusion among her people as to method? Jerusalem, the holy, is not for her. She tries to clothe her appeal for Gerizim with the authority of the past: “Our fathers worshipped.”

“Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. Ye worship that which ye know not: we worship that which we know; for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” Her appeal for Gerizim is answered by a flat denial of the validity of the Samaritan claims. They have abandoned the Old Testament. Whenever a person abandons the Bible, it is always true that he worships he knows not what. But her unconscious appeal for approach to God, forgiveness and a higher life is not denied. It is not a matter of location, but of spirit and truth in finding God. Correct belief must unite with a sincere spirit. The truth He has revealed must be accepted by actual assimilation in a human spirit brought into harmony with the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament is the Word of God; salvation is of the Jews, and the Samaritan claims are absolutely false. But a new revelation is about to be granted from heaven which sets aside the Old Testament. This is one of the most profound and revolutionary of the sayings of Jesus. It completely sets aside the central proposition of the Old Testament which is built about the one central place of worship. A Hebrew idiom clouds

the meaning of “Neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem.” Cannot one now worship here? His fundamental principle shows this cannot be the meaning. The idiom means “not only in this mountain, and in Jerusalem, but also” (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:17). The declaration, “The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth,” matches the great pronouncement to Nicodemus: “Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of God.” The Christian religion has both a body and a spirit. The Forgotten Waterpot

“I know that Messiah cometh: when he is come, he will declare unto us all things.” This is the inevitable outcome of the conversation. He has risen above the need of help from Jacob’s well, and offered living water; He has revealed miraculous insight into her unworthy past, and has condemned it; He has even dared to claim superiority to the Old Testament itself, and authority to reveal a new dispensation of God. Her amazement and awe at His words burst forth in this puzzled declaration: “Messiah cometh.”

“I that speak unto thee am he.” The brevity, simplicity, and majesty of this revelation baffle description. And just as the climax of the conversation has been reached, the disciples come trooping tip with provisions. What a situation! “They marveled that he was speaking with a woman. But their reverence and loving devotion to Jesus surmount even this surprise, and they do not utter a word of criticism or question. Do they eye the woman with sidelong glances? Although thirsting for more of this living water, she perceives the conversation is not to continue now. The recollection of the command, “Go call thy husband, and come hither,” sends her flying to carry the wonderful news to Sychar. She will hear more of the wonderful news and she will share it with all her fellow-townsmen. Someone has called the waterpot left on the well-curb “the unconscious pledge of her return.” It is also the mute token of her new interest in a higher life. She came with a waterpot seeking water from Jacob’s well. When she left, her waterpot was forgotten. She is now consumed with thirst for living water. Her exaggerated tribute to His power to read the human heart is natural. She felt He could tell all things she had done. The news sets the village afire. All work is abandoned as they start forth toward Jacob’s well.

“In the meanwhile the disciples prayed him, saying, Rabbi, eat.” The meal has been spread upon the ground. The disciples take their places, and turn to see Jesus still sitting in silent abstraction on the well-curb. They are all weary and hungry. Why does He not join them? They know His need of food and rest if He is to bear the staggering load of such evangelistic labors. They will not begin without Him. Dare they interrupt His meditations? There is a very deep pathos in the simple appeal: “Master, eat.” The reply of Jesus, “I have meat to eat that ye know not,” sets them whispering across their improvised table: “Hath any man brought him aught to eat?” The consuming desire of Jesus to save lost souls received immortal expression in His response: “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work.” Then, with a gesture toward the green fields of grain, He cites four months till the harvest in April, and with another gesture toward the Samaritans pouring out of Sychar on the road to the well, He indicates a harvest-field that is ripe and ready for the gospel reapers. The impetuous and vehement testimony of the woman won the whole village to an excited investigation, and a two-day ministry of Jesus in their midst confirmed their faith in Him as the Christ. The isolation of Samaria permitted this open declaration of Himself as the Messiah. In the Galilean ministry which followed, Jesus was compelled to pursue a more guarded revelation of Himself because the Messianic movement among the Jews threatened to stir undue excitement and lead off in the direction of war with

Rome. But a more extended evangelization of Samaria was not advisable at this time, for it would have so aroused the resentment of the Jews that a further ministry among them would not have been possible.

048. Chapter 27 - The Healing of the Nobleman's Son

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John 4:46-54 A Notable Miracle

Both the rich and the poor came to Jesus for succor and no cry for mercy and help was denied. Nameless and uncounted are the multitude of those who were healed, but occasionally an individual case is described as typical or because of exceptional interest. John describes none of the miracles Jesus worked in Jerusalem and records nothing concerning the early period of the Galilean ministry except the miracle of healing the nobleman’s son. Thus he supplies alternate glimpses of teaching and miracles which have not been recorded by the three other Gospel narratives. This healing in John 4:46-54 is notable because it was the second miracle in Cana of Galilee; it was a cure performed at a distance from the sufferer; and it was performed for a distinguished officer of the king. This nobleman was doubtless a member of the government of Herod Antipas (either the army or the court) and this miracle may have been the beginning of the strong influence which Jesus exerted among some who were high in court life. As Paul from his prison in Rome sent a stream of Christianity into Caesar’s palace, so Christ, while apparently avoiding wicked Tiberias, won surprising support in the king’s court (Luke 8:3; Acts 13:1). The campaign of Jesus, however, was concentrated on the masses rather than the classes.

Desperate Need

Sickness and death come to the high as well as the lowly. The mansion of this nobleman at Capernaum is full of despair at the critical illness of his son, But the miracle at the wedding feast at Cana and the miracles worked by Jesus in Judaea have been reported throughout Galilee. The nobleman is determined to go in person to seek the aid of the great Teacher. Who can fail to sympathize with this nobleman? Surely not one who has lived in times and places when communication and transportation were slow and tedious, and medical aid hard to obtain. As we read this narrative, we are reminded of familiar scenes: times of desperate need when a mother walks the floor in anguish and watches the clock and a father drives with mad haste through the night over lonely, country roads. We hear again the swish and suction of buggy wheels tearing through impassable mud roads or the wild clamor of galloping hoofs as death rides on the wind. Will the doctor be in time? Will he be able to save the child when he comes? It was a long, difficult journey under such circumstances from Capernaum to Cana. What a wild beating this man’s heart made at the gates of his soul as he climbed mountain trails or grimly plodded on up the highway. Was it through the long hours of the night that he toiled up from the Sea of Galilee to the crest of the mountain range? This seems to be true for lie arrived in the daytime, in a time when Jesus was surrounded by a listening multitude. Jesus had just returned from His campaign in Judaea. Galilee was filled with the reports of amazing miracles He had performed at Jerusalem during the Passover;. Jesus seems to have gone immediately to Cana, the scene of His first miracle. The return to Nazareth and the first rejection there, which is described in Luke 4:16-30, followed a period of evangelization in Galilee (Luke 4:15), or at least was a part of such a campaign and as

such followed this miracle of healing the nobleman's son. The presence of the multitude at the time of the nobleman's arrival is indicated by the reply of Jesus, "Except ye see signs…." The plural form of this verb is important as we reflect upon the meaning of Jesus. Certainly Jesus was not accustomed to exhibit impatience at such interruptions as the urgent appeal of this father for his son. What was there about the attitude or conduct of the father which could have caused Jesus to issue what sounds like a stern and hard rebuke? "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will in no wise believe." Did not the coming of the man and his request that Jesus come to his home and save his dying son reveal great faith? Perhaps Jesus was but testing and prodding him on to greater heights of faith and preparing him by this stern, buffeting reply for the astounding trial of his faith which was about to follow. The plural form of the verbs seems to show that the multitude, with their rustle of excitement and curiosity at the breathless arrival of this nobleman and his appeal, stirred Jesus to this rebuke. Many commentators speak of the weakness of the nobleman's faith, but there is not the slightest evidence of weakness of faith on his part, if this remark was directed toward the crowd. He was rebuking people who would not believe His spiritual message and claims unless they saw signs and wonders. This plainly does not fit the man who came to seek the recovery of his child, hut the crowds who were welcoming Him to Galilee because of the miracles that had been witnessed in Jerusalem and which they were desiring to see in Galilee. If Jesus looked at the nobleman as He spoke, He was probably rebuking the gaping multitude, full of worldly ideas and designs for the Messiah, over the head of the man. His reply indicates that the people of Galilee were tense with eager excitement over the prospect that He would work miracles in their midst as they had seen or heard reported at Jerusalem. The implication of His reply is that they should have been prepared by the Old Testament and the ministry of John the Baptist to see the spiritual nature of the Messiah's presence and message without the need of miracles to confirm His word. How often Jesus has been compelled to lament the hardened unbelief of man who, even though he has seen signs and wonders, still will not believe! The miracles were God's crowning evidence of the truth and finality of Christ's message. But not even His miracles were able to convince those who had eyes and ears but who refused to see or hear. Like an echo of this first outcry of Jesus against the unbelief of the nation is the pathetic comment of John upon the closing phases of Jesus' ministry: "But though he had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on him" (John 12:37).

Strong Faith The answer of the nobleman shows he was perplexed by the declaration of Jesus: "Sir, come down ere my child die." He arose above the rebuke of Jesus and made another appeal to come, and to come immediately, before it was too late. The pathos of the nobleman's appeal was matched by the authority and brevity of Jesus' reply: "Go thy way; thy child liveth." This was a mighty test of the man's faith for Jesus' ministry was just beginning. He had come with the conviction that if he could reach Jesus in time and could persuade Him to come to his home, his child could be healed. But Jesus demanded that he believe that it was not necessary for Him to come to his home and that He could heal the child at a distance by the same sort of authority and power with which God had said in the beginning: "Let there be light." "The man believed the word that Jesus spake unto him, and he went his way." The Time Element

Cana is 2,849 feet above sea level. Capernaum is on the north-west shore of the Sea of Galilee which is 682 feet below sea level. The distance is some twenty miles. When the nobleman met his servants coming to report the good news of his son's recovery, he questioned them concerning the

time of the boy's recovery and found it to be exactly the time when Jesus had declared, "Thy son liveth." It is not easy to determine what is meant by the "seventh hour." John's Gospel, which was for universal use, evidently employs the Roman method of counting time; but this statement is a quotation. Jewish servants would use Jewish time (sunrise to sunset) in reporting the hour of recovery. If the "seventh hour" means 1:00 p.m., then the nobleman probably started some time during the night on his urgent journey. The servants would not leave immediately after the recovery of the boy, for fear that the sudden recovery might be quickly followed by a relapse and their interference in the plan to bring the great Prophet might prove fatal. When they did start, they proceeded only under the pressure which moves the bearer of good news. The father had exerted himself to the utmost on the journey from Capernaum to Cana and fatigue would now take its toll in a slower return journey or in an enforced rest. Not many are able to endure forty miles of mountain climbing without some rest. If he was compelled to stop during the night for rest, the time element furnishes no problem. Even if he kept traveling until he met the servants, he would not have met them until after sunset and the statement of time, "Yesterday at the seventh hour," would still refer to 1:00 p.m. of the day which had now passed.

Modernistic Attack on the Miracle

Bernard attempts to deny that this account records a miracle or even was so intended by John (Commentary on John, Introduction, cl.). He bases his contention upon the statement of Jesus, "Thy son liveth." He claims that Jesus did not speak "an effective word of healing" but merely assured the father that his son would live even as any physician, diagnosing a case, would predict recovery or death and that such "prescience" is "not beyond human powers." This is a curious absurdity. John flatly declares that it was a miracle, placing it alongside of the turning of the water into wine, also worked here at Cana: "This is again the second sign that Jesus did, having come out of Judaea into Galilee" (John 4:54). Bernard deliberately evades the central point of evidence which John introduces so emphatically, i.e., that the healing of the son was reported by the servants (who were ignorant of what had transpired at Cana) to have occurred at an hour which coincided exactly with the hour of Jesus' solemn declaration of recovery. John does not attempt to argue that it was a miracle. He simply states the facts; these constitute indubitable evidence that it was a miracle. Bernard does not attempt to explain how it happened that the son recovered at the very time when Jesus tittered the words. What Jesus had said was as yet unknown in the home. There was no room for psychological influence of personality. All that Bernard can do is suggest, by his silence, another feeble effort to write "accident" instead of "miracle." According to the modernist, the New Testament contains the most extraordinary collection of accidents ever assembled. And these are they who belabor others for being "child-like" in their faith! The miraculous knowledge of Jesus shines forth in this passage as does His divine power. He did not ask the man a single question as to the symptoms, condition, or physical makeup of his son. He did not need to do so. He pronounced his cure in language which matched the desperate appeal of the father: "Ere my child die"; "Thy son liveth." Only minds darkened by unbelief would seek to twist such sublime language into an argument against this being in reality "the second sign which Jesus did" at Cana.

Jesus' Reward

Why did not the rich nobleman present Jesus with noble gifts to express his gratitude? One is reminded of Naaman coming from afar with “ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment” which Elisha refused to accept, although he was afterward betrayed in this stand by his faithless servant, Gehazi (2 Kings 5:1-27). The doctors of the day were not slow to accept money for their services. Let the woman with the issue of blood “who had spent all her living upon physicians, and could not be healed of any,” bear witness (Luke 8:43). There is a startling revelation of the character of Jesus to be found in this phase of His miraculous ministry. What untold wealth might He have collected! It is not the mere fact that He did not accept rewards for His healing, but that it is never even recorded that anyone ever offered Him such rewards. What held them back from such a natural expression of their overflowing gratitude? His utter simplicity of life would immediately make such possessions incongruous. His spiritual teaching showed such insight into the futility and peril of riches and such complete scorn for them, that any discerning person would see that to offer such rewards would be an unpardonable offense to His inimitable purity and heavenly devotion. There was that mysterious something about the person of the Son of God which held men back from making such offers to Him. But there was a reward for Jesus when the nobleman “believed, and all his house.” This implies an acceptance of Jesus at whatever He claimed to be and obedience to Jesus in whatever He commanded. The Messianic claims and the nature of the kingdom He proclaimed were not as yet fully known. But here were hearts open to receive the proclamation. It is no wonder that so many have speculated that this nobleman may have been Chuzas, Herod’s steward, or even Manaen, his foster brother (Luke 8:3; Acts 13:1). The love of lost men had brought Jesus from heaven to earth and amid the sorrow of rejection by many, there was always the joy of winning some like the nobleman and his family into the fellowship of faith.

049. Chapter 28 - The First Rejection at Nazareth

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Luke 4:16-30 Warnings of Tragedy A prophet without honor in his own country. The Son of God scorned and assaulted in His own home town! And this the reward of thirty years of quiet, obscure, loving service to His fellow townsmen! Intimations of tragedy are given by John even in the first verses of his Gospel: “And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not….He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not” (John 1:5, John 1:10, John 1:11).

All this is poignantly illustrated at Nazareth. He had been in Nazareth through the silent years of His youth, and Nazareth “knew him not.” Now that He comes unto His own, they receive Him not. What a contrast between the enthusiasm and rejoicing at Sychar and the fierce resentment at Nazareth! Although John does not record the latter, he shows that Jesus, as He entered into His Galilean campaign, issued the sad warning: “A prophet hath no honor in his own country” (John 4:44). This may mean: Jesus had no honor at Jerusalem, where the temple is (His own country), but will be welcomed in Galilee; or the enthusiastic reception from the Samaritans will be sharply contrasted with the attitude of the Galileans (His own country); or the friendly reception of Galilee, in general, will be reversed by the rejection at Nazareth (His own country). This last interpretation seems most probable: a warning to the disciples of the rejection by His home town.

Two Visits to Nazareth

Matthew and Mark describe a visit to Nazareth at a later time in the Galilean ministry, and scholars differ as to whether this is the same incident as is recorded in Luke immediately following Jesus’ entry into Galilee (and to be placed following the healing of the nobleman’s son recorded in John). Formerly the incidents were identified, but the present tendency of conservative scholars is to accept both Luke, and Matthew and Mark, as chronological in their arrangement of rejections at Nazareth.

Those who have attempted to identify the visits, point out that all three accounts declare Jesus preached in the synagogue, was scorned by the people, and quoted in return this famous saying that a prophet hath no honor in his own country. But if there were two rejections, this is just what would be expected, and the differences in the accounts are very striking. In Luke we have an extended description of the synagogue service, the text of Jesus, the first favorable effect of His amazing sermon, the rising tide of scorn, Jesus’ speech in reply, and the riot in which they attempted to kill Him. There is none of this in Matthew and Mark. Moreover, Luke makes clear that Jesus worked no miracle on this first visit. Matthew and Mark declare that He healed a few sick people. The disciples were evidently not present at the time of this first visit, but Matthew and Mark show they are with Him at the second rejection. Some argue that Jesus would not be likely to return to Nazareth a second time after so violent a rejection, but Jesus went repeatedly to

Jerusalem and elsewhere after the inhabitants had sought to kill Him, and it is more in harmony with His character and ministry if He made a second effort to win His home town than otherwise. Those who hold to an identification of the scenes argue that this arrangement is not chronological, but that Luke places at the first of his record of the Galilean ministry a dramatic illustration: an unfavorable reception (Nazareth) and a favorable one (Capernaum). But the differences in the narratives and the whole course of the Galilean ministry favor the view that there were two visits at Nazareth.

Why Return to Nazareth

Why should Jesus have returned to Nazareth at all? Consider its insignificance, its poverty and wickedness. How often we falter and lose heart when we are asked to preach to a group too small to seem to justify our efforts. But why, then, did Jesus come to earth at all? How many of His most wonderful messages were delivered to single individuals! No finer statement of Jesus' motives in coming back to preach at obscure Nazareth, instead of remaining exclusively at Jerusalem or working in Tiberias or Caesarea, can be found than the text which Jesus chose for His sermon on this occasion: "The poor have the gospel preached unto them." What matter if they be few and poor? God is eager that all come to repentance. What if they be wicked and finally reject? God's gracious invitations must be delivered to them. Their blood, then, is upon their own heads, if they refuse. The Setting The marvelous reports about Jesus' preaching and miracles at Capernaum and at Jerusalem have stirred even stolid, self-satisfied Nazareth. The one synagogue of which the little village boasts is thronged on this Sabbath. It has been Jesus' custom to attend the service in this rude, rectangular structure each Sabbath in His youth (Luke 4:16). Here are the rough seats for the men on one side and the women on the other. Yonder, the ark of painted wood which contains the library of sacred scrolls of the Pentateuch and the prophets — the most precious possession of the synagogue. Here, the pulpit where the reader and the interpreter stand to read, first from the law and then from the prophets, pausing after each verse of the law and every third verse in the prophets to permit the interpreter to translate from Hebrew into Aramaic (the dialect spoken in Palestine after the captivity). The rulers of the synagogue, the scholarly leaders of the congregation, are in their accustomed seats, facing the crowd. It is their work to read and interpret the lessons from the law and the prophets, and to take turns preaching to the congregation. But a visiting rabbi is usually invited to be the speaker of the day, and in their midst today is One whose fame has been heralded throughout the nation. The hush of pent-up expectation and excitement pervades the early portion of the service as the verses from the law are read. The Scripture

Then Jesus "stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the book, and found the place where it is written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor" (Luke 4:17, Luke 4:18). How appropriate that Jesus should ask the attendant to bring to Him the scroll of Isaiah, the prophet who most clearly and beautifully predicts both the sufferings and the divine glories of the Messiah! And the passage He reads pictures the Messiah, not as a mighty temporal ruler, holding sway by force of arms, but as a Minister to the sick and afflicted, and a Teacher of the neglected, and a Saviour and Comforter of the oppressed. The passage read is at once a reply to the false, worldly notions of His hearers as to what the Messiah is to be and to do, and also a description of that very program of Jesus. The reading of so brief and significant a passage, and the peculiarly profound emphasis with which He reads, create further excitement. (Did Jesus lay particular stress on the

pronoun “me”? The declaration of Himself as the Messiah or Anointed One suggested in the verb “he anointed me” would become very pointed with such emphasis: “He hath sent me...to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”) The Sermon

“The eyes of all in the synagogue” are fastened on Him as He sits down to begin His sermon. His opening sentence boldly unveils the Messianic claim implicit in the passage: “Today hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears.” An animated buzz of whispers follows His sermon as the hearers turn to one another in astonishment “at the words of grace which proceeded out of his mouth.” Uplifted into momentary ecstasy by the divine eloquence, they quickly lapse back into the churlish and critical mood which pervades the town. “Is not this Joseph’s son?” “How can it be that such incomprehensible power should be found in this man?” “No royal blood in His veins; no palace for a home; no famed philosophers as instructors of His youth; no wealth or worldly pomp in His manhood.” “What inconceivable impertinence that He should claim to be the fulfillment of Isaiah’s holy vision!” “But what of the reports of miracles at Cana and in Jerusalem, and this recent account of a nobleman’s son healed at Capernaum?” The Popular Reaction

Suddenly the growing turbulence of the discussion among the audience is hushed as He speaks again. His driving analysis of their whispered objections first freezes the crowd into paralyzed silence and then fires them into wild, unreasoning rage. “Physician, heal thyself.” Yes, this was the heart of their objection. “Show Messianic glory after the worldly manner of David and Solomon.” “If you are the Messiah, why are you so poor and humble?” “Work in our midst the mighty works reported from Capernaum and thus ‘heal thyself’: improve your place in our midst by replacing the unbelief with faith.” Their scornful resentment has been summed up in a proverb: “The Messiah, a Physician? What folly!” Recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised?...Physician, heal thyself.” The Reply And now Jesus gives another proverb in reply, explaining their unbelief: “No prophet is acceptable in his own country.” It is they who are blind, but they do not even desire to see. A slashing attack on their unbelief follows in two surprising citations from the Old Testament: Israel in the throes of apostasy and famine; many widows; Elijah sent of God to a Gentile home for shelter; the widow of Sarepta honored by such a guest as Elijah, because she had the faith to share even the last morsel of meal and oil with God’s prophet. Elisha, God’s prophet and mighty worker of miracles in the midst of the nation; many Jewish lepers suffering and dying within reach of Elisha; Naaman, the Syrian, alone healed: the man who had faith to come and ask, and to humble himself in obedience. The Messiah rejected of His own people, but received and honored by the Gentiles. The blessings of God poured forth on the Gentiles, since the Jews scorn Him in unbelief. This is the clear implication of His illustrations, and the crowd, in wild rage at His analysis of their unbelief, cry out against what they hold to be a betrayal of Israel, the chosen of God. The Mob

They form a swirling mob about Him. Fiercer and more deadly grows their hate as they push through the narrow streets, bent on casting Him headlong from “the brow of the hill whereon their city was built.” And now the critical moment has come. Here yawns the precipice! A momentary hesitation. Who shall be the first to lay hold of Him to destroy Him? A strange, unaccountable calm instantly succeeds the whirlwind. The violent tumult of voices and passions is stilled. The lowly Nazarene whom men may deny and reject, but whom they cannot restrain or destroy, is in their midst. Blind to the grace and beauty of His humble youth, they had scorned His arresting manhood. Blind to the truth of His unfolding of the Old Testament, and His uncovering of the

baseness of their own hearts, they had sought to destroy Him. Their Failure But the Lamb of God, before whose wrathful face the kings and mighty heroes of earth shall one day flee in terror and cry for the rocks and the mountains to fall on them that they may not be compelled to stand in His presence, reveals to the murderous mob at Nazareth a glimpse of His heavenly majesty, and they draw back in awe and dismay. He walks from their midst. They do not follow. Of what do they think or speak as they walk home dazed and subdued? Of what does the Master think as He climbs in lonely majesty the winding path to the mountain top and turns to cast one last, heartbroken glance at the little village where He had lived, loved, and served in His youth, and where He now had preached and been rejected? (McGarvey, Lands of the Bible, p. 317).

Reasons for Rejection The divine love revealed in the effort of Jesus to save the people of Nazareth is matched by the human baseness shown in their rejection. Why did they reject Jesus? (1) It was the natural enmity of those who are wicked against One who had achieved supreme and spotless virtue. He had been in their midst, but He had refused to share their worldliness. Their own sinful lives provoked them to hate One whose very goodness revealed their wickedness. (2) Jealousy, the curse of man's darkened heart, was another cause. They were jealous because One, who had been constantly in their midst and whose quiet, obscure life had caused them to overlook the real mystery and power of His personality, should gain such fame in Israel and should even dare to claim that Isaiah predicted His present ministry. All of their false ideas of a worldly Messiah multiplied this lurking resentment when Jesus presented Himself as a humble, ministering Messiah. False pride could afflict villagers of Nazareth as well as scholars and statesmen in Jerusalem. (3) Human ingratitude, the most common and worst of crimes, must have influenced the people: ingratitude for all the kindness and gracious, loving service He must have rendered to all about Him during His youth. It is often true that the more that is done for unworthy people, the less they appreciate it and the more they presume on the generosity of others and grow in the false grandeur of their own conceit. (4) Familiarity with Jesus as a child, a youth and a man, caused them to stumble now at the evidence of His deity as seen in His very Person, His teachings and His miracles. That they should have doubted His power to work miracles, and demanded that He work for their satisfaction the mighty works they had heard reported from Capernaum, is not more surprising than the repeated demand of the Pharisees for "a sign from heaven," and not more difficult to understand than the general scorn of Nazareth for Him, in spite of His youth spent in their midst.

Reason for Their Failure

Why did they fail to destroy Him? Here, as elsewhere, the repeated efforts to assassinate Jesus failed because of that same mysterious, divine power which was revealed on occasions to thwart such attempts until the day of the Lord's final gift of love to a sinful world lifted up the Son of man on the cross. It was not cowardice that caused Jesus to retreat from their midst. He did not finally avoid death. "I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." The attack of the mob at Nazareth does not seem to have been thwarted by a direct miracle, but by a revelation of His inner majesty which left them powerless. His Refusal to Defend Himself

Why Jesus did not resist them as they offered physical violence to Him in thrusting Him through the streets of the city and to the edge of the precipice, is no more difficult to explain than His entire

effort to save Nazareth. He might have escaped this whole heartbreaking experience by avoiding Nazareth, where the rejection by the nation at large found its first dramatic climax. But Christ did not choose to avoid the humiliation and suffering entailed in this scene. It was only when God's will was about to be thwarted by the premature death of Jesus here at Nazareth, instead of on the cross at Jerusalem, that He resisted their violence by a flaming look and a gesture that left them helpless.

050. Chapter 29 - The Calling of the Disciples

Chapter 29 - The Calling of the Disciples Matthew 4:18-22;Mark 1:16-20;Luke 5:1-11 Relation of the Gospel Accounts The independence of the Gospels is shown in the most convincing manner, when we begin the attempt to fit together into a chronological outline the opening of Jesus' Galilean ministry. We can be sure that John, who wrote nearly a half century after the others, knew the accounts which Matthew, Mark and Luke had written. Yet he does not make the slightest effort to fit his surprising collection of events which they did not record into the outline of events which they offer. A few words would have sufficed to explain the relationship of the call of the fishermen by the Sea of Galilee to the preceding association of Jesus with the six disciples He had won at the Jordan a year before. But John makes absolutely no attempt to harmonize his account with theirs. He writes with complete independence, telling the story of Jesus' life in such a way as to fill in the gaps left by the other three and yet making no effort to relate his account to theirs. As if this were not damaging enough to the radical Two-source Theory, there is the additional evidence furnished by the entirely independent account which Luke gives of this call by the seaside. His record of the wonderful miracle which accompanied their call is not even suggested in Matthew and Mark. And yet the critics are very sure that Luke copied from the two preceding Gospels. Luke records the conversation of Jesus in an entirely different way and states the call in language that is strikingly independent. The accounts of Matthew and Mark are very similar, but a close study will show differences even here, such as the mention of the hired servants of Zebedee in Mark which is omitted in Matthew. The Disciples at Their Old Tasks The six disciples who had accompanied Jesus from the Jordan to Cana, to Capernaum, to Jerusalem, through the Judaean ministry and now back to Galilee, seem to have scattered to their homes for a brief rest. There is no indication that they were present at the rejection at Nazareth. But now Jesus calls them from their labor at the Sea of Galilee to give up all outside work and give Him their whole time. They doubtless had started in with a will to help their families the moment they returned from the year's labor with Jesus. They now relinquish this work at His call. One wonders how the family of Peter was supported. We know that he was married. He was a native of Bethsaida, but moved to Capernaum and had a home there which Jesus made His headquarters while working in the city. The manner in which the disciples went to work upon their return from the long evangelistic campaign in Judaea naturally causes one to meditate upon how the family of Peter managed during his absence. Doubtless some older brother, or some other relative, too old to attempt active campaigning for the Messiah, gladly took the added burdens at home that Peter might be permitted to give all of his time to assist Christ. The sons of Zebedee would be missed from their father's fishing business, but he had hired servants to assist him even when the sons were at hand. The Call and the Miracle

Both Matthew and Mark represent Jesus as walking along the shore to where Peter and Andrew were casting their net into the sea, and further on, where James and John were in their boat mending their nets. Jesus called them to leave all: "Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." Their obedience was immediate and unhesitating. It is hard to understand

such a peremptory call and acceptance without the account which John gives of their earlier association. Luke shows that there was much more to this important event in the lives of the disciples than is recorded in the other narratives. Luke describes the multitudes as so vast that they were pressing upon Him as He preached to them the Word of God. He records the fishing expedition which interrupted this ministry and which brought the miraculous catch of fish. The entirely different setting which Matthew and Mark give from that found in Luke seems to furnish a real difficulty. But Luke shows that the disciples had spent the entire night in unsuccessful fishing. The scene described in Matthew and Mark evidently occurred early in the morning. The expedition was just over and they were mending their nets. They answer the call of Jesus and abandon their work for Him. The crowds gather and Jesus preaches to them until a later time in the day. Then, in the midst of this ministry, follows the miraculous catch of fish. The question as to how the disciples could be out fishing later in the very day on which they had abandoned their occupation to follow Jesus is readily solved by a study of Luke's account. He shows that Jesus requested the use of Simon's boat because of the immense crowd. This natural pulpit enabled all to see and hear. Then when He had finished His sermon, Jesus commanded them to get the nets ready for a draught. If Luke's account is chronological, this miracle may have occurred several days later, since he records the first miracles in Capernaum before describing this fishing expedition. The Setting of the Miracle This command of Jesus to turn from the ministry in which they had been engaged back to a fishing expedition must have seemed very strange to the disciples. Since they had failed in their effort the night before and doubtless needed food, it should not have seemed strange from the practical point of view. Peter registered the amazement and also the implicit faith of the group in his remark: "Master, we toiled all night, and took nothing: but at thy word I will let down the nets." The command seemed strange in the light of the fact that they had thoroughly tested the fishing prospects and had failed. They were expert fishermen; they knew the best places and times to fish; they had visited their favorite haunts in vain. They knew that the night was the most favorable time and if the night proved that the fish were not to be found, it was useless to try in the morning light. The fishing on the Sea of Galilee centers about the northern end of the lake where the Jordan empties into the sea bringing a fresh supply of food for the fish. The cities grouped about the northern end of the lake doubtless found the fishing industry their chief source of income. The fish, today, are for the most part small (6 to 8 inches), but some are larger (12 to 18 inches). They are sold fresh in nearby markets or are dried for shipment.

Toilers of the Night

How often we feel like Peter that we have toiled all night and taken nothing, and further effort is worse than useless. In our personal struggles with temptations, we seem not to have gained an inch. In our effort to become more efficient and useful, we seem to make no discernible progress. In our attempts to serve, our kind words have been misunderstood, and our offers spurned or accepted without appreciation. In our vigilant evangelism, praying and watching for souls, we continually seem to toil all night and take nothing. And yet in the morning, Jesus comes again commanding us to launch out into the deep. Oh, for faith to match such a challenge!

Jesus knew that His disciples had toiled through the night without avail when He gave the command. Was He not present in the spirit as they toiled? Was He not praying for them? Why had He not given them aid from a distance the night before? This was part of the test. We must fail of our own might before we are willing to trust God. We must realize our own helplessness before we

will give the credit to God. Their fruitless toil through the night gave Jesus His opportunity. How often we fail because we go forth in our own strength and leave out God! Is your life broken and discouraged? Hear the challenge of Jesus: “Launch out again into the deep.” Then comes the word: “Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.” The Test and Confirmation of Faith

Although they found fish in such abundance on this expedition, this was not the primary objective of Jesus. He wanted to test and strengthen the faith of these disciples. He had just given a strong test in demanding that they leave their business and homes to follow Him and devote all their time to His ministry. They had gladly yielded obedience. Now when they are in the very midst of this ministry, Jesus suddenly ceases His preaching and commands that they go out to sea on a fishing expedition. They must have been puzzled at this, beyond all words. Thoroughly sated with the fruitless casting of the net through the long night hours, they are now commanded to undertake another fishing expedition at a time when it appears utterly useless. But their obedience is still immediate and implicit. The fact that their life-long experience and the whole night of toil foredoomed their attempt to failure made all the more impressive the remarkable miracle which followed. It was against the background of the most unpromising circumstances imaginable that the miracle was performed. It is no wonder that these experienced fishermen were so astounded. The Humility of Peter

Peter and Andrew lowered the net and when they discovered they had instantly caught such a multitude of fish that their nets were breaking, they hastily summoned their comrades, James and John, to come to their assistance with their boat. When the excitement of landing the enormous catch had passed and both boats were so full of fish that they were ready to sink, Peter, who had been doing some hard thinking while he worked feverishly at the nets, fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” Many take this to mean that Peter had been a wild, reckless person in his youth. But exactly the opposite is more probable. His humble confession is the natural reaction of a noble man who finds himself in the presence of God in a sense which he had not before realized. Isaiah’s confession at the time of his vision of God seated in majesty and holiness upon His throne did not mean that Isaiah had been particularly vulgar or blasphemous in speech because he said humbly: “I am a man of unclean lips.” It means rather his conscience was keen and sensitive. In the presence of God all men, no matter how noble they are, must cry: “I am a sinful man.” Could anything be more impressive than the manner in which the divine person of Jesus emerges in the Gospel narratives through the actual proof of His power and the recognition of His holiness and mysterious divinity by those who found themselves in His presence? Three things were essential in the experience of the disciples at this crisis in their relation to Jesus: (1) a recognition of the divine character of their Leader and the spiritual character of His mission; (2) a realization of their own sinfulness; (3) a complete consecration of themselves to the work of Christ. All this had been growing up in their hearts during the preceding months of association with Jesus. This definite call by the seaside brought an acute realization of these things. The miracle which accompanied the call confirmed their faith and devotion. Their whole understanding was inadequate and developed gradually after this time. Further crises arose in the ministry of Jesus, as at Caesarea Philippi and at the Mount of Transfiguration, when their growing realization of the character and program of Jesus became suddenly crystallized. These were times of lucid vision in the midst of groping through prejudice and false preconceptions to perceive the mystery of God’s Son in their midst and the kingdom of heaven being set up on earth.

Fishers of Men The apostle Peter did not really desire to separate himself from Jesus when he cried out: “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” Separation from Jesus would have been the greatest calamity he could conceive. If he had wanted to separate himself from Jesus, he might have done so without protest. His cry means exactly the opposite of what he says. It is the extreme expression of humility as he declares himself utterly unworthy of remaining another hour in the presence of Jesus. It carries the agonizing appeal that in spite of his human frailty Jesus may permit him to remain in the company of One who reveals the purity and power of heaven. The answer of Jesus shows a complete understanding of Peter’s heart. The Master could discern the presence of the fish in the unseen depths of the sea; He could likewise perceive the unspoken thoughts and desires of the hearts of men. He quieted the distress of Peter: “Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men.” Thus the miracle confirmed their faith and enabled Him to confirm their call by this emphatic repetition of His promise to make them to be fishers of men. The word used here means to take men alive. Jesus continually used illustrations suggested by the experience of his hearers. The verb used suggests that their life work was to mean not death but life for those whom they should rescue.

Simon Peter The clear and very attractive portrait of Peter begins to appear in the Gospels with Luke’s record of this miracle. His life furnishes an admirable opportunity for tracing the results of association with Jesus. When we lay alongside the portrait of the simple fisherman by the Sea of Galilee that of the mighty apostle on the day of Pentecost and the days following when he faced and silenced the Sanhedrin itself, we can measure something of the influence of Jesus upon his life. The native courage of the man increased as the foundation of courage, which is faith, became more firm. It is true that the Jerusalem scholars sneered at him and his companions as ignorant and unlearned men. And this was after Peter had graduated and had his diploma and degree from the Master’s college. They scorned this training because it was not standardized, but the training Peter had received, plus the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, made him a giant. He had the truth in contrast with the false theories of the Jewish scholars. He had the courage to defend it with his life; they made a cowardly resort to physical violence. His sincerity shines with the brightness of the sun against their hypocrisy. He had the divine presence and help; they had but the might and power of men.

Character Analysis

Peter is often described as “a weak man who became strong.” He was a curious combination of weakness and strength like every other human being, but can he properly be called a “weak man”? This is rather the account of a strong man who became a giant. Even when Jesus met him, Peter was no weakling. The faults of Peter’s character are the faults of a strong man. What weakness is to be seen in Peter’s character? (1) It was not lack of courage. This is a fundamental lack of weak men. Peter was as bold as a lion. He was such by nature. Witness how he dared to step out on the water to walk to Jesus on that stormy night. See him draw his sword and attack a whole company of soldiers in Gethsemane. Study him in his hour of failure. It took a stout heart to venture into the very palace of the high priest. Behold his courage on Pentecost. (2) It was not lack of decision. Sometimes people are weaklings because they are vacillating. Hamlet and Micawber are classic examples. Peter was a man of action as well as words. He talked too much, but he was quick to make up his mind and act. He did not daily and hesitate. At Antioch he did show something of this attitude, but it is an exception. (3) It was not lack of will-power. He was stubborn

and set of purpose. He was so strong-willed that he was turbulent. Jesus had to call him Satan for attempting to dictate a false course, or had to warn him he could no longer be His disciple if he did not yield to Jesus as He washed the disciples' feet. At the Last Supper, he stubbornly insisted on his declaration that he would not deny Jesus. (4) It was not lack of intellectual acumen. Some people are weak because they are stupid. Men often talk today as if they would have learned much faster and developed more faith than did the apostles; but it is easy to work a problem in mathematics after you have seen the solution. Peter listened with avidity and gripped the great truths Jesus revealed. Every teacher knows he can grade a student by the number and quality of the questions he asks. If he tries to ask too many, some will be foolish. Peter's remarks and questions occasionally went astray, but they reveal a keen intellect. (5) Peter was not weak in the direction of dissolute living. Brilliant men often mar their careers with astounding moral failures. The Germans have a proverb: "Bright lights cast dark shadows." Some men are tempted to drink, some to lust, some to deceit, others to slander or to greed and dishonesty. "I am a sinful man," said Peter as Jesus called him on the Sea of Galilee. But this does not mean a reckless, dissolute youth. It was the natural shrinking of sinful humanity in the presence of Deity. Peter was rash and indiscreet. He liked to think out loud — to speak first and think afterwards. He often had to repent hasty remarks, as on the Mount of Transfiguration, when he did not know what he was talking about. He did not always hold out. When sifted, his character revealed much chaff. But he was a strong man and he became one of the mighty figures of human history.

051. Chapter 30 - Miracles in Galilee

Chapter 30 - Miracles in Galilee Matthew 8:2-4,Matthew 8:14-17;Matthew 9:1-8;Mark 1:21-45;Mark 2:1-12;Luke 4:31-44;Luke 5:12-26 The Campaign in Galilee The contrast between the ministry of John the Baptist and that of Jesus was sharply defined and must have caused much discussion among the people. John had worked no miracles; Jesus began His Galilean ministry with an amazing series of miracles. The multitudes had gathered in the wilderness where John thundered against the sins of the nation and called them to repentance and baptism in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. But the excitement of the throngs that pressed forward to see and hear Jesus was unbounded. The miracles of this early stage of His Galilean ministry were centered in Capernaum for He made this His headquarters. When the excitement became too intense here, or the needs of the other parts of Galilee called Him, He left Capernaum to carry on swinging evangelistic campaigns in this whole section. But these tours ended as they had begun: in Capernaum. The healing of a demoniac in the synagogue on the Sabbath was followed by the miracle in the home of Peter when his wife’s mother was healed of a fever, and by the healing of a vast multitude afflicted with all kinds of diseases as they were brought to Him after sunset. An extended campaign through Galilee followed. The healing of a leper created such excitement that Jesus had to withdraw into desert sections lest the Zealots, who were eager for a leader to enable them to throw off the yoke of Rome, should attempt to seize His movement and start a war. Even in the desert the people flocked to Him. When the excitement began to subside in the center of population because of His continued absence, Jesus returned to Capernaum and began further instruction of the people, striving to turn them from their worldly, warlike ambitions to His spiritual program. As soon as it was known that He had reappeared in Capernaum, immediately the crowd gathered in such numbers that a paralytic carried by four friends had to be taken to the top of the house and let down through a hole in the roof in order to get him to Jesus. The Order of Events

We cannot be sure of the exact order of such events as are known to us from this section of Jesus’ ministry. John gives no record of it. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all differ in their arrangement. The Scripture is arranged at the head of this chapter in the order in which most harmonies attempt to fit the events together. It follows the order of Mark, but it is by no means certain that this is the chronological order. None of the writers declares his order to be chronological. Luke affirms he has written “in orderly fashion” (Luke 1:3), but this does not necessarily mean strict chronological order; it may only mean a logical presentation of the current of Jesus’ ministry without the effort to place each minute detail in its order of time. Luke follows in general a chronological arrangement of events, but it is evident he does not carry this out in unimportant details. Matthew seems to have used a topical arrangement in this early section of Jesus’ ministry for he groups together examples of the teaching of Jesus and of His miracles. This is just as logical and effective a biographical method as an arrangement of everything in exact order of time. Since Mark records so little of the teaching of Jesus during this period of His ministry and tells a succession of miracles, it seems more probable that his arrangement is more likely to be in order of time and for

this reason it is usually followed in comparing the accounts. But the student who is interested in testing out the modernistic theory of the origin of the Gospels from two common sources, will find that a careful study of the variations in the order of such events as the three have in common furnishes strong evidence that they wrote independently. If they copied from one another or from common sources, what intelligent reason can be given for their amazing variations in the arrangement of events? We cannot even be sure that the miraculous catch of fish, which we have just studied in a parallel arrangement with the call of the fishermen by the sea, occurred at the same time, for Luke tells of the first miracles in Capernaum and the first tour of Galilee before he relates the miracle of the catch of fish.

Problem of Demon Possession The preaching of Jesus in the synagogue at Capernaum astonished the people because of the authority with which He spoke. Both Mark and Luke call attention to this. He spoke with authority in His own right and power instead of quoting the authority of the Old Testament or of the famous rabbinical teachers of the day as did the scribes. He spoke with the authority of God, presuming to make new revelation, to forgive sins, and to offer salvation. The miracle that followed this Sabbath day sermon in Capernaum illustrates what is meant by the authority with which He spoke. There was in the synagogue a man with an unclean spirit — literally “in an unclean spirit” — in the power of a demon. The origin and exact nature of these emissaries of the devil are unknown to us. In the time of Jesus they took possession of men, and inflicted bodily ills and mental torture. They do not seem to have the power to possess men today. The gospel of Christ sets men free from the bondage of the devil. Some think that the demons who possessed men in the time of Jesus were the spirits of evil men returned to earth in the service of the devil. But there is no proof that the dead thus returned to influence the living and this theory seems to have the flavor of spiritualism. It is more probable that these demons are fallen angels cast out of heaven when the devil revolted against God and that they still are doing the service of the devil (Jude 1:6). This scene in the synagogue at Capernaum, where Jesus met this man afflicted with a demon and cast the demon out, suggests the inevitable conflict between God and Satan. Immediately after the baptism, the devil met Jesus in mortal combat. Upon beginning His ministry Jesus began to push the irrepressible encounter. This demon recognized Jesus and the nature of the crisis, for he cried out in the synagogue: “What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.” Jesus silenced the demon. He consistently refused to let the demons testify to His divine personality for the following reasons: (1) He was not ready for an open revelation of His deity. (2) Jesus did not need the devil to testify for Him. (3) It would not have been effective, since the devil is a liar. (4) It would have given grounds for the scribes and Pharisees to push their charge that He was in league with the devil. Instead of permitting the demon to testify, Jesus rebuked him and cast him out of the man.

Modernistic Denial of Demons The modernists deny the existence of demons as they do that of angels. Their denial of the existence of the devil and of God is only the natural extreme of their rejection of the repeated accounts in the Scriptures of the work of the devil and his demons. It is plain at a glance that the theory which explains demon possession as insanity denies completely the historic testimony of the Gospels. The demons recognized Jesus by their supernatural power; they addressed Jesus and were addressed by Him; they were cast out by Him. The difficulties for those who deny the reality of demon possession are insuperable. Plummer offers the following

unassailable analysis of the problem: “In considering the question of demoniacal possession we must never lose sight of the indisputable fact, that our sources of information clearly, consistently, and repeatedly represent Christ as healing demoniacs by commanding demons to depart out of the afflicted persons. The Synoptic Gospels uniformly state that Jesus went through the form of casting out demons. If the demons were there, and Christ expelled them and set their victims free, there is nothing to explain: the narrative is in harmony with the facts. If the demons were not there and demoniacal possession is a superstition, we must choose between three hypotheses. (1) Jesus did not employ this method of healing those who were believed to be possessed, but the Evangelists have erroneously attributed it to Him. (2) Jesus did employ this method and went through the form of casting out demons, although He knew that there were no demons there to be cast out. (3) Jesus did employ this method and went through the form of casting out demons, because in this matter He shared the erroneous belief of His contemporaries” (Commentary on Luke, p. 136).

Balmforth’s Non-Committal Discussion The effort to explain away demon possession as cases of dual personality is equally impossible. It denies the existence of demons and thus tears the Gospels to ribbons. The manifest absurdity of the theory of a dual personality is seen in the case of the Gadarene demoniac who, according to this theory, was afflicted with four or five thousand (a legion) dual personalities! A commentary on Luke (1930) by an English scholar named Balmforth contains a lengthy discussion of the problem of demon possession. The author declares inadequate both the testimony of the New Testament for the existence of demons and the current, radical explanations which deny the existence of demons. “Medical science interprets the phenomena formerly attributed to demoniac possession in purely physical or psycho-physical terms, either as due to organic lesion or functional disturbance of the brain, or as caused by mental obsessions, unconscious conflicts, disassociation of personality...and the like. Yet there are several considerations which should make us hesitate to reject altogether the idea that non-human spirits exist and that in certain circumstances they may enter into human affairs. (1) On a theistic, or indeed any spiritual view of the universe, it is unlikely that man is the only product of the cosmic process. (2) The experience of educated European missionaries in heathen countries today leads them again and again to go back to the belief in demon-possession as the only hypothesis that will fit certain facts in the life of their heathen neighbors. (3) The lack of evidence of demoniac possession in Christian countries may be explained by their acceptance of the Christian faith and the operation of the Spirit: the triumph of Christ over the demons of which the early Christians were so convinced, would produce that result. (4) The mysterious hinterland behind the surface consciousness of everyday life is hardly known at all. We cannot rule out beforehand the possibility of spiritual intelligences being able to affect it by entry from without. On the whole, we can say that more evidence is desirable, and that the verdict at present should be ‘not proven” (Commentary on Luke (1930), p. 146). Was Jesus Ignorant and Mistaken?

Throughout his commentary, Balmforth tends to state both the radical and conservative views and to declare his own position as neutral and non-committal. Having declared that the testimony of Jesus and the New Testament writers is not sufficient to convince him of the reality of demon possession, he then proceeds to defend his position as entirely compatible with belief in Jesus as the Son of God. “On such questions He appropriately employed the ideas inculcated by His environment and education. This is as necessary to a true incarnation as His birth of a woman, His

helpless infancy, His liability to fatigue, disappointment, hunger, and bodily death. None of. these things are appropriate to a mere apotheosis: but none of them conflict with His moral perfection or His spiritual dignity as the living Sacrament of ultimate spiritual Reality" (Commentary on Luke (1930)., p. 147). Can He be the Son of God if He Taught That Which is False? As he attempts to defend himself against the charge of denying the historical veracity of the Gospels or the deity of Christ, he offers an argument which is plainly built to answer the dilemma of Plummer. He chooses the alternative of declaring that Jesus was ignorant in regard to demons. If demons do not exist, then it is possible and proper to affirm that Jesus thought they existed, but He was just ignorant and mistaken concerning the facts. He holds such a view is entirely compatible with belief that Jesus is the Son of God and that it is no harder to conceive that Jesus was the Son of God and yet ignorant concerning the true nature of demons than that He was the Son of God and yet was a little, helpless baby in the care of His mother and that He suffered and died. Now just what is the possible connection between the two things he attempts to lay parallel? The Gospels affirm that Jesus is the Son of God and yet was born into this world a helpless infant. They also affirm that Jesus declared that He did not know the time of His second coming. Had the Gospels made no mention of Jesus' talking with demons and casting them out and affirmed that Jesus said He did not know whether demons existed or not, then this limitation also would be compatible with belief in Him as the Son of God. But the things which Balmforth compares are as far apart as the poles. The Scripture expressly affirms that Jesus accepted human limitations in being born into the world as an infant and that He admitted He was in ignorance as to the time of His second coming, but in neither of these is there anything which caused Jesus to falsify the truth and to mislead men. Where limitations of the flesh were His, He did not attempt to deny them. But if He claimed to have knowledge and power which He did not possess, if He solemnly declared and proved the existence of demons, when they do not exist, then He taught and claimed that which was false. If He was in ignorance in regard to these matters concerning the spirit world, then there is no certain truth or authority to any of His declarations concerning the devil, hell, heaven, and God Himself; and the whole structure of Christian faith collapses. The Gospel writers repeatedly affirm that Jesus claimed to have personal knowledge of the existence of demons and that He exercised authority over them in casting them out. Is it possible to claim that Jesus repeatedly stated that which was false, and pretended to have knowledge and power He did not possess and yet is the Son of God? Such crooked and perverse reasoning is characteristic of the sophistry of the modernists. If Jesus falsely declared that demons exist, whether in ignorance or deliberate misrepresentation, then it either is true that He is not the Son of God sent into the world to reveal the truth, or that God is the author of falsehood and there is no such thing as truth.

Miracles in the Home of Peter The authority with which Jesus spoke is illustrated in the following stage of the narrative by the marvelous way in which He rebuked the fever and healed Peter's wife's mother. They told Jesus of her as soon as they returned from the synagogue. Jesus "stood over her and rebuked the fever" (Luke) and "took her by the hand and raised her up" (Mark). Jesus was accustomed thus to accompany a miraculous cure by a solemn declaration and by throwing out a challenge to the sufferer to believe in Him and His power to heal, and then to assist the faith by such a gesture as Mark describes. The multitudes waited until sunset because the tradition of the elders interpreted the command to do no work on the Sabbath day as meaning, among other things, that they could not carry a burden on the Sabbath. As soon as the Sabbath was ended they came in great crowds bringing their sick to be healed What a beautiful picture this furnishes of the

close of this first great Sabbath day of His Galilean ministry. The Prayer Life of Jesus

Mark records that at the close of this day of exciting and exhausting ministry, “in the morning, a great while before day, he rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed.” The ministry of Jesus, so full of startling effects upon the multitudes, had also its effect upon Him. As He began to give Himself unremittingly to the service of the sick and the dying, to men and women lost in sin, He began to feel the pressure and to seek help from God in long nights of prayer. Such had doubtless been His custom through His youth. But now there was a double necessity. Nothing devours the vital energies like such a ministry to suffering, perplexed and despairing humanity. But this season of prayer on the night after this victorious Sabbath in Capernaum is characteristic of the whole ministry of Jesus. The pressure of His ministry, instead of causing Him to neglect His communion with the Father, had the opposite effect as He sought help and strength. Sometimes when some preacher brings shame upon the church by a glaring moral downfall, his friends attempt to pity and excuse him by saying: “Poor man, he was so busy visiting the sick and the needy and helping to save the lost people about him, that he did not have time to guard and care for his own life.” But no man has any right to become so busy helping other people that he neglects the elemental moral and religious structure of his own life. Daniel Webster declared the greatest thought which had ever entered his mind was: “My individual responsibility to Almighty God.” We delight to sing the hymn, “Others.”

Lord, let me live from day to day, In such a self-forgetful way, That even when I kneel to pray, My prayer shall be for others.

There is, however, a very high and holy sense in which we are obligated to pray: “Lord, let me live from day to day, In such a self-dedicated way, That even when I kneel to pray, My prayer shall be for myself — that I may humbly confess my own weakness and sin before contemplating the moral failures of others, that I may zealously dedicate my time, my strength, my all to Christ before presuming to urge others to do so.” We can be sure that Jesus, as He prayed through the cold morning hours out under the stars, offered many an urgent petition for His disciples and the restless, worldly multitudes. But we also know enough about the prayer-life of Jesus to be sure that He prayed most earnestly for His own purity of soul and for the victorious life in all the trying circumstances that each day brought to Him. The sinlessness of Jesus stands out in the boldest contrast with our continual failure to live a life of righteousness and unselfish service for Christ. But the contrast of achievement in His character and ours is not greater than the contrast of His continual, intense, soul-searching prayer-life and our persistent refusal to use the communion with God which is always available.

Criticisms of Jesus The sinlessness of Jesus does not mean that He was never charged with sin. The Gospels relate with the utmost frankness the repeated criticisms of His conduct and speech. These criticisms came mainly from His enemies. This mighty outburst of evangelism, which stirred all Galilee with miracles and thrilling sermons, brought forth bitter criticism from unbelieving Jewish leaders who saw their leadership of the nation imperilled and the hypocrisy and baseness of their pretended piety uncovered before the nation. But in each case where charges were brought against Jesus, these charges were shown to be either malicious or mistaken. But charges were made or implied against Jesus by His friends as well as His enemies. The rebuke which Mary offered to the boy Jesus in the temple when He was twelve years old is a good illustration. Jesus,

however, corrected her inadequate understanding of His nature and obligations He was God's Son and must do first of all God's will as the Father was revealing it to Him. Another illustration of criticism by a friend is implied in the manner in which Simon and the other disciples found Christ in the desert after this flight of prayer and protested against His secret and inexplicable departure from Capernaum. It is not hard to imagine the fearful perplexity and rising indignation of Peter as he viewed the synagogue in Capernaum packed to suffocation, awaiting the preacher — but the great Prophet was late for the service! All the reverence of Simon for his Master and his desire to shield Him from criticism seems pent up in the rushing words of salutation, surcharged with deep emotion, with which he greeted Jesus when he finally discovered Him in the desert: "All are seeking thee." The calm reply of Jesus makes clear His defense. He not only has done no wrong in disappointing the excited multitudes awaiting Him in Capernaum; He does not even now intend to return. He plans to go elsewhere in Galilee campaigning through the cities and towns. In this, as in all else, He is obeying the direct commands of God. A better understanding of the rising conflict between the worldly ideals of the excited multitudes seeking to turn the movement of Jesus into military channels, and the heavenly program of spiritual redemption which Jesus, the Son of God, offers the nation, will cause Peter to see how hasty and foolish were his critical reflections upon the conduct of his Master.

Jesus and the Leper The campaign which carried Jesus through the cities of Galilee brought great throngs from all over Syria and Palestine. Multitudes were healed and the kingdom of God proclaimed to them. The healing of a leper is recorded as a most striking example of the healing ministry of Jesus. It occurred in an unnamed city. The great faith of the leper caused him to approach Jesus in spite of the fact that he had to enter the city to do so. It led him to fall on his face before Him and worship Him, and to appeal with strong assurance: "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." How much agonized reflection on the part of the leper was compressed into these few words with which he made his appeal! He was absolutely sure that Jesus had the power to heal him, Dared he hope that the love of Jesus could reach to even an outcast leper? With what inimitable grace Jesus revealed both His love and power as He touched the leper in token of His boundless sympathy and invincible power! It is idle to reflect that Jesus had the right under the Old Testament law to touch a leper, since He was a priest after the order of Melchizedek, and that the law, while strictly forbidding any to touch a leper, yet gave the priests the right to examine them in cases of readmittance to society. Jesus was the Great Physician who could heal all the world's diseases. He would not contract or transmit the man's leprosy; His touch would rather heal with the instantaneous power of God. Jesus towered above the Old Testament law even as He came to deliver the supreme and final revelation from heaven, acting and speaking with the absolute authority of the Son of God. Jesus did not have to approach God through Moses to discover His will; His contact with God was immediate and absolute; His obedience to God was perfect.

Nature of Leprosy

Great effort is made by modernists to show that the leprosy of the Bible which Jesus repeatedly healed was not really the terrible Elephantiasis which man has viewed through the years as contagious and fatal. The world of medicine still wrestles with leprosy, seeking to determine if it be necessarily contagious or incurable. Meanwhile the skeptics scoff at the miraculous healings of leprosy by Jesus as the psychological cure of some minor skin ailment. But the pathetic condition

of the lepers Christ met fits exactly the loathsome disease which has been known through the centuries and which one may see today in the East devouring the face and the hands and feet of victims, joint by joint. The fact that the Old Testament made provision for the examination of lepers for readmission to society is not proof that the leprosy of the Bible was an insignificant skin disease and not leprosy, for this provision of the law had as its objective the discrimination, after a due season of segregation, between those actually afflicted with leprosy and those who had only suspicious-looking skin disorders. Moreover, the disease of leprosy was cured by miracles in both the Old and New Testament times, and the purpose of provision of the law for readmission into society thus was clearly illustrated. The Bible does not affirm that leprosy was contagious and fatal. But it suggests how terrible the disease was when it shows that the lepers were segregated and forced to give deadly warning: “Unclean! Unclean!” The Bible shows clearly whether leprosy was the horrible Elephantiasis or a minor skin trouble in the amazed exclamation of King Ahab when he read the appeal of the king of Syria: “I have sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy. And it came to pass when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, Am I God to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?” (2 Kings 5:6, 2 Kings 5:7). The statement of Naaman in 2 Kings 5:18 does not necessarily imply that the king of Syria had been leaning upon Naaman’s hand in the temple of Rimmon while he had been afflicted with leprosy, but only that Naaman would have this customary part in the heathen ritual now that he was restored to health. The curse of leprosy on Gehazi is represented as something terrible beyond all description (2 Kings 5:27). The momentary leprosy of Moses inflicted and cured by the placing of his hand in his boson’ at God’s command is described as a prodigious miracle and not as the mere appearance and disappearance of a trifling skin disorder (Exodus 4:6, Exodus 4:7). The leprosy of the Old and New Testament is the same, for the cases in the New Testament are presented without differentiating them from those in the Old Testament. Jesus classed His miracles of healing lepers along with the most impressive signs He worked: “Go, and tell John the things which ye hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up” (Matthew 11:4, Matthew 11:5). The modernist would render this: “The lame walk, minor skin disorders are healed, the deaf hear and the dead are raised up”! Alongside the effort to deny the seriousness of the disease is the skeptical theory that what Christ actually did was to pronounce clean a leper who had already recovered from the disease in order to save him the long and difficult journey to Jerusalem. This contradicts and makes ridiculous the whole narrative with the pathetic appeal of the man who was “full of leprosy” and the clear declaration of Jesus: “I will; be thou made clean”; the statement “immediately the leprosy departed from him”; and the strict command of Jesus that he should go now and show himself to the priests, as Moses commanded. The modernists delight to describe such theories as the process of “rationalizing the miracles.” What a clever and subtle way of saying “denying the miracles.” The miracles do not need to be “rationalized.” This is more than can be said for the modern theories advanced to deny the miracles. Disbelief in God is the height of the irrational. Fundamentally, the attacks on the miracles arise out of disbelief in God. When the creation is exalted above the Creator and the world declared to be under the rule of force and law rather than subject to the will of a divine Person; when God is reduced to the stature of a mere superman; when His existence is denied by affirming that “God is an idea”; then those who have accepted such irrational conceptions feel obligated to explain away the miracles. The Command not to Report the Miracle

Two commands were given to the leper. “See thou tell no man.” The man did not obey this command but told of his cure with the result that the excitement of the people knew no bounds. Jesus had to withdraw into the desert places. Even here the throngs followed. Would such excitement result from the curing of a minor skin disorder? The man was doubtless so overjoyed at his recovery that he could not contain himself. His gratitude to Jesus was greater than his desire to obey the command to be silent. The people who saw the miracle also must have helped to spread the news. Some suggest that Jesus commanded the man not to tell of it because He knew it would make him tell it all the more. This is manifestly absurd. It reverses the ideal of Jesus that He would have obedience rather than sacrifice. It would make Jesus resort to a miserable subterfuge to raise excitement and secure popularity that was detrimental to His ministry. It would have Jesus invite the man to disobedience to secure His own ends. The text shows clearly why He desired to have the man refrain from telling of the miracle. The intense excitement which resulted drove Him into the wilderness. He had to keep the healing ministry from crowding out His preaching, else His campaign would degenerate into a “social gospel” for the bodies of men that would leave their souls untouched. The people had to be kept in a state of mind where excitement would not outrun their calm judgment. A study of the Zealot movement which was so powerful in Galilee at this time shows how the province was aflame with the expectation of a political Messiah who would raise an army and deliver the nation from bondage to Rome. The slightest encouragement from Jesus would be all that was necessary to touch a spark to the Zealot movement and lead to a bloody outbreak against Rome. The question may still be asked as to why He gave such a command to a man when He knew before He gave it that the man would not obey. Several reasons are apparent: (1) It was the regular course He pursued in seeking to suppress the excitement over extraordinary miracles. (2) The enthusiastic publication of such miracles by those who had been healed might have been much more extensive, but for His command to silence. (3) The command would assist the man in obeying the other injunction to go to the priests and fulfill the Old Testament law for purification. The two commands fitted together. The man might have conceived that gratitude to Jesus, as shown in the publication of the miracle, superseded the fulfillment of the ceremonial requirements. The Leper Sent to the Priests The narratives indicate three main reasons why the man was sent to the priests. (1) It was commanded in the law. The fact that Jesus had touched him might have inclined him to disregard the required regulations. The strict command of Jesus made him feel his obligation to keep the Old Testament law. (2) It was for his cleansing. The priests were the health officers to supervise the reception of such a person back into society. His own future would require the fulfillment of the law. (3) It was for the sake of the priests: “for a testimony unto them.” The priests, as well as the other national leaders, did not believe in Jesus. Sending the man to them thrust the miracle into their very presence. Thus He tried to keep the man silent among the multitudes whose interest needed no stimulation, and to send him directly to the priests who needed to be confronted by the miracle. Thus the man was sent to the priests for his own sake and for theirs, that he might be received back into society and that they, through faith, might be received of God. This miracle marks a climax in this early stage of Jesus’ Galilean ministry, for the intense excitement over such a great miracle caused Jesus to withdraw from the centers of population to the desert until the excitement had subsided. Even in the desert the multitudes sought Him out.

052. Chapter 31 - Controversies in Galilee

Chapter 31 - Controversies in Galilee Matthew 9:1-17;Mark 2:1-22;Luke 5:17-39 Growing Hostility

It was not merely the unlearned multitudes that thronged about Jesus. The scholars from near and far gathered to investigate His ministry. When the public excitement had subsided, Jesus returned to Capernaum and resumed His preaching and healing ministry. The home of Peter seems to have been the location of the next great scene: “When he entered again into Capernaum after some days, it was noised that he was in the house.” The immense crowds that gathered when they learned He had returned filled the house and the street. The scholars who had been awaiting His return occupied seats in the midst: “there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every village of Galilee and Judaea and Jerusalem.” Such an imposing assemblage of the scholarship of the nation in a city of the provinces indicates the rising tide of Jesus’ fame and the serious nature of the national situation from the viewpoint of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The departure of Jesus from Jerusalem shortly after the first exciting clash with national leaders had reduced the tension. But the success of His Judaean ministry had caused their opposition to become active and formidable. The withdrawal from Judaea to the provinces again postponed any critical collision with the hierarchy. But the national leaders were keeping close watch upon the progress of Jesus’ campaign in Galilee, and when it began to assume extraordinary proportions, they sent picked leaders to prevent Jesus from wresting leadership of the nation from their hands. An exciting series of clashes occurred between Jesus and these scholars; three separate controversies in rapid succession show how tense the situation was becoming, and how bold and malicious was the opposition Jesus faced. The first of these controversies arose out of the healing of the paralytic and the claim of the power to forgive sins which Jesus attached to it; the second was caused by the breach of their whole system of pious conduct, when Jesus called a tax collector to be one of His immediate helpers and accepted the invitation to a banquet attended by publicans; the third was closely associated with the second and was a direct attack by the Pharisees upon Jesus’ failure to make His disciples observe the prevailing rules for fasting. The first of these was much more fundamental in character and the issues involved are rooted in the elemental teaching of the Old Testament and the claims of Jesus as to His divine person and power. The last two were rather matters that contravened the traditions of the scholars as the methods of Jesus boldly discarded the customs which the Pharisees had tried to bind upon the nation. The Paralytic

Four zealous friends came bringing on a stretcher or camp-bed a friend who was afflicted with palsy. Unable to approach even the door of the house where Jesus was preaching, they climbed to the roof of the house and, tearing a hole in the roof, lowered the man by ropes into the presence of Christ. Modernists have attempted to ridicule the idea of hoisting a sick man in a bed to the roof of a house and of digging up the roof for such a purpose. But a little investigation of the land of Palestine and its customs would have saved them “much ado about nothing.” The houses in Palestine have flat roofs and many of them have outside stairways which would have been easily ascended. The houses are built close together so that the men also might have entered an

adjoining house by an inside stairway and crossed over from one roof to another without difficulty. The stretcher would have been laid aside and the man carried on the mattress. The roof of this house was made of tiles (Luke 5:19), as is common in Palestine. These can be removed easily and later replaced without damage to the house. Even if clay and mortar had to be dug out and some people in the main chamber below were sprinkled with dust and rubbish, this would not deter men who had strong faith. The hostile scholars would doubtless be indignant at such an interruption which, in the most dramatic manner imaginable, focused attention upon the miraculous power of Jesus. But Christ did not resent the bold conduct of the men; the more faith men showed, the better He was pleased. It took surprising faith on the part of the four men to persist in their determination to get their friend to Jesus, even though it required such startling procedure. It required great faith on the part of the man to endure the complicated ordeal by which he finally came into the presence of the Master. Each of the Synoptics emphasizes the faith of the men and the impression which it made upon Jesus. The throng must have become motionless and breathless as they watched the man lowered through the roof and as they awaited the answer of Jesus to such an astonishing appeal to Him for help. But their wildest expectations of a bold answer to such a bold appeal could not have anticipated the stunning declaration of Jesus to the man: “Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven.” Instead of pronouncing a cure of the pathetic physical ailment, Jesus granted forgiveness of sins to the man. This suggests some critical connection between the man’s past life and his present physical suffering. Jesus read the man’s heart and knew that he was repentant, even as He read his past and knew that he was responsible for his condition. The man had come seeking relief from physical paralysis, but God often grants to man more than he asks. The declaration of Jesus implies divine understanding of the human heart and of the deepest needs and possibilities of man, even as it Implies possession of the highest authority and power of heaven. The Necessity of Controversy

Jesus knew that such a declaration ,would bring upon Him the fierce denunciation of His enemies seated in the midst. Controversy was sure to result from such an assumption of divine prerogatives by Jesus. Evidently Jesus did not share the fear of controversy which causes so many preachers today to support all sorts of false teaching rather than have circumstances arise which might bring poverty or persecution. The primary consideration ‘gas that here one of God’s lost children was seeking his way back to the Father’s house. Jesus answered directly the unspoken outcry of the man’s faith-filled and repentant heart. Jesus might have given him assurance of forgiveness in a private conference, but Jesus had come to save not this one man alone: all men should hear the invitation to life. This could only be done if men were brought to understand the nature of God’s Son and the divine plan of redemption. The opposition of those whose hearts were filled with hatred and malice could not restrain Him from declaring in the most effective manner this revelation of His person and power. The Fundamental Issue A gasp of astonishment must have succeeded this pronouncement. The swift protest of the scholars, unspoken as yet, was: “Who is this that speaketh blasphemes? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” To blaspheme is “to rail at or insult God; to take God’s name in vain; to speak evil of God; to deny the existence, attributes, power or authority of God.” It also means “to arrogate or claim any attribute, power, or authority which belongs exclusively to God.” It is in this latter sense that the Pharisees accused Jesus of blasphemy. Their fundamental proposition was correct: God alone can forgive sins. But their application of the principle was false for Jesus is the Son of God. Their accusation of blasphemy would have been just, if He had been a mere man. He proves their

accusation false by working a miracle which sets the seal of God's approval upon His claim of identity with God implied in forgiving the man's sins. Most of the attacks of the enemies of Jesus, then and now, center in the proposition as to whether He is God as well as man the son of God. In the midst of His most humble ministrations, the deity of Christ is gloriously revealed. Before He healed the paralytic, a dramatic revelation was made of His divine authority — the power to forgive sins. For a mere man to claim this power is blasphemy. It was then; it is now. It implies absolute perfection on the part of the one who offers such forgiveness to mankind. It implies supreme authority. It is a direct claim to deity. "Who can forgive sins but one, even God?" The Old Testament had provided that sins could be forgiven of God through the offering of bloody sacrifices in the temple by the priests, looking forward to final redemption in the death of the Messiah. Jesus claimed authority to forgive the sins of the paralytic and proved His claim by a miracle which baffled His enemies. The Claim Substantiated by the Miracle

Jesus answered the ferment of criticism in the hearts of the scholars. The first item of evidence which He offered them to prove His claims was to read their hearts and publicly state the evil thoughts they were thinking. He then laid (the proposition that He would prove that "the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (as God has in heaven) by a miracle: "Which is easier, to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed and walk?" It would be easier to pronounce the forgiveness of the man's sins for the reason that they would have no visible means of testing the truth of His claims to have such authority. But if He commanded the man to rise up healed of this fearful disease which had made him helpless, they would be able to test the reality of His authority. Thus Jesus proved the less difficult by the more difficult. The argument was valid because it was only by the exercise of God's prerogatives and powers that He could accomplish either. Jesus left immediately after the healing and the people were filled with fear and amazement. His enemies were confounded, but we soon find them returning again to the attack.

Modern Attacks on This Account This incident naturally provokes just as bitter criticism from unbelievers today as it did in the beginning. It furnishes one of the strongest affirmations of the deity of Jesus. The attacks of the modernists come from several directions. (1) They attempt to deny that Jesus claimed the power to forgive sins. (2) An extreme group, led by Welihausen, try to deny that Jesus ever called Himself the Son of man (meaning the Messiah) and offered miraculous proof. (3) They declare He never worked miracles for evidence of His deity, but that His works of healing were done out of sympathy for the sufferer. The Power to Forgive Sins On the first problem, they maintain one of two positions. Jesus did not forgive the man's sins, but merely announced that God had forgiven them. But this is a complete denial of the declaration of Jesus that He would heal the man as definite, indubitable proof that He had the power on earth to forgive sins. It is true Jesus did not say: "1 forgive thy sins" but "Thy sins are forgiven." But that Jesus meant by this statement that He was forgiving the sins of the man is the plain meaning of the passage. (1) The entire portrait of Jesus as the Son of God presented in the New Testament shows this. (2) The Pharisees immediately interpreted His statement as a declaration that He was forgiving the sins of the man. Their unspoken protest was: "Who can forgive sins but one, even God?" Jesus did not reply that their accusation of blasphemy was the result of a misunderstanding of His statement, that He had only meant to inform the man that God had forgiven his sins. Their proposition that only God can forgive sins and their conclusion that Jesus had claimed to forgive

sins are both accepted by Jesus as correct in His reply. (3) The reply of Jesus affirms that He has forgiven the sins of the man, for He declared that He will prove by a miracle that He has the right to forgive sins on earth. The evidence of this statement is simply unanswerable. Not even the perverted interpretation of the unbeliever is able to destroy the evidence of the passage for the deity of Christ. For how could Christ even announce that God had forgiven the sins of the man except by knowing in a miraculous way the mind of God and the heart and the life of the man? When Christ declared, “The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins,” He uttered something entirely new. “We have seen strange things today!” “We never saw it on this fashion.” These conclusions by the crowd were both correct and natural. His declaration offered something entirely aside from the Old Testament provisions for the remission of sins. The only reason the Pharisees did not object to His astounding declaration as being against the Old Testament regulations which provided a temple, priests, and sacrifice, was that all of this was dwarfed by the larger claim of Jesus to be God — to have authority in Himself and upon earth to forgive sins. The Act of Forgiveness and the Act of Healing The second skeptical attempt to deny that Jesus forgave the man’s sins declares that He merely removed the penalty of the sin, the paralysis which had been caused by the sin. This is the position of Gould in his commentary on Mark. But it is impossible to identify the healing with the forgiving. They are two absolutely different acts. He proves one by the other. He contrasts the two: His declaration that He forgave the sins of the man, which His auditors cannot test; and His command which results in the healing of the man, which they can test. He reduces the whole proposition to something which they can test with their senses as they witness the healing of the man. He, also, is unable to explain why the scholars should have understood that Jesus claimed to forgive the man and why Jesus did not correct their misunderstanding, if all He claimed to do was to heal a disease caused by the man’s sin. The Son of Man The extreme modernists who attempt to break the force of the testimony of this passage to the deity of Christ by affirming Jesus did not mean to refer to Himself here by the title “Son of man” urge that “Son of man” was not a Messianic title in the mind of the people and that Jesus did not call Himself “Son of man,” meaning the Messiah. Those who admit that “Son of man” could have been a Messianic title, hold that He could not have used it publicly, at least not until after the scene at Caesarea Philippi. All the Synoptics agree that on that occasion Jesus commanded His disciples to tell no man that He was the Christ. The modernists claim that Mark gives the correct idea about the ministry of Jesus and that he does not record Jesus as using this title to mean Himself until after Peter’s confession (Mark 8:29), and then secrecy was enjoined. They claim that the term means merely man in Mark 2:10, Mark 2:28. They would interpret this declaration of Jesus as He healed this paralytic thus: “I will prove that man can forgive sins.” The plural in Matthew 9:8 is said to uphold this: “They were afraid, and glorified God, who had given such authority unto men.” But this verse does not record a declaration of Christ or of Matthew. It is the awed and obscure reflection of the multitude. They do not completely realize the relation of Jesus to God, but they see that He has proved that although actually in the flesh before them, He can forgive sins. The plural “men” means that they have seen one in the flesh claim to forgive sins and prove the claim He has made. Moreover, the miracle of Jesus proves that Jesus could forgive sin, and not that man in general can. The miracle proved the claim. What was His claim? If men generally, after laying claim to the power to forgive sin, could work miracles to prove the claim, then this proposition would be true. But there is no warrant in the Scripture for suggesting such a proposition. The Method of Jesus

There is a vast deal of misplaced emphasis in the critical discussion of the question as to whether the term “Son of man” (the same thing applies to the term “Son of God”) was in current use to mean the Messiah when Jesus came. Suppose the term was not so used by the scholars, writers and people before this time. What then? The objections of critics to this proposition rest upon two enormous assumptions, both of which are false. (1) That Jesus would not have used in His teaching and preaching terms and titles with which the people were not familiar or old terms and titles with a new significance which the people would not understand. This assumption overlooks the whole person and method of Jesus. This is the very sort of thing that Jesus repeatedly did and that caused scholars like Nicodemus or even the foremost disciples to protest that they did not understand His meaning. (2) That the people, even though they did not understand at first His use of new terms or the new meaning He gave to old ones, would not quickly recover from their astonishment and seize these terms and begin to use them with a growing understanding. The Gospels are full of evidence that this very thing did happen and it is true to human nature through the ages. If the term “Son of God” was not in general use to mean the Messiah when Jesus came, then the ready use which Nathanael made of the title, “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel” (John 1:49) shows how quickly this apt student had taken up a title which he had just learned from his inspired master, John the Baptist (John 1:34). The same thing is true of the use of the term by the Roman centurion who could hot but have heard the raging discussion of the question as to whether Jesus was the Son of God, which took place during His trials, and the taunts of the Jews as Jesus died: “If thou art the Son of God….”

Use of the Term by Jesus The modernists claim that in Aramaic “a son of man” meant a human being and by mistake it was changed over, in writing the phrase in Greek, to “the Son of man.” This is a shallow theory which implies that Jesus did not make Himself clear, or the disciples did not know or properly represent what He said. The key citation to show that Jesus used “the Son of man” as a Messianic title and applied it to Himself is Matthew 16:13. and the parallel passages. Matthew 26:64 is also absolutely conclusive. From the first appearance of “Son of man” in John 1:1, it is clear that Jesus used it to mean Himself, and that it was a Messianic title, though veiled and not in general use since it emphasized the humanity of the Messiah, while the Jews painted a picture of worldly glory rather than humiliation for the Christ. The command at Caesarea Philippi that they should tell no man that He was the Christ was the result of the exciting circumstances following the climax of His Galilean campaign. While campaigning in remote Sychar of Samaria, He could proclaim Himself the Messiah to the people without fear of Zealot’s wresting His movement to violence (John 4:26,John 4:39-42). In the same way He commanded the Gadarene demoniac to broadcast through his native country the fact of his healing, because the Decapolis was unevangelized and not yet stirred to any great interest in Christ (Mark 5:19, Mark 5:20). But His command to the leper to tell no one of the miracle was the result of the overflowing excitement in the section where this miracle occurred (Mark 1:44). Harnack offers the following stinging rejoinder to Wellhausen on this point: “Some scholars of note, and among them Wellhausen, have expressed a doubt whether Jesus described Himself as the Messiah. In that doubt I cannot concur; nay, I think it is only by wrenching what the evangelists tell us off its hinges that the opinion can be maintained. The very expression ‘Son of man’ that Jesus used is beyond question. It seems to me to be intelligible only in a Messianic sense” (What Is Christianity?, p. 110). In other words, ‘Wellhausen’s view is absolute violence to the Scriptures and not an interpretation of it. It is like an effort to tear a door off its hinges instead of entering through it. The hinges are “the Son of

man” and “the Son of God”; one, at the top; the other, at the bottom. The door swings on these hinges that affirm and reveal that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Only those who are determined to deny that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of the world would make such a violent effort to deny that Jesus claimed the power to forgive sins.

Purpose of Miracles

Unbelievers use the third line of attack against all the miracles which the Gospels declare were worked as direct evidence of the deity of Christ. They hold that the mighty works, which they explain as more or less natural events, were worked solely out of sympathy for man’s suffering. This miracle of healing the palsied man is a good place to test their view, since Christ so clearly declared the miracle to be the proof of His divine claim. There is not the slightest incongruity in combining these two motives: sympathy for suffering, and desire to give proof of the divine person and message of Jesus. This passage plainly indicates that Jesus was moved by pity for the man’s suffering, but His regard for the needs of the man’s soul came first and were met first. Jesus might have managed the healing in such a way as to have avoided the public claim to the power to forgive sins, but the needs of the souls of all men came first and He placed the emphasis in the healing, not upon the physical but the spiritual condition of the man, not upon His power to heal so much as His power to save. The whole modernistic contention that Christ worked His miracles only out of sympathy for physical suffering argues that the body is more important than the soul. if He had sympathy for the spiritual ailments of men, then He would have used His miraculous power to bring faith to their hearts and forgiveness and salvation to them. This is exactly what He did. He declared He was working miracles for this purpose and argued afterward that they furnished an all-sufficient basis for faith in Him. “Because I said unto thee, I saw thee underneath the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these” (John 1:50). “But the witness which I have is greater than that of John, for the works which the Father hath sent me to accomplish, the very works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me” (John 5:36). “But though he had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on him” (John 12:37). The same undercurrent of argument underlies the Synoptics; a good illustration is the manner in which Jesus cited His miraculous works as proof of His claims in reply to the question of John the Baptist and the fearful denunciation of the unbelieving cities where most of His mighty works had been done (Matthew 11:2-6;Matthew 20:1-34;Matthew 21:1-46;Matthew 22:1-46;Matthew 23:1-39;Matthew 24:1-51). The Call of Matthew The calling of a tax-collector from his place of toll by the roadside to be one of the disciples of Jesus was the signal for another controversy. The publicans had a very profitable but disgraceful occupation. They were considered outcasts and traitors because they assisted Rome in collecting taxes from Israel. The temptations of their work, the possession of wealth, and the general scorn of the religious leaders usually led the publicans into dissolute living. The constant connection in the Gospels of “publicans and sinners” is most significant The narrative which describes the call of Matthew and the farewell banquet which he gave to his new Master and his old comrades in his home, throbs with the revelation of a great love. It was a love which sent Jesus into most unlikely places looking for lost souls. The publicans were usually a reckless and worldly set. But Jesus’ love sent Him into the highways and byways. If we do not go in like manner, we have not known true love. Jesus promised to make His disciples “fishers of men.” When men go fishing they must go where the fish are to be found. Jesus carried His message to the people; so He has sent us into all the world. Again, it was a love that made sinners

love Jesus. James Barrie says that love is not blind, but has an extra eye which enables us to see the good in people. The great love of Jesus enabled Him to see the good under the tough exterior of the publicans. This immediately stirred the publicans to love Jesus. “We love Him who first loved us.” While we were yet in our sins, Christ loved us and died for us. It was a love which brought a glorious fellowship. Reckless men have a sort of sixth sense which enables them to recognize a hypocrite afar off. But the purity of Jesus’ life was self-evident. The fellowship which drew the publicans into the presence of Jesus was as natural as the mutual animosity which separated them from the hypocritical Pharisees A solemn hush must have come to this rude assembly when the great Prophet entered. What a beautiful picture this is of Jesus in the home of a publican approaching lost men on the social side to win them back to God. The Farewell Banquet The great love which Jesus revealed was matched by the great sacrifice which Matthew made. The call of Matthew produced an embarrassing situation. It costs much to cut loose from evil surroundings and companions. How often a man shrinks from changing his life because he lacks the courage to break with the crowd. It is a wonderful thing to see how Matthew faced this Situation. He invited his old comrades to this banquet in order that they might know Jesus. Did Matthew make a speech that day at the close of the banquet? It must have been a thrilling occasion. The best way to get his friends to understand the change in his life was to get them to see Jesus. What did Jesus say to the crowd? He never lost an opportunity to preach. What a sermon this must have been: the sympathetic attitude with which He touched their hearts and awakened memories of innocent childhood, the bold challenge to their life of recklessness which stirred their conscience, and the beacon light of hope which He swung out on their darkened pathway. The thing which crowned this occasion was the great sacrifice. Matthew left all and followed Jesus. This is the way to begin the Christian life. He met a great love with a great love. Jesus’ sacrifice for him stirred bin) to a great sacrifice for Christ. It must have meant more to Matthew to leave all than to the fishermen by the lakeshore. Wealth, luxury, and worldliness had to be surrendered.

Matthew the Apostle

What Matthew gave tip was not to be compared with what he gained. Back of the great love which brought forth a great sacrifice was the great Saviour who was able to save him from his past anti to call him into a great future. Matthew’s break with his past was definite anti final: he did not drift back into it. He became one of the apostles of Jesus. He became the author of the first Gospel — one of the most important documents of all history. The contrast between Matthew, the publican, and Matthew, the faithful apostle and biographer, reveals the great love and saving power of the Son of God. Matthew was saved to a glorious fellowship. The Self-Righteous Pharisees On this occasion, as the Pharisees walked the streets in front of Matthew’s house and voiced their sneering criticisms of the presence of the great Prophet in the home of a publican amid a motley crowd of sinners, Jesus joined battle with them and gave them a pungent and penetrating rejoinder. It is impossible to understand His words, unless they be interpreted as sarcasm. “They that are whole, have no need of a physician, but they that are sick.” Jesus is the physician: the publicans, the sick,. the Pharisees, the well. Are we to understand, then, that the Pharisees were perfect and did not need salvation? Are not all men sinners and dependent on God’s mercy? Here is the sarcasm: Jesus applies the titles “the whole” and “the righteous” to the Pharisees as their own estimate of themselves, but it is a patent absurdity. “You think you are well, but you are desperately sick and do not know it. A physician cannot help you until you realize your illness and

are willing to take his medicine. You think you are so righteous that you do not need God. I can do nothing for you. The Great Physician

Jesus offered a most touching defense of His presence in the home of Matthew. He said in effect: “I know that these people are sick unto death with sin. But I am a physician. That is why I am here. I am not contracting their diseases nor carrying them to other people. I am healing them and sending them back to the noble tasks of life.” The courage and devotion which send a physician into the midst of all kinds of contagious and deadly diseases with his sympathetic touch and healing power is the type of Jesus, the Great Physician. The charge of the Pharisees that Jesus associated with sinners was His glory, not His shame. Judged by both His motives and the results, this association revealed Jesus as Lord and Saviour. The Controversy about Fasting The last controversy recorded in this period of His Galilean ministry bears evidence of arising out of this scene in the home of Matthew. Although silenced by the defense of Jesus, the Pharisees appear to have carried their campaign to the disciples of John the Baptist. Once before they had sought to stir the jealousy of John and his followers against Jesus. But John had replied in no uncertain terms: “He must increase but I must decrease” (John 3:22.). John was now in prison. Some of his faithful disciples still undertook to bring him comfort and to carry on as best they could his fading campaign. The Pharisees seem to have succeeded this time with the disciples of John and had them join in the protest against the manner in which Jesus’ disciples were failing to keep the fast days. Matthew states that the disciples of John addressed a protest to Jesus. Mark does not definitely identify the speakers, but associates the disciples of John and the Pharisees together in the protest. The Pharisees had set aside Mondays and Thursdays as fast days. The disciples of John “were fasting often,” which perhaps means they were keeping the days ordained by the Pharisees. and others in addition, as they were moved by the austere example of their leader and by their grief for his present misfortune. There is evident in their approach to Jesus a note of jealous complaint and criticism of the freedom and abundant character of the life of Jesus’ disciples as contrasted with the ascetic character of their own living: locusts and wild honey versus a banquet in the home of a publican! The Underlying Principles The reply of Jesus is in an entirely different mood from the cutting sarcasm which He had used toward the Pharisees on the subject of His association with the publicans. The disciples of John had been misled. They were not attempting to attack Jesus, but seeking to comprehend. They were assailed by jealousy, but their circumstances made life hard and made it difficult to understand this phase of Jesus’ ministry. Jesus used three figures in quick succession as a means of explaining His situation and program: a wedding, where mourning would be out of place, pictured the present phase of ministry where fasting would not be fitting. He added an ominous prediction of the tragedy before Him: “but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then will they fast.” This is the first clear intimation of His death and departure. What was the effect of this prediction upon the disciples? Did they feel the chill of fear creeping over them as they listened to this prophecy? They may have been puzzled and dismayed; but the prediction was veiled and may have soon been forgotten in the rush and excitement of Jesus’ ministry. The other figures were familiar, but vivid: a person attempting to sew a piece of unshrunk cloth upon an old garment finds that the new patch, when it shrinks, will rend the old material. New wine placed in old skins, which have already been stretched to the fullest extent, will burst the skins when the new wine ferments ant! expands. The principle is that things which do not harmonize should not be put together. So fasting and His present program do not match. He does indicate that fasting is to have a place in the lives of His

followers. But Jesus clearly condemned fasting as a set religious performance to be observed by the calendar no matter what the circumstances of the individual or the needs of the soul. Fasting should rise out of the heart and should not be imposed on the body by mere external custom. It is of great service, under certain circumstances, for the health of both body and soul. Frequently when a physician comes to visit the sick, he advises at least some sort of limited fast. Gluttony is disgusting. Overeating is a common failing of humanity and a prevailing cause of bodily ills. It is not possible to stir the soul very deeply when the body has been gorged with food. It is patent that fasting under certain circumstances would harmonize with the mood of the soul. When death enters a home, those who are bowed in sorrow do not desire food. This is the very illustration that Jesus uses: “the bridegroom shall be taken away.” The time and manner in which we should fast is left to our own discretion. The New Testament gives some interesting examples of how the early Christians applied this fundamental principle of Jesus under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:3; Acts 14:23; 2 Corinthians 6:5; 2 Corinthians 11:27). Their example furnishes a natural precedent to govern our choice in the matter of fasting.

Luke shows striking originality in his report of Jesus’ defense. The unseemly attempt to put a patch of new cloth on an old garment is made the more emphatic by tearing tip a new garment to get the new piece which is to be used as a patch. Luke alone rejects the final illustration: “And no man having drunk old wine desireth new; for he saith the old is good” (Luke 5:39). Again the same principle is urged: things that do not harmonize should not be put together. Fasting does not fit with His present joyous and victorious ministry. How much further does the force of this argument of Jesus reach? It certainly carries within its sweep the ascetic way of life which John’s disciples followed and the ceremonialism of the Pharisees, for the problem emanated from these two groups and the answer applies directly to them. Does it also mean that the whole Old Testament law with its intricate ceremonialism is the old wine skin which has been stretched to its fullest extent of usefulness and cannot contain the new wine of the gospel: a new revelation from God independent and all-sufficient is about to be given by Jesus? McGarvey argues that this cannot be the meaning because Luke’s last parable would make the gospel less desirable than the law, since it affirms that no one “having drunk old wine desireth new: for he saith the old is better” (Commentary on Matthew and Mark, p. 84). But this objection is based upon a positive identification of each detail of the last parable, which frequently cannot be done in parables. The fundamental principle that here receives repeated illustration and emphasis (things that are incongruous should not be combined) applies directly to the fasting problem, but the application to the law and the gospel seems to be in the background. The later discussions of the law and the gospel by Jesus confirm this conclusion.

053. Chapter 32 - The Lame Man at the Pool of Bethesda

Chapter 32 - The Lame Man at the Pool of Bethesda

John 5:1-47 Identity of the Feast The Galilean ministry, which had gained such momentum as to draw great crowds from a distance and to lead the scholars from Jerusalem to send delegations for the purpose of obstructing His campaign, was interrupted by a visit to Jerusalem for one of the great feasts of the Jews. The identification of the feast is a decisive factor in determining the length of Jesus' ministry. If it was the passover, then there are four passovers in the ministry of Jesus which must have lasted through three years and a fraction. manuscripts differ as to whether there is a definite article with the word "feast." If the article is used, then it certainly must have been the passover for it was "the feast of the Jews." "A feast" may mean any one of the various feasts: passover, pentecost, tabernacles, dedication, and purim. All have been advocated by various scholars. But the natural process of elimination argues strongly for the passover. He had cleansed the temple at the preceding passover. An extended ministry in Judaea followed. The trip through Samaria and the great campaign in Galilee followed. The note of time in John 4:15 shows it was about the last of December when He was at Sychar (four months before the harvest). This immediately rules out tabernacles and dedication. The latter was about December 25 and was not commanded in the Old Testament, but instituted by the Jews to commemorate the rededication of the temple by Judas Maccabaeus, after it had been defiled by Antiochus Epiphanes. Purim came in February and was a feast which the Jews had established to celebrate the rescue of the Jews in Persia by Esther. It was a noisy and hilarious affair like our Halloween. Such a feast would hardly have been propitious for a campaign by Jesus in Jerusalem. Moreover, this does not leave sufficient time for such a movement as is indicated in Galilee between the time He was at Sychar and this feast. All things point to this feast as the passover and the ministry of Jesus as more than three years. it is characteristic of the erratic tendencies of B. W. Bacon that he should hold that the ministry of Jesus lasted one year and that Jesus was fifty years old at the time. He arrives at the first conclusion by roundly denouncing the Gospel of John as unhistorical and at the second conclusion by contradicting the explicit declaration of Luke that Jesus was "about thirty years of age" when He came to be baptized. He selects the age of fifty by affirming historical accuracy for the casual estimate of the Jews in John 8:57: "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" The Synoptics do not definitely describe more than one passover. John names three passovers and seems to indicate four: John 2:23; John 5:1; John 6:4; John 11:55. Only John says that the feeding of the 5,000 occurred at the time of the passover. The other three indicate the general movement of the ministry of Jesus without attempting to record the exact time element. John is of the greatest assistance in filling in the gaps of the narrative and in giving notes of time. These are introduced incidentally, but give clear chronological data.

Value of This Record The purpose of John in introducing this narrative of the healing of the lame man and the ensuing controversy was evidently to supplement the Synoptics which had concentrated on the great Galilean ministry and had omitted the events enacted during His early visits to Jerusalem. This procedure enabled John to introduce a powerful illustration of Jesus'

power to heal and a revelation of His divine personality. It also assisted in tracing the rising tide of Jewish hatred of Jesus in the capital — a bitterness which gradually spread to the provinces. The Pool of Bethesda The Pool called Bethesda in this text is usually identified with the siphon spring and pool southeast of the temple area which is now called the Virgin's Pool. There is no word for "gate" in the text: "a pool by the sheep (gate)." Barclay would supply "market" and supposes it was a pool in the Tyropean Valley farther south. He objects that the Virgin's Pool is underground and no place available for the five porches mentioned in the text. But the description of the troubling of the waters so closely fits the action of the siphon spring which feeds the Virgin's Pool that it seems likely this pool was called Bethesda in the time of Christ and that the porches were built over the entrance to this underground pool. The Omitted Verse The best manuscripts omit John 5:4 and it has been removed to the margin of the American Standard Version. The account implies that the people believed some supernatural force caused the irregular flow of the pool and that the first person to enter would be healed. The omitted verse seems to be an explanatory addition of a scribe who attempted to state this belief of the people. He probably wrote this statement in the margin and later scribes copied it into the text. The entire verse is omitted by the great uncials: Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Ephraemi, and others; also, the important cursives: 33, 157, 134. Many cursives mark it with an asterisk, indicating it is doubtful. The last clause of John 5:3 is also omitted by an array of manuscripts equally impressive. The internal evidence confirms the testimony of the manuscripts: (1) The miracles of the Bible are always connected with the delivery of a specific message. Miraculous healing by the waters of a pool with no messenger to explain is not according to the teaching of the Scripture. The miracles stamped the divine seal of God upon the truth of the message delivered. The best proof of the falsity of the modern claims to work miracles in the name of Christ is the fact that such claims are advanced by various sects which teach exactly contradictory doctrines. If their so-called "faith healings" are actual miracles, then God is the author of confusion and confirms as true, pronouncements which are absolutely contradictory and mutually exclusive. The Scripture clearly indicates the passing of miracles with the apostolic age when the divine evidence to prove the truth of the gospel was no longer needed (Acts 8:5-24; 1 Corinthians 13:8-13). There is no parallel in the New Testament to the proposition of being healed by a pool with no specific message attached to the miracles. The healing by the touch of the garments of Jesus, Peter, and Paul is not parallel, for these miracles were directly connected with their personality and message, even though an inanimate object played a part in the miracle. (2) A second reason why it is evident that the original text did not declare that miracles had actually been worked by the pool is that such healing would have enabled the rich who could employ assistance to secure miraculous aid before the poor. This is plainly contrary to the Scripture. (3) The four hundred years of silence since the close of the Old Testament and the fact that John the Baptist worked no miracles place a profound emphasis upon the miracles of Jesus. This emphasis is lost if miracles were being performed all the while by the water in a pool of Jerusalem. Jesus did not attack this superstitious belief of the people. They probably would not have listened to Him. But He cut the ground from under their superstition by performing a real miracle and showing it came from God. The contrast which this miracle afforded with the imaginary cure of the pool was the most effective method of correcting their false conception. The Man Selected A great multitude of sick and infirm people were here near the pool. Why should Jesus have selected this man out of so great a crowd? Several reasons are evident: (1) This impotent man seems to have been a most hopeless case and therefore would offer most decisive evidence

of His power. (2) The pitiful state of this man, who was more helpless than the others and was constantly thrust aside by the multitude since he had no friends to help him, stirred the sympathy of Jesus. (3) He read the man's heart and life as an open book and He knew that he had the character to respond to the challenge for faith. The Man Challenged To Believe

Jesus did not walk up to the man and heal him without any effort to appeal to his heart. In the cases we have studied thus far, the sick and afflicted came to Jesus seeking miraculous aid. Here Jesus approached a man who did not know Him and hence had made no effort to seek His aid. Jesus came into the world to lead men to that faith in Him which would bring eternal redemption. This was the ultimate purpose in His mighty works. Divine love moved Him to pity man both in his physical ailments and in his spiritual suffering. Sympathy that would reach as far as the body but would disregard the needs of the soul would be very poor sympathy indeed. Hence Jesus used His miracles to bring faith as well as health. The miracles gave opportunity to stir faith and to confirm faith. Jesus continually tested the faith of those who came seeking help before He performed a miracle. The amount of faith which He demanded varied with the opportunities of the individual. The first thing that Jesus did for this lame man was to stir anew in his heart the great desire to be healed and the faith to believe lie could be healed by the mysterious and majestic Person who addressed him. "Wouldest thou be made whole?" seems like an obvious question to ask a man who was at such great pains to seek a cure at this pool. He had been sick for thirty-eight years and was trying desperately to be healed. But the Master desired to dispel any despondency in his heart because of his failure to secure relief here at the pool and to stir faith that would lead him to obey Jesus' challenge. The question of our Lord is directly connected in the text with His intimate knowledge of the man's persistent effort to secure relief from the pool. The Man Healed

There is a startling grandeur in the manner with which Jesus called the lame man away from any dependence upon the waters of the pool and demanded that he put his trust in simple obedience to the command which the Master gave to him. Inasmuch as the man later states he did not know the identity of the wonderful Person who had healed him, this is a case in which the divine personality of Jesus exerted a strong natural influence upon the man to persuade him to obey this command. The faith that the man showed, as he obeyed the command and was healed, was a faith in Jesus that He could do as He promised and heal him if he obeyed. Later on, as the man was being persecuted by the Jewish leaders because he had broken their traditions in bearing a burden (his bed) on the Sabbath, Jesus revealed Himself more completely to the man and warned him: "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee." Thus Jesus, having led the man to the recovery of a whole body through the miracle, sought him out to give him spiritual aid, The manner in which Jesus revealed Himself to the man is most impressive. He did not come to apologize to him for having healed him on the Sabbath or even to defend His course. He did not seek to express regret that persecution had resulted for the man. He did not tell him that He had heard he was unable to identify his Benefactor and assure him that He wanted to make known His identity. He showed His divine majesty in unique fashion by reading the man's heart and life. He also sought to turn the man's mind away from the petty persecution he was meeting and from too great exaltation over his physical recovery, to his spiritual life and his relation to God. Thus Jesus sought to lead the man to a clearer faith and to help him face the trying problems before him. The Man Vindicated

It may seem strange that the man immediately went and told the enemies of Jesus who it was that had healed him. But Jesus had not forbidden it. The man felt his act of carrying his bed was completely justified by the authority of the great Prophet who had such miraculous power. Since Jesus had possessed the power to heal by a miracle, he felt that the Master had divine authority for the command He had issued. It was in no sense a betrayal of Jesus that he revealed to the Pharisees His identity. He could not defend himself to these scholars against the charge of being a Sabbath breaker, but he was sure that Jesus could. He doubtless felt that the Jews had no right to criticize his conduct, and since they were seeking to ignore the miracle, they should be compelled to face the facts and to come into the presence of the tremendous Person who had worked the miracle. His report was a testimony for Christ, because he laid emphasis upon the miracle rather than the breach of Sabbath regulations: “that it was Jesus who had made him whole.” The Method of Jesus This second visit to Jerusalem created almost as great a furor as His first visit. The manner in which this miracle was worked aroused heated discussion. Why did Jesus heal the man on the Sabbath day, if He knew it would bring such bitter criticism upon Him? Jesus made a deliberate choice in the whole matter as to the man and the time, for He approached the man, and commanded the man to take up his bed and carry it home, even though He knew that the sight of this man carrying such a burden through the Sabbath day crowds which thronged the temple would create controversy. The difference in the methods of Jesus is most pronounced: in Galilee, where such intense excitement prevailed over His ministry that it threatened to get out of hand, He counseled a leper to tell no one of his cure; here in Jerusalem, which was so full of hostility on the part of leaders that even the people who favored Him only dared to talk of Him in whispers, Jesus boldly threw down the gauntlet to the cold and callous unbelief of the leaders by sending this man right through their midst on the Sabbath day carrying his bed as proof of the miracle. Moreover, Jesus did not attempt to hide behind the man when the storm of criticism arose. The man evidently acted in harmony with the will of Jesus when he immediately reported to the Pharisees who had cured him. This completed the testimony of the man to them concerning the miracle. The Critical Nature of the Controversy On His first visit to Jerusalem, Jesus had challenged the rule of the Sadducees in the temple. He had boldly cleansed the temple of its worldly merchandising. He had thus proclaimed to the nation that which He later explicitly stated: “Behold, a greater than the temple is here.” On His second visit to Jerusalem, Jesus denounced the false leadership of the Pharisees, who, by their traditions, had nullified the Word of God. He deliberately sent this lame man walking through the crowds carrying his bed on the Sabbath day. Thus He proclaimed to the nation: “The Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” He struck two successive blows at the Pharisaical shackles which bound the nation and which must be broken before they would be prepared to hear the gospel of God’s grace on the day of Pentecost. He had uncovered the hypocrisy and falsity of the political and religious leaders of the nation. He had begun the controversy which was to bring about His death, but which would also bring about man’s redemption. He had given prodigious revelations of His divine nature and the spiritual character of His program. The Method of the Pharisees The Jewish leaders immediately began to persecute Jesus when they learned of a certainty who had worked the miracle. They probably did this at first by a sneering refusal to admit His miracles or hear His teaching; by laying traps for Him and heckling Him while He preached; by spreading underhand, slanderous attacks, and stirring opposition to Him among the crowd. These were their usual methods. The appeal to violence gradually prevailed among the enemies of Jesus. There is some suggestion of this attitude even at

His first visit to Jerusalem (John 2:23-25), and at the close of His early Judaean ministry (John 4:1-3). And now they begin desperately to plot His death. Jesus' opening statement in the temple in defense of His healing the lame man caused His enemies to redouble their plots to kill Him: "For this cause therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only brake the sabbath, but also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God" (John 5:18).

054. Chapter 33 - Witnesses for the Son of God

Chapter 33 - Witnesses for the Son of God

John 5:17-47 Background of the Sermon The selfish multitude about the pool probably did not give any heed to the miracle as Jesus healed the lame man. But they, and all the crowds in the temple and city, were not permitted to ignore the miracle for Jesus deliberately chose to heal the man on the Sabbath day and to send him through their midst bearing his bed in bold disregard of the traditions of the elders. The man was immediately halted and challenged for his open violation of this tradition. His explanation of his conduct filled Jerusalem with excited discussion of the miracle and of the mysterious Person who had healed him and dared to command him to carry his bed home on the Sabbath. The man was not able at first to make known the identity of his Benefactor. This must have vastly increased the excitement and suspense as the people sought to learn if Jesus was present. When Jesus sought out the man and made Himself known, the man then supplied to the Jewish leaders the confirmation of the fact that it was actually Jesus who had healed him. The persecution which had been heaped upon the lame man was now turned in a furious attack upon Jesus. In the white-heat of this controversy Jesus stood forth to make the first clear, public declaration of His deity. The dramatic circumstances surrounding the sermon gave peculiar weight to His words. This sermon in the temple is the first public utterance of Jesus which is recorded in such lengthy detail. It arose in course of defense against the charge that He was a Sabbath-breaker, but it immediately merged into the larger claim that He was the Son of God. The same thing had happened when He had healed the man sick of the palsy in Peter’s home at Capernaum: all minor considerations had been swallowed up in the amazing claim of Jesus to have authority to forgive the sins of the man. Any careful study of the criticisms of Jesus by His enemies will find them constantly merging into an attack on His claims to deity.

I. The Fundamental Proposition (John 5:17-29).

1. The Proposition Stated: “My Father worketh even until now, and I work” (John 5:17). When Jesus met the fierce persecution of Jews for His breach of their Sabbath regulations, He did not attempt to justify His conduct by an attack on the absurd character of the traditions by which they had superseded and annulled the great beneficial regulations of the law. He followed this line of argument at a later time. He cut straight to the heart of the whole matter in this first great declaration in Jerusalem by making a sweeping claim to authority over the Sabbath as He had claimed authority over the temple when He had cleansed it. His assertion of deity based His defense upon His unity and equality with God. In one all-inclusive declaration of just nine words Jesus made His amazing claim to deity. The defense of His healing on the Sabbath became a corollary to the main proposition of His divine person and authority. The Sabbath had been given by God in token of His rest on the seventh day after the completion of the work of creation. But Jesus pointed out that this rest of God was not a state of inactivity: God did not create the world and straightway desert it to its fate. He had continually labored to sustain that which He had created and to bring about the fulfillment of His divine purposes in man for whom all had been

created. Thus it was not merely in imitation of God or in harmony with God's own course that Jesus had acted; His healing of the lame man had been co-ordinate with that of God who was His Father and with whom He acted in perfect unity. The Jews had interpreted the day of rest in purely negative terms of rest from physical labor. Jesus showed by His assertion that a positive interpretation should be given which would enable man to rest from worldly labors in order to carry on the heavenly labor which God desires. His own authority over the Sabbath, He declared to be as absolute as that of God Himself.

2. The Proposition Resented: "He called God his own Father, making himself equal with God" (John 5:18). The Jews were quick to perceive the nature and implications of Jesus' declaration. All objections to His non-conformity to their Sabbath regulations were dwarfed by this breath-taking revelation of the extent of His claims. They saw immediately that Jesus was claiming to be the Son of God in an intimate and unique sense, and that the implication of the manner in which He referred to God as His Father and identified His conduct with that of God constituted a mysterious claim to equality with God. Is it not exceedingly strange that anyone in this present generation, which boasts of its enormous superiority to all preceding ages and of its mental alertness, should be so blind as not to see that which was apparent to the auditors of Jesus in a moment? How many radical scholars attempt to read out of the words of Jesus any claim to deity! But even the Jews who were so full of hostility and unbelief were able to see instantly that the declarations of Jesus made explicit and implicit claim to deity. They were able to see this even before the gospel had been unveiled with its recital of the virgin birth, the atoning death, the resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. Much of modern radical comment on the Gospels gives startling confirmation to the increasing blindness of those who refuse to see. "The Gentiles rage, And the peoples imagine vain things. The kings of the earth set themselves in array, And the rulers were gathered together, Against the Lord and against his Anointed." By this defiant opposition to God, the prediction of Isaiah has been repeatedly fulfilled: "By hearing, ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall in no wise perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, And their ears are dull of hearing, And their eyes they have closed; Lest haply they should perceive with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And should turn again, And I should heal them." The fierceness of the Jewish resentment against Jesus is revealed in the fact that after this declaration, they "sought the more to kill him."

3.The Proposition Defended: "that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father" (John 5:23). The opening statement of Jesus in explanation and defense of His first startling proposition set forth that even though His authority arose from His immediate relationship to God, as Son to Father, and though His working was co-ordinate with that of God, yet all He did was subject to God and not of Himself, apart from God: "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing." This decidedly limits the conclusion which the Jews had drawn from His original proposition. They had summed up thus: making himself equal with God." Jesus immediately attached an amendment to this by affirming that He was subject to God, although His very Son and working in conjunction with God. But this amendment was so stated as to make still clearer His claim to deity. He represented Himself as able, while on earth, to look up into heaven and see what God was doing and also to have authority and power on earth to do what God was doing (John 5:19). The fact that the Son does not work apart from God is no real limitation of His power and authority, for the perfect obedience which the Son shows to the Father is matched by the

perfect love which the Father shows to the Son in revealing all things to the Son (John 5:20), and in giving Him power to raise the dead back to life (John 5:21), and to be the eternal Judge of mankind (John 5:22). Thus while Jesus made clear that He was not detracting from the glory of the Father and was Himself subject to Him, yet the very purpose of God in sending His Son into the world, clothed with such authority and power, was to bring men to honor the Son even as they honored the Father (John 5:23). Thus far the defense of Jesus has centered in the relation of the Son to the Father in His nature and work; the latter part of this section deals with the relation of the Son to men, especially in giving them eternal life (John 5:24-29). Hearing the gospel of Jesus and believing as true the revelation from God which He brings, the Christian passes out of death (he has been separated from God by his sins) into life (forgiveness and the new life in fellowship with God result from his obedience to Christ) through a spiritual resurrection. This is to be followed by the general resurrection of the dead in the judgment when eternal condemnation shall await the evil; as eternal blessedness, the righteous. The statement that the one who believes “cometh not into judgment” uses “judgment” in the sense of “condemnation.” It cannot refer to the judgment day when every man must be judged according to the deeds done in the body, for this passage clearly points first to the hearing of the gospel by those dead in sin, which, through faith, brings life in Christ (John 5:24-26), and then to the final judgment and the separation of the good from the evil, which brings eternal life to the faithful (John 5:27-29).

II. Witnesses for the Son of God: “These are they that bear witness of me” (vv. 30-47).

1. Jesus Bearing Witness (John 5:30-32).

Having made clear His claims, Jesus proceeded to introduce in rapid succession the witnesses which testified to the truth of His claims. He had solemnly given His testimony concerning Himself and His relationship to God both in person and work. Now He turns to show that He has not offered this testimony independent of God, hut only as God has directed Him. “If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true” (John 5:31), must necessarily be understood in the light of its immediate context where He declares,” I can of myself do nothing” (John 5:30). On a later occasion, He affirmed in answer to the objection of the Jews that His testimony was not valid since He was bearing witness of Himself: “Even if I bear witness of myself, my witness is true...for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me (John 8:13-18). These two declarations seem contradictory, hut a study of the two sermons will show that on both occasions He affirmed exactly the same thing from opposite angles. He first affirmed that His witness to Himself would be false, if given independent of God; He later declared that His testimony to Himself was true since it was given in conjunction with God. The modernist is accustomed to declare that he does not object to the teaching of Jesus in the general field of morals and religion, but that he cannot accept the teaching of Jesus in regard to Himself. But this is the very heart of the gospel. It is found on every line and in every sentence of this great sermon. It cannot be stripped from any sermon of Jesus. The unbeliever attempts to maintain that only the sermons in the Gospel of John represent Jesus as speaking of Himself in this fashion; hence the violence of his attack on this Gospel. But even a cursory examination of the Synoptics will show that this is not true. Take the first sermon Jesus preached at Nazareth (Luke 4:16-30) as an example: take the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-48; Matthew 6:1-34; Matthew 7:1-29): take the sermon on John the Baptist and the Unbelief of the Generation (Matthew 11:1-30); take any sermon of Jesus and this teaching of Jesus concerning Himself is either explicitly declared or inherently implied. To deny this is to destroy the

historic record of His life.

2. John the Baptist (John 5:33-35).

Jesus, in presenting the witnesses, quickly passed from His own testimony, for He had already delivered this in detail. The second witness He summoned was John the Baptist. He pointed out that the testimony of John was known to all. The Pharisees before Him could not deny this for they themselves had sent a delegation to John and had heard from him directly his testimony to Christ (John 5:33). Furthermore, his testimony could be denied by none (John 5:35). How beautifully Jesus pictured John bearing his tremendous witness to the Messiah: “He was the lamp that burneth and shineth.” They had rejoiced in John’s light for a time — until the light had been turned on their sins! We can hear again John crying aloud in the desert: “In the midst of you standeth one whom ye know not, even he that cometh after me, the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to unloose” (John 1:26); “Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29); “He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire” (Matthew 3:11); “He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all” (John 3:30, John 3:31); “And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God” (John 1:34).

3.The Miracles of Jesus (John 5:36). The third witness was described by Jesus as greater than that of John, because this witness was the direct work of God through His Son. No mere human agent intervened. This third witness was the miracles of Jesus: “the very works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.” Nicodemus, one of their own number, had so declared and his conclusion was correct: No one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him” (John 3:2). The miracles of Jesus furnished the basis for this discussion with the Jews. We cannot but wonder if the lame man who had been healed was standing in the midst as Jesus summoned the miracles He had wrought to witness for Him. The Jews were unable to deny these miracles, as they later confessed: “For that indeed a notable miracle hath been wrought through them, is manifest to all that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it” (Acts 4:16). They could not deny the fact that Jesus had worked miracles, but they refused to accept the evidence which God thus offered to them. All the attacks of the centuries have not been able to erase from history the record of the miracles of Jesus. Yet how many still refuse to yield to the evidence which they cannot explain away or deny, but which they will not accept. The Christian, however, finds a firm foundation for his faith in the mighty works which Jesus did to prove His deity.

4. God, the Supreme Witness (John 5:37, John 5:38). The citation of the miracles of Jesus led directly to the introduction of God Himself as the supreme witness. “And the Father that sent me, he hath borne witness of me.” Jesus had already appealed to God as His chief Witness, without clearly identifying Him: “It is another that beareth witness of me” (John 5:32). He continually declared that God was His great Witness: “I am he that beareth witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me” (John 8:18). At the baptism of Jesus God had declared: “Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11). At the final passover Jesus cried: “Father, glorify thy name. There came therefore a voice out of heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again” (John 12:28). The multitude did not understand the words spoken in the second instance and probably not in the first, but the inspired writers of the New Testament have recorded this testimony along with the declaration of God on the Mount of Transfiguration, as

strong evidence of God's direct approval of Jesus' claims. Thus while it was true in the absolute sense that "Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his form" (John 5:37), the testimony of God, nevertheless, was given with mysterious power. The attestation of God is also inseparably connected with the miracles which God did through Jesus and with the Scriptures which God had revealed through His servants. Thus, the last three witnesses Jesus presents are closely united.

5. The Scriptures (John 5:39-47).

"Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me" (John 5:39). The first verb of this great declaration may be either indicative or imperative: "Ye search" or "search." There is no emphasis on "ye think," as if to say "ye mistakenly think": the Old Testament taught the way to obtain eternal life, but the way it indicated was by faith and obedience to the Christ when He should come. The Jews were studying the Scriptures and rejecting the very fundamental obligation which such study implied: whole-hearted acceptance of the divine Person in whom the Old Testament found its fulfillment. The same method of studying the New Testament prevails today among unbelievers. The testimony of the Old Testament to Jesus is certainly one of the most impressive lines of argument to establish His claims. Read again the Gospel narratives with this in mind and see how often the writers appeal to the predictions made many centuries before. This is especially true of Matthew and John. As we read such passages as the second and the twenty-second Psalms, the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and similar passages which predict the place of Jesus' birth, the manner of His birth, and all sorts of details of His life and death, we rejoice anew in this astonishing evidence which has endured the test of the ages. The sermon of Jesus finds a fitting climax in this recitation of the testimony of the Old Testament writers to His coming and claims. Jesus closed His address with a piercing analysis of the cause of the unbelief of His enemies: their desire for the praise and glory of men rather than the favor of God. The concluding words offer a mighty thrust. Moses, a strong witness for Jesus, will he the chief witness against them in the day of judgment.

It is strange that the Pharisees, who were the learned scholars and the intellectual leaders of the nation, would have been so blind in their study of the Old Testament as to miss the very objective of God's revelation and to reject the Christ Himself whom the Old Testament predicted. But it was ever thus. The Pharisees but illustrate the incredible blindness which characterizes most of the philosophers, scientists, and theologians of our day, concerning whom someone has said: "They know so much that it is not true, about things that do not matter, that they are deaf, dumb, and blind to reality."

055. Chapter 34 - The Sabbath Controversy

Chapter 34 - The Sabbath Controversy Matthew 12:1-21;Mark 2:23-28;Mark 3:1-12;Luke 6:1-11 Human Need and Sabbath Regulations The controversy which had raged so fiercely in Jerusalem was carried back into Galilee when Jesus returned from the feast. Even before this encounter at the capital, the national leaders had become so nervous over the enormous popularity of Jesus in Galilee that they had sent skillful scholars to try to combat His movement (Luke 5:17). Now the discussion about Jesus' refusal to keep the Sabbath regulations arose anew in Galilee. "Now it came to pass on a sabbath, that he was going through the grainfields; and his disciples plucked the ears, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands. But certain of the Pharisees said, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath day?" (Luke 6:1, Luke 6:2). This scene raises the interesting question as to why the disciples were hungry and how often in their ministry the pressure of their exciting and incessant labors prevented them from securing ordinary food. Did they often suffer such lack as they traveled in the desert or in hostile territory? They were seasoned campaigners by this time, accustomed to the hardships of labor and travel. Jesus later assured them that in their widespread ministry they would find everywhere someone who loved God and would be glad to care for His messengers and that in the exceptional cases where this would not be true, they could shake the dust off their feet and seek a place of labor and rest elsewhere (Matthew 10:11-15). This same program was doubtless followed by Jesus in His own ministry. This picture of Jesus' disciples traveling along the highway reminds us of Gideon's three hundred heroes securing what water they could to satisfy their need while they continued on the march. There is no suggestion in the Gospels that Jesus was trying to satisfy His hunger by thus plucking grain from the wayside fields. Was it still true as at Sychar that He had meat to eat that they knew not — that He was so engrossed in His tremendous labors that it left Him no inclination to eat even as it had left the disciples no opportunity? A little later we find the pressure of the eager, needy multitudes so great that there was neither time to eat nor sleep. In the last week at Jerusalem, Jesus, being hungry, sought food from a wayside fig tree. Inasmuch as this was early in the morning and the disciples are not described as hungry, here again we find anguish or labor preventing Jesus from securing the normal sustenance of the body. Jesus must have had a powerful body to withstand such a constant drain upon His physical resources. His disciples found themselves in a ministry which taxed their sturdy resistance to the utmost so that Jesus at a later time gently suggested: "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile" (Mark 6:31). And even on that occasion that search for relaxation found the excited multitudes pursuing them into the deserts. The Specific Charge As the disciples traveled the highway, they reached out to pluck the heads of the wheat which was now ripe. This furnishes a chronological touch which helps to show that this scene naturally follows the visit to the passover in John 5:1-47, for the grain usually ripens in April and May. There is no suggestion that the disciples were guilty of stealing in thus appropriating handfuls of grain to satisfy their hunger. The Pharisees, eager to make any possible attack upon Jesus, did not charge the disciples with stealing. A provision of the Old Testament law gave permission for the needy to take any grain they might reach from the highway, but they were not permitted to trespass upon the grainfield (Deuteronomy 23:25). The

Pharisees did charge the disciples with breaking the Sabbath. Specifically they were held guilty of reaping, threshing, and winnowing as they plucked the grain, rubbed it out in their hands, and blew off the chaff.

Outline of Defense The defense of Jesus is based upon five arguments. (1) The conduct of David when he ate the shewbread to appease his hunger. (2) The conduct of the priests in carrying on laborious tasks of temple sacrifice on the Sabbath. (3) The principle enunciated by Hosea that God desires mercy above sacrifice. (4) The fundamental purpose of God in ordaining the Sabbath for man and not creating man for the Sabbath. (5) The crowning declaration that the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath. Matthew gives all of these with the exception of (4). Mark omits (2) and (3). Luke gives only (1) and (4). Here is a good place to test the Two-source Theory. Let the modernists explain, if they can, why Matthew, if he copied from Mark, omitted argument (4); why Luke, if he copied from both, gave only two out of the five arguments. What reason can be assigned for such variation except that these are independent narratives and not concoctions copied from “sources”? The Case of David The first argument does not attempt to discuss the propriety of David’s course when, in his flight from Saul, he sought food for himself and his hungry men from the friendly high priest and when no other food was available ate the shewbread, which the law strictly forbade any but priests to eat. It is the “argumentum ad hominem” — the argument based upon that which the opponent accepts. The Jews did not criticize David for eating the shewbread under such trying circumstances; why criticize the disciples when they were but breaking the Pharisees’ interpretation of the Sabbath law? There is seemingly a scribal error in the record concerning this Old Testament incident. Mark says, “Abiathar was high priest,” whereas 1 Samuel 21:1-6 states that Ahimelech, the father of Abiathar, was high priest. But in 2 Samuel 8:17 and 1 Chronicles 18:16 the names are reversed. This shows some confusion in our present Old Testament text also, unless there are some details of names, relationship and office unknown to us. The Temple and the Sabbath The second argument shows that there were certain inevitable conflicts of duty arising from the law which God had left man to work out according to his own conscience. The law forbade any work on the Sabbath. The law commanded certain sacrifices to be offered in the temple. When these sacrifices came on the Sabbath, the priests gave precedence to the law for sacrifice in the temple rather than that providing rest on the Sabbath. Again, the argument is: they did not criticize the priests for thus breaking the Sabbath law; why criticize His disciples? This argument is sealed by a majestic declaration of His deity “One greater than the temple is here.” The Son of God had shown His authority over the temple in the presence of the assembled nation. If the priests in the temple were guiltless in their work of offering sacrifices on the Sabbath, how much more the disciples of the eternal High Priest whose ministry supersedes and ends the temple in Jerusalem? The third argument furnishes a quotation from Hosea: “I desire mercy and not sacrifice.” Notice the Hebraism — the limited negative — “I desire not only sacrifice but also mercy.” Jesus declares that His disciples are “guiltless” and that if the Pharisees had understood Hosea’s words they would not have criticized His disciples. This quotation very subtly joins together all the arguments of Jesus. “The greatest of these is mercy.” Mercy had led to saving the lives of David and his men even though they broke the regulation as to who should eat the shewbread. Mercy permeates the sacrifices offered in the temple. Mercy was the moving purpose of the ministry of Jesus which overshadowed the temple. The last argument is a clear declaration of the personal authority of Jesus over the Sabbath. The Son of man is Lord over both the temple and the Sabbath — the two great institutions of the Old Testament. The

Principle Involved The application of the principle Jesus here enunciated, that works of necessity and of mercy limit the strict observance of the Sabbath, raises the question as to what are works of necessity and mercy. As we plan our routine physical labors and our spiritual ministry on the Lord's day, where does the dividing line run between works of necessity and mere comfort or luxury? between mercy upon the suffering of men and indulgence for the whims of a pleasure-loving generation? The state of physical health and spiritual need will naturally cause variation in the answer which every Christian must settle with his own conscience. It should be noted that the whole tenor of the arguments of Jesus reflects back to real need for food on the part of the disciples as they plucked the grain, and not the mere satisfaction of a passing fancy. Moreover, their strength was completely devoted to the spiritual tasks confronting them. Their whole-hearted dedication of themselves to these tasks had reduced them to the necessity of securing the scanty food available as they traveled alongside grainfields. The Scene in the Synagogue The destination of the company on this Sabbath day was the synagogue and as soon as they arrived the controversy was resumed. Here again the principle of works of mercy being appropriate on the Sabbath was set forth by Jesus. The miracle which He worked in the synagogue served to set the seal of heaven on His whole position. For a man with a withered hand was present in the assembly. Whether he came by custom or eager desire to see Jesus, we do not know. The scribes and Pharisees were watching to see if Jesus would heal the man on the Sabbath and they may have brought it about that he was present in order to furnish a test case. Certainly the man did not reveal any alliance with the Pharisees, but responded immediately to the commands Jesus gave him. Matthew states that the Pharisees asked Jesus whether or not it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath; Mark and Luke state that Jesus asked them whether it was lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath? to save a life or to kill? Luke also notes that Jesus read the thoughts of their hearts. Evidently, when Jesus in answer to their thoughts called the man forth, some of the Pharisees voiced their objection by a question and then Jesus replied with a question. The three writers do not contradict but supplement each other. Incidentally, they furnish here another hard knot for the Two-source Theory advocates to untangle. Matthew records the opening question of the Pharisees, but omits the command of Jesus to the man to stand forth. Mark and Luke omit the question and record the command. Luke, alone, emphasizes the sharp contrast between the underhand program of the Pharisees and the open methods of Jesus. They followed Him about, watching to entrap Him; but He read their unspoken thoughts and openly healed and taught. The man was asked to stand forth in order to test his faith and obedience. It also served to concentrate the attention of all on the critical issue. The man might have been healed later or in private, but Jesus not only healed him on the Sabbath but had him stand out where everybody might see the miracle. Thus His answer to the Pharisees was as direct and as impressive as possible. He had two objects: (1) to help the man; (2) to expose the false teaching of the Pharisees and to set forth the truth. Mercy upon lost men was the motive which led Him toward both objects. His pertinent illustration from everyday life showed that the Pharisees had more mercy for a dumb animal in its suffering on the Sabbath than for a man in need (Matthew 12:11, Matthew 12:12). The Discussion Closed The question which Jesus asked in closing the discussion was not at all parallel to their opening question. They had asked, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath?" Jesus asked, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm? to save a life or to kill?" This gave a most embarrassing turn to the discussion. They were not able or willing to answer. Mark records how Jesus "looked round about on them with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their

hearts." What a look that must have been! Some interpret His question as meaning to save the man's life by healing him or to kill him by refusing to heal him because it was the Sabbath. But this does not fit the use of the strong word "kill" (the man's condition seems chronic rather than critical) nor the whole context which shows how desperately the Pharisees were plotting Jesus' death. It rather means to save a life" (as I am doing to this man) or "to kill" (as you are plotting to do to me). This laid bare the hypocrisy of the Pharisees who objected to Jesus' healing the crippled man on the Sabbath, but were themselves spending the day in plots to kill Jesus. They had daily grown more bitter in their hatred of Him and more desperate in their plots to kill Him because He was continually defeating them in argument, proving their teaching and customs false, uncovering their hypocrisy and wresting the leadership of the people from them. Jesus healed the man after He had again tested his faith by commanding him to stretch forth the withered hand. The Pharisees left the synagogue in search of the Herodians who were a powerful political party in Galilee devoted to the interests of the Herod family. They were naturally enemies of the Pharisees, but a common hatred of Jesus now caused them to join forces in their plots to kill Jesus. The Merciful Ministry of Jesus

Jesus withdrew from the center of population after these exciting encounters with the Pharisees. Luke declares that "He went out into the mountain to pray and he continued all night in prayer to God." Both Mark and Luke state that the choice of the twelve apostles followed immediately. Matthew and especially Mark describe the crowds that followed Jesus and pressed upon Him seeking to be healed and to be taught. Matthew quotes a beautiful passage from Isaiah in which the prophet had predicted the humble, patient ministry of the Messiah. He is pictured as declaring "judgment to the Gentiles" and we read that now among the teeming multitudes from all over Judaea, great crowds were coming to Him even from the Gentile country of Tyre and Sidon (Mark 3:8). Isaiah declares, "He shall not strive nor cry aloud; neither shall any one hear his voice in the streets. Jesus had just retreated before His enemies, but it was not from fear of them nor of death at their hands. It was not yet time for Him to offer Himself. It was God's will that He should proclaim the truth to the nation before His death. He spoke out boldly for the truth, but He refused to defend Himself against the violence which His enemies used against Him. When persecuted and finally crucified, He did not cry aloud in self-defense nor in accusation of His murderers. Here where His enemies plotted His death after the Sabbath controversy, He did not use His miraculous power to destroy them, but meekly went to other communities to preach. He was as bold as a lion in defense of the truth, but as meek as a lamb in resenting personal attacks. The quotation closes with a declaration: "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, Till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles hope." This is a touching delineation of the mercy of Jesus to the sinful, the sick, the suffering, and the downtrodden. A bruised reed suggests the man oppressed by sin or misfortune whom Jesus will not destroy if he seeks forgiveness and help. Smoking flax is the wick of the lamp which is about to flicker out for lack of oil or because of imperfection of the wick. The light is feeble and the smoke annoying, but Jesus will not snuff it out; He will rather replenish and fan it to a flame. Jesus even had mercy upon the hypocritical Pharisees and continually sought to save them. The clause "sent forth judgment unto victory" portrays the final triumph of the gospel.

056. Chapter 35 - The Sermon on the Mount

Chapter 35 - The Sermon on the Mount Matthew 3:1-17;Matthew 4:1-25;Matthew 5:1-48;Matthew 6:1-34;Matthew 7:1-29;Mark 3:13-19;Luke 6:12-49 The Time and the Place

Efforts to arrange the records of this section of Jesus' ministry in chronological order are hound to be conjectural. None of the writers offers a strict chronological narrative. Matthew places the Sermon on the Mount earlier in his Gospel but he evidently uses a topical arrangement, grouping together examples of the teaching and of the healing ministry of Jesus. He places the Sermon on the Mount to the forefront as the keynote sermon of His early ministry and a superb example of His preaching. Mark does not record this sermon and hence offers no assistance in determining the time of its delivery. Luke furnishes the data upon which is based the usual placing of the sermon at this juncture in the ministry of Jesus. All three Synoptics agree in affirming a retirement of Jesus after this Sabbath controversy. All declare that tremendous crowds followed Him and that He continued His ministry in the open country. Mark and Luke place the selection of the twelve apostles at this time and Luke places at the same time the so-called "Sermon on the Plain" which is so similar to the Sermon on the Mount that they are usually identified. Luke really locates the sermon on a mountain, for he describes how Jesus spent a night in prayer on an isolated mountain peak and then came down "to a level place" (presumably some natural amphitheater on the plateau) and delivered this message. The Preaching Methods of Jesus The problem as to whether Matthew and Luke have given free reports of the same sermon or more accurate records of similar sermons causes one to reflect on whether Jesus was accustomed to repeat His messages. We know that He had a number of favorite sayings which He frequently uttered. The logic of effective preaching as well is the needs of many new people in His audiences on different occasions would naturally lead Him to repeat in varying forms some of the same fundamental messages which all should hear. Most of the time the preaching of Jesus was spontaneous in the sense that the sermon of the day was a direct answer to a question or a criticism; or an explanation of a miracle, a situation, or a problem. This made His preaching timely in the highest degree and caused His audiences to be constantly on fire to hear His pronouncement upon the subject which had arisen. At times, however, He came with a set message which was in no sense suggested by the events of the day. Examples of this type of preaching are the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon in Parables (Matthew 13:1-58). Was Jesus a Preacher? The idea is sometimes advanced today that Jesus was not a preacher, in the modern sense, but that He was merely a teacher. His audiences were free to interrupt with a question, and His speeches were as informal as the classroom lectures of a college professor today. This is evidently true of many of the speeches of Jesus as the recorded interruptions show. But the Gospel writers discriminate carefully between two types of public address which Jesus used: preaching and teaching. "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease" (Matthew 4:23). While much of the ministry of Jesus was devoted to teaching, there were those times when He addressed the throngs in thrilling and majestic sermons. There is no indication of any interruptions during the Sermon on the Mount. The

people were so filled with awe at the authority and sublime majesty of His utterance that they could talk of nothing else as they went down the mountain side at the close of the service. On what other basis can modern critics contend that Jesus was not a preacher but only a teacher? Is it argued that Jesus did not use the complex, flowing, oratorical periods and perorations of the orators of Greece and Rome? The pompous style of the orator, Tertullus (Acts 24:2-8), and the flowing oratory of Paul's sermons do show entirely different styles from that indicated in the speeches of Jesus. But this is not to say that Jesus was not the Sublime Preacher as well as the Great Teacher. Will someone arise to assure us that the immortal Gettysburg Address of Abraham Lincoln is not really an address because it is couched in simple language and is devoid of ornate construction? Jesus spoke to men with the simplicity of heaven, hut the emotional depths of some of His fervid appeals and the startling grandeur of many of His exalted sermons cause His utterances to stand apart, without parallel and beyond all comparison. Can anyone produce a more stirring combination of withering sarcasm, thundering denunciation, gracious thanksgiving, heartbroken, intense appeal, and tender invitation than pours forth in rapid succession in the sermon of Jesus on John the Baptist and the Unbelief of the Generation? (Matthew 11:1-30). Matthew opens his report of the Sermon on the Mount by saying that Jesus "sat down" and "taught them." But neither the calm posture of Jesus nor the simplicity of speech furnishes ground for affirming that this was really not a sermon. The circus gymnastics and the violent, uncouth utterance of many modern pulpiteers can hardly be said to furnish adequate criteria for the definition of a sermon. Jesus usually sat as He addressed the people, but this was not always true: "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink" (John 7:37). The restrained manner in which Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount thrills one with the depth of thought and emotion of the Speaker. The amazing, dramatic climax with which it closes is without parallel in the literature of the world. The Foolishness of Preaching The method Jesus adopted for the conquest of the world seemed utter folly. It mystified the loyal disciples. It caused John the Baptist to doubt. It stirred the scorn of the Jewish hierarchy and brought about His rejection by the nation and His death on the cross. But time has established the divine wisdom of His ways. Military kingdoms rise and fall, but the kingdom of heaven goes on encompassing the earth. It has been eclipsed at times, but like "truth crushed to earth" it rises again conquering and to conquer. "For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God….Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:18, 1 Corinthians 1:20, 1 Corinthians 1:21).

Jesus preached. The nation paused to listen in amazement, but stopped its ears, rejected, and crucified Him. But Jesus died preaching and rose again to send His disciples to preach. The disciples risked death to proclaim the message. and the stubborn nation yielded and came to its knees. Paul preached, and his enemies called him the man who had turned the world upside down. Preaching is the heart of Christianity. It is God's plan or saving the world.

Whenever the church has faithfully obeyed the final command, "Go preach my gospel," Christianity has prevailed. Whenever the church has gone to sleep and failed to raise its voice, or become fearful and talked in whispers, or, Judas-like, has betrayed its message, the light has been

dimmed and the world slipped into the valley of shadows. Has a pulpit lost its power today? Not when Christian martyrs, instead of craven cowards or selfish worldlings, stand in the pulpit. Whenever the gospel is proclaimed, victory is nigh. When the churches substitute theatrical performances, pie suppers, and pool tables for the preaching of the gospel, then downfall is inevitable. When the husks of philosophical and scientific speculation, modernism, and infidelity are substituted for the gospel, God's people are starved and the kingdom suffers defeat.

Natural Amphitheaters The Sermon on the Mount delivered to the vast, assembled throng leads one to reflect upon how Jesus managed to make Himself heard and understood by so many thousands. open-air amphitheaters often supply marvelous acoustics. The narrow valley between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim where Joshua read the law to the whole nation is a good illustration. Jesus seems to have selected carefully the amphitheater in which the Sermon on the Mount was delivered. This was doubtless true of many similar occasions, as when the five thousand were fed. At other times the circumstances gave little opportunity for choice of location for His preaching in the out-of-doors. William Jennings Bryan probably had the most remarkable voice of any modern orator. How many times when some local celebrity, chosen to introduce him, had attempted in vain to make himself heard even though he shouted frantically, Bryan would arise to stir ten thousand people with his calm but powerful tones. John the Baptist must have had a wonderful voice. Isaiah described him as "A voice crying in the wilderness." The voice of Jesus must have been inimitable. The rapt attention with which the people listened must have added many thousands to those who could hear distinctly. The Power of Personality

Personal magnetism plays an important part in the effect of a public address. The biographers of Jesus make no effort to describe this phase of His preaching, although the effects of His divine personality are continually in evidence. Isaiah in describing the Messiah had said, "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him" (Isaiah 53:2). But this does not necessarily mean that Jesus was ugly and misshapen in form and feature, but rather that .the humble character of His birth and life and His whole approach to men was so devoid of pomp and circumstances and so full of the simplicity of heaven that the worldly-minded were not attracted to Him. No artifice of manner and appearance nor stratagem of speech was used to add mysterious glamour to One who needed no worldly devices. How often a speech credited with thrilling a great audience appears cold and lifeless upon a printed page. The skillful finesse of personal delivery, rather than any momentous import of the thought, had produced the effect. But the words of Jesus have stirred the ages. As we read the Gospel narratives we immediately feel again the matchless power of His person and of the divine truth He reveals. We cannot paint a satisfying picture of how Jesus appeared in towering utterance or tender exhortation. How His eyes must have flamed and His whole being glowed with the divine fire of love for lost men! If it was true of Stephen when he arose at his trial to speak and to die for his Christ, that they "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel," how much of veiled glory shone in the face of Jesus as He preached to the multitudes?

Limitations of the Sermon The Sermon on the Mount is the greatest statement ever made on the general subject of religion and morals. It is at once profound and practical. It offers full and final discussion of some of the most elemental and persistent problems concerning our relation to God and to our fellow men. However, in regard to some of these problems, it gives only a preliminary statement. The gospel is based upon the divine person of the Son of God and the divine program

of redemption through His death and resurrection. Quite obviously all of this could not be clearly stated as yet. Peter's sermon at Pentecost offers the necessary complement to the Sermon on the Mount. It is not intimated in any way that Jesus has given a complete statement of His message in this opening sermon. It is not to be isolated from the rest of the teaching of Jesus, but must be joined inseparably with it.

Outline of the Sermon

Jesus discusses in quick succession certain of the natural questions in the minds of His hearers and certain of the universal problems of mankind. The Characteristics and Mission of the Ideal Disciple (Matthew 5:3-20); The Relation of the Gospel to the Law: Murder, Adultery and Divorce, Swearing, Revenge, and Attitude toward Enemies (vv. 21-48); Common Faults of Worship such as Vain Display in the Giving of Alms and in Praying and Fasting (6:1-18); Warnings against Hoarding of Earthly Treasures and Appeals for Trust in God (vv. 19-34); Exhortations to Generous Conduct toward Others (Matthew 7:1-12); Solemn Command to Accept the Gospel as the Means of Eternal Salvation (Matthew 7:13-27). The Sermon on the Mount presents the highest ideals of living the world has ever received, in the most beautiful language ever conceived. It opens with a series of sayings which sum up the ideal life of the Christian and it closes with a passionate appeal to the world to accept and follow these ideals and thus build on the rock instead of the sand. It gives this beautiful view of the ideal life, swiftly contrasts the teaching of Jesus with the law and then presents the all-encompassing love of God which will uplift and sustain us if we will obey Him. It should enable us to see clearly the absolute perfection of Jesus' teaching, the universality of its application to every life, the universal failure of mankind to attain to these ideals, and our dependence upon God's love for forgiveness and help.

Emphasis on the Inner Life This sermon and, in fact, the whole teaching of Jesus and His inspired apostles place a profound emphasis on the inner life. The Old Testament occasionally gives forth such a sweeping challenge as "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." But the Old Testament system was one of innumerable regulations and ceremonies which were the prolific ground for the growth of formalism. The prophets cry out in protest against the empty form which carries out the letter, but has no life. But Jesus gave the supreme declarations on the final importance of the inner life. Notice how completely the Beatitudes centralize on the spirit: "Poor in spirit," "mourn," "meek," "hunger and thirst after righteousness, "merciful," "pure in heart," "peacemakers," "persecuted for righteousness' sake." Again, in the criticisms of the Old Testament law which follow, Jesus emphasized the inner life, making the thought and intent to do evil as sinful as the deed itself. It is not enough to avoid murder, but we must not hate. Adultery is to be shunned, but lust also must be crushed. Evil words and deeds rise out of the heart. We must guard the heart as the very citadel of life. Jesus passes from the negative to the positive phase of this teaching. Good deeds and true worship must rise out of the heart. If they do not, they are mere forms and selfishness, and find no recognition with God.

Fundamental Contrasts

"Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased" might well be written over the Sermon on the Mount as a text. The whole message breathes love and mercy, but it is no mere sentimental outpouring. It is far from being spineless. It places the glory of God first; it subordinates peace among men to obedience to God. It urges peace among men, but

it provides for war. It shows men the way to peace, but warns that there is no peace for those who defy God. The last Beatitude offers a ringing conclusion to the group and the last two Beatitudes give lucid and powerful expression to the fundamental contrast of the sermon: peace and war. Matthew 5:9 breathes peace, good fellowship, reconciliation, and love: “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God.” But the final Beatitude talks of hatred, abuse, violence, persecution, and death: “Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake” (Matthew 5:11). in Matthew 5:9, the disciple is pictured as giving his life to the cause of harmony and reaching out in love to get his fellow men to live in peace. In Matthew 5:10-12, he stands forth in full armor wielding the sword of the Spirit, fighting with a song on his lips, fighting to the death if need be. Thus the heart of the entire sermon is made clear: implicit and absolute devotion to Jesus as Lord and Saviour. The result should be “peace on earth among men in whom he is well pleased” but it is bound to be spiritual warfare with those in the service of the devil. The prophets fearlessly arraigning the wickedness of Israel, and suffering persecution and death as a result, are represented as the pioneers blazing the path for the disciples. Peace and war: peace on earth, the persistent ideal and the great objective of human endeavor which is to be sought by forgiveness of personal wrongs and reconciliation of personal differences; war on earth, the constant and terrible reality: war with the devil and his cohorts which is to allow no cessation of hostilities; but demands loyalty to God and His truth regardless of the consequences; and promises joy amid the conflict and eternal rewards at its close.

Jesus’ Attitude toward the Law At the outset of this sermon, Jesus outlined His attitude toward the Old Testament law. He introduced a general statement that He was not undertaking to destroy the law. This denial was timely because: (1) the Jewish nation would expect Him, in the light of His revolutionary teachings and methods, to make clear His attitude toward the law; (2) this general statement is an introduction to some sweeping criticisms of the law; (3) the conflict between Himself and the Pharisees would suggest that He was destroying the law. This subject remained the major source of contention during His whole ministry and furnished the primary charges at His trial and crucifixion. Through the centuries it has remained a subject of misunderstanding anti discussion. Both the Catholics and Protestants have gone astray in this field. The modernist, with his customary perversity, holds that Jesus and Paul are the two separate sources of Christianity, and that they are in complete and irreconcilable contradiction. They maintain that Jesus was a Jew who lived under the law, revered and taught the law and had no thought of setting it aside; and that Paul hated the law, and, of his own initiative and in violent contradiction to Jesus, repudiated the law and set up Christianity on an independent basis. Even a cursory study of the Gospels will show that this theory is a rope of sand. Catholicism is a hopelessly confused mixture of Christianity, Judaism and heathenism. Protestantism has shaken off these shackles only in part. One of the great contributions of the Restoration Movement has been the insistence on rightly dividing the Word of truth. The relation of the Old and New Testaments is the elemental problem here. Alexander Campbell’s “Sermon on the Law” is a document so revolutionary as to deserve a place with the great pronouncements of Luther, Calvin, and Wesley. A great need of the Christian world today is the clear recognition that we are not under the law, but the gospel; that the law was nailed to the cross and passed out of force when the new will was probated at Pentecost; that the whole Old Testament law in its abiding features is included in the great principles of life upon which Jesus established Christianity: (1) love God with all your heart; (2) love your neighbor is

yourself, do to others as you would have them do to you; (3) follow Jesus as Saviour and Lord. Everything in the realm of morals and religion is included here in its supreme form. The Epistles of the New Testament argue this powerfully. The Epistle to the Hebrews is completely devoted to this discussion. But a close study of the life and teaching of Jesus will show that this whole position is not to be attributed to Paul alone, but to Jesus. The full and complete revelation was given to Paul, but Jesus clearly intimates during His ministry the passing of the law. His declaration that not one jot or tittle of the law is to pass away is joined immediately to the phrase, “till all things be accomplished.” The implication is that the law is to pass away when its purposes are fulfilled, and He declares in the same breath, “I came...to fulfill.” The view that He merely deepened and emphasized the law in the Sermon on the Mount will not bear investigation. His teaching on oaths, hating enemies and retaliation does not deepen, but revokes, the Old Testament. In the case of divorce, He absolutely sets aside the law.

Methods and Motives The central portion of the sermon strikes hard at hypocrisy of all kinds. Jesus passes from a discussion of evil deeds to be avoided to that of the manner in which good deeds are to be done. After declaring in such astounding fashion that God considers the man who harbors murder and adultery in his heart, as guilty of the deed, He turns to explain how a bad motive vitiates a good deed. We are to watch the motives from which our good deeds spring and keep them pure even as we guard against evil thoughts and intent which lead to wicked conduct. The Greek word for hypocrites means (1) a play-actor, (2) a pretender or deceiver. We usually consider a hypocrite as a rare specimen who is seldom met. But a hypocrite is the genus homo. We are all hypocrites at some time or in some degree. Whenever we commit a sin and try to hide it or pretend to be wiser or better than we are, we play the hypocrite. The Pharisees were flagrant offenders, but the warning should be heeded by every man. The Pharisees did not actually sound a trumpet before they did a good deed, but they might as well have done so. They furnish an extreme and repulsive example of a universal weakness of humanity. We like to “show off.” The praise of them is sweet to our ears. We can hardly hold our tongues and refrain from telling the world how good and how wise we are, and what good deeds we have done. But God sees, and that should be sufficient. And the world will see and glorify God. Boasting may bring some praise from men. But such praise is base alloy. The pure metal is given only to the humble and sincere.

Mechanical Religion

Jesus warns us against the peril of indulging in mechanical worship. He concentrates upon the danger of prayer offered in a mechanical way. But the same principle applies to all of our religious life. Baptism, unless it be accompanied by the profound spiritual experience of faith and repentance, is a mere form. When Jesus was baptized He was praying. The Lord’s Supper brings condemnation to those who make it a mere form, not discerning the Lord’s body. The prayer of a little child, “Now I lay me,” readily becomes a mere string of heads. So does the prayer of an adult who goes over the same routine of requests and words each day. Break up the routine. Pray at different times, for new things and in different order. Widen your vision. Give careful attention to what you are going to say to God before you ask for an audience. The sublime model prayer found in this sermon often becomes nothing more than a collection of phrases when mechanically repeated by congregations. Shakespeare has given impressive utterance to this principle which he learned from the Master. As the play Hamlet rises to its climax, the king, who had murdered his brother, weary of the terrifying torture of a guilty conscience, seeks relief in an unaccustomed

manner. He attempts to pray. But the effort is futile. He rises from his knees in despair crying out: “My words fly up, my thoughts remain below; Words without thoughts never to heaven go.” The Sermon on the Mount and the Epistle of James A close comparison of the Sermon on the Mount and the Epistle of James is a most fruitful undertaking. Professor Ropes attempts to reduce the message of James to two words: “Against Shams.” What a slashing attack on hypocrisy is to he found in this Epistle! And yet at every turn, James seems to be quoting freely and applying the incomparable words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Compare the following passages: (1) James 1:5 with Matthew 7:7 and Luke 11:9; (2) James 2:5 with Matthew 5:3 and Luke 6:20; (3) James 3:8 with Matthew 5:9; (4) James 4:4 with Matthew 12:39; Matthew 16:4 and Mark 8:38; (5) James 5:1-6 with Luke 6:24; (6) James 5:12 with Matthew 5:34-37. The joyful endurance of suffering and resisting of temptation; the search for wisdom from God; the simplicity of true faith in prayer; the scorn of earthly riches; the unfailing love and care of God; the great need for mercy and generosity in our dealings with our fellow men, especially in guarding our words; the folly of a sham faith and the necessity of actually doing the will of Christ; the earnest endeavor for peace with our fellow men but the urgent necessity of fighting the devil; the joyful privilege of leading lost men to light and life; all these great topics are discussed by James in a manner that is strikingly reminiscent of the Sermon on the Mount. At every turn James reflects the gleams of divine light from this great utterance of Jesus. The Parables of the Sermon

We are accustomed to think of Jesus’ sermon in parables (Matthew 13:1-58) as the beginning of this method of teaching and preaching. While this sermon was a surprising departure from His previous method in that the sermon was given completely in parables without explanation, this general method is seen in the sermons of Jesus from the beginning and is clearly illustrated in the Sermon on the Mount. It closes with the parable of the house built on the rock. It contains a marvelous collection of brief, undeveloped parables, sometimes called “Germ Parables.” They are more than mere figures of speech or comparisons. They reveal one of the fascinating characteristics of the sermon as they suggest so much more than is said and lead the mind to complete and apply in detail the parable which is suggested. This is always a hidden source of power in effective preaching. The picture of men knocking at the gate of heaven for admittance; the orchard being purged of the worthless trees by the husbandman; the masquerade of false prophets like wolves cunningly concealing their identity from the sheep they desire to destroy; the parable of the two gates and the two ways of life and death; all these searching comparisons are made in the last fourteen verses of the sermon. The preceding sections offer a like amount of exquisite or harrowing illustrations. Here is another line of contact between the Epistle of James and this sermon. The ordinary scenes of nature are the prolific source of illustration in both: the flowers of the field, the birds of the air, the animals of the field, the fountain of water, the fruit of fig and vine, the rain, the moth and rust that consume.

Humor in the Sermon

There is little of the sound of laughter in the Bible. It is a life and death message from heaven to earth. Such a message does not allow much room for mere humor. The serious and tragic aspects of life fill the mind of each messenger who stands forth to speak for God. It is natural that a historical narrative should recount some humorous situations that were inextricably bound to the salient facts and events. A comical illustration is the excited conduct of the girl Rhoda who forgot to open the door and then stood arguing with the members of the church gathered in the night

assembly, while Peter kept knocking desperately for admittance (Acts 12:14-15). Such humor as is found in the speeches of the Bible is usually confined to penetrating sarcasm. There is never the effort to create a laugh or to be funny. If something humorous is said, it has a profoundly serious point. Even the amusing fable of Jotham (Judges 9:7-21) was a stinging indictment of the murderers who must have listened in impotent rage to the sarcasm of Jotham. We never read of Jesus' laughing and yet we are sure that He must have smiled often and laughed occasionally for this is a part of the natural perfection of manhood. There is even in the majestic sweep of this great Sermon on the Mount an occasional glint of humor which, if it did not cause the audience to laugh, at least communicated itself in a subtle manner from the Speaker to His hearers. The touches of humor consist in extremely exaggerated comparisons. "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" (Matthew 7:3). A mote is a tiny speck of straw or dirt; a beam is a saw-log or rafter of a house. The picture of a man with a saw-log in his eye offering to remove the speck of straw from his neighbor's eye is so exaggerated as to be full of pungent humor. "When therefore thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men." Here, again, is an exaggerated figure of a man blowing a trumpet before he performs a good deed, which reveals a type of humor so effective as to set going through the ages, the adage: "Blow your own horn." "Neither cast your pearls before the swine, lest haply they trample them under their feet, and turn and rend you." No one, of course, ever really attempted to feed pearls to hogs. The figure is so extreme as to be ludicrous but it is so pithy and trenchant that the reader can never forget man's bestial contempt and wanton destruction of spiritual things in his crazed haste to secure worldly trifles. The Close The most astounding feature of this sermon is its dramatic conclusion. Where else in all literature is to be found a great sermon with an ending so negative, tragic, disastrous? "And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the flood came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof" (Matthew 7:26, Matthew 7:27). Hear the wild, rushing roar of the storm as blinding lightning pierces the night sky! See the swift destruction descending upon the heedless! Hear the crash of falling timbers and stones and the shrieks of those caught in the toils of their own folly!

057. Chapter 36 - The Sermon on the Mount and The Social Gospel

Chapter 36 - The Sermon on the Mount and “The Social Gospel” The Dilemma of the Atheists The acute need for a standard of morals — some definite and authoritative means of determining what is right and wrong — for the intellectual group who have discarded belief in God, is the problem to which Walter Lippmann addresses himself in his book entitled A Preface to Morals. He frankly admits the great power for good which has been exerted through the past by the belief in God and the acceptance of the Bible as His revealed Word; but, having abandoned this belief, he casts about for some other basis for analyzing human conduct. This is a famous example of the “social gospel” which is being proclaimed to this “new age.” A friendly critic who shares with him the atheistic position, and who affirms that Mr. Lippmann has acquired his religious views from Kirsopp Lake, of Harvard, and the school of thought which he represents, speaks with great appreciation of Mr. Lippmann’s book, but frankly admits that it recognizes rather than solves the pressing problem; that it is nothing more than a “preface” to a real search for a basis of morals.

Plagiarizing the Sermon the Mount The nearest Mr. Lippmann is able to come to a on positive suggestion in the matter is to lay down the proposition that the conduct of men should be gauged by the principle of “disinterestedness.” And what does this mean but unselfishness? — And where did he learn this but at the feet of the Christ he scorns, and from the Bible he discards? The futility of “the search for truth” apart from God could scarcely be more clearly revealed than by the failure of this brilliant modern editor to find any sort of alternative for the simplicity of Christian faith. Contrast the darkness in which the boasted intellectual of this “new day” gropes, with the beaming sunlight in which the Son of God walks in the Sermon on the Mount. The Finality of the Sermon The majority of the left-wing modernists — those who are atheistic — furnish a frank confession of the hopelessness of their effort to find any new basis for morals by their constant references to the Sermon on the Mount. In this sermon Jesus offered the clearest and most powerful declaration the world has ever heard concerning the problem of human conduct. The advance over the revelation offered in the Old Testament is most startling. The range of man’s responsibility is immeasurably extended by the profound emphasis upon the thought-life as the active source of speech and action. The full gospel was not proclaimed by Jesus on this occasion, because this gospel was to be based upon His death, burial, and resurrection, and hence could not be set forth until Pentecost. But the Sermon on the Mount carries the most complete analysis of human conduct — its sources, its motives, its qualities, and results. All the combined wisdom of the centuries has not been able to add anything to the fundamental principles laid down in this sermon. Individual problems have changed with the changing scenery of the generations that have come and gone, but these problems still must be taken to the feet of Jesus for their proper solution on the basis of the principles of life He enunciated. The Problem of Human Conduct

Sometimes people are vexed at the difficulties which beset them in guiding their lives. Is this wrong or is it right? One says, “Yes”; another, “No.” How can I tell? Take any of the avenues of pleasure with which a Christian is faced in this riotous generation: dancing, card playing, the theater, drinking, playing the races, etc. Someone says: “I can not find any condemnation of this or

that modern pleasure in the Bible: what about it?”

Individual Responsibility

One of the unique characteristics of Christ’s teaching is the solemn responsibility placed upon the individual to determine for himself his own conduct. The Old Testament surrounded the Jews with well-nigh innumerable petty laws designed to specify in each particular case what was right and wrong. Underlying these minor regulations were the great moral principles seen in the Ten Commandments and in evidence even from the beginning. For even Cain knew it was wrong to murder his brother — Abel. God had made this known to him, as it is quite evident He had made known the duty to offer a sacrifice and the manner in which it was to be offered. Else why was Cain’s offering rejected or Cain condemned for murder? In man’s spiritual nature God has implanted the conscience, that faculty which keeps saying, “Do the right”; “Avoid the wrong.” But the conscience, unaided by careful education in the light of God’s revelation, may be entirely in error when it sounds its warnings as to what is evil, or it may become stifled by the constant rejection of its appeals. How can man hope to guide his life without God’s help? The light of direct contact with God shone upon Adam and Eve in the beginning. But man permitted the recollection of this light to fade with the passing generations, and his “foolish heart became darkened.” The Old Testament law was added to guide and stir anew man’s conscience and bring him back to God. But Jesus sets forth an entirely new and unique standard for the guidance of human conduct. In this standard, all of the fundamental moral principles are most effectively reaffirmed. This standard is, first of all, a perfect life actually achieved among men in the person of the Son of God. The Way of Life

Christianity sums up the way of life in two words: “Follow Jesus.” Are you troubled about what is right and wrong? About which course to take? Take up your New Testament and study the life of Christ. Solve your problems in the light of the perfect example Jesus gives. “What would Jesus do, in my place and facing my problems?” Added to this perfect example is the perfect teaching which Jesus gave. The underlying moral truths which furnish the ground for righteous living are reiterated, illustrated, deepened, and enforced in the Sermon on the Mount. But Jesus made no effort to be exhaustive in restating these propositions. He took tip the problems connected with murder, adultery, honesty, the taking of oaths, retaliation, evil criticism, love of money, love of enemies, and benevolent sharing with others. On later occasions He dealt with other problems of moral conduct. But the necessity for an exhaustive survey of these intricacies is relieved by the second great feature of Christianity: the fact that Jesus set forth a single, all-inclusive rule of conduct which is universally and eternally applicable. “All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets.” All preceding revelations of man’s righteous relations to his fellow men are included in this one summary of life. Are you troubled as to your choice of right and wrong? Write the Golden Rule indelibly in your heart as you seek to follow where Jesus leads.

Freedom in Christ A further principle which stands out in the Sermon on the Mount is the supreme value of the soul when compared to the whole universe of material things, and the supreme responsibility of the individual for the development and direction of his own life. It is self-evident that the daring way Jesus sums up life by calling men to follow His example, and by giving such a brief and all-inclusive rule of moral conduct, gives to man a new freedom. Does the example of

Jesus demand that you deny this or that desire which others deem worldly? You must decide that for yourself. You may seek the advice of others; you may feel the restraint others exert; but ultimately you must decide for yourself the exact application of the invitation of Jesus: “Come unto me...and learn of me;...and ye shall find rest.” This freedom in Christ begets a new responsibility, that we make of our freedom not a license to sin, but an urgent call to consecration. The Fundamental Principles

Two corollaries flow forth naturally from these great sources of Christian ethics: the Christian is obligated to scrutinize everything in his life (1) as regards its effect on his own well-being; (2) as regards its effect on his fellow men. Is it right for me to do this thing? Well, what are its results in my life? Does it build up a stronger body, a more active and useful mind, and a nobler soul? Does it but multiply disorders, or does it bring real improvement and lasting content? If the results are mixed and confusing, if the aftermath is a medley of exhilaration combined with discontent and regret, then it is well to concentrate upon the second phase: What are its effects upon others with whom I walk in life? In the most dramatic language imaginable, Jesus presents this first test of conduct: “If thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell.” If something in your conduct seems as essential as your hand or eye (either by reason of a habit formed years before or because of false choice at the present time) and you find this thing producing evil effects as regards your physical, mental, or spiritual well-being, cast it out rather than stumble and ultimately perish. The second test underlies a great part of the Sermon on the Mount, and is often discussed by both Jesus and Paul. It is the very heart of the “Golden Rule.” What is the effect of this on the lives of others? How would I like for others to treat me in this particular? “To live day by day in such a self-forgetful way” that our thought is concentrated first on Christ, and second on our fellow men, is the way of life full of glory and contentment. The Program of the Christian

All of these principles guiding the conduct of the Christian culminate in the active program, the grand objective of earthly living. Over and over Jesus throws out the challenge in the Sermon on the Mount to follow Him and aid in saving a lost world. The world is in darkness, but the Christian is the light of the world. “Let your light shine” is Christ’s daring command given for a world-wide enlightenment of mankind. This captivating vista glorifies the entire sermon. And how is the humble disciple to accomplish so vast an objective? By amassing earthly treasures? by imitating the pomp and circumstance of kings? No, by humble service; by “your good works”; by loving, forgiving, teaching, helping others in the name of Jesus. What is the motive and objective of these shining lights? “That they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” God is the source and the end of man’s moral endeavors, as outlined in the Sermon on the Mount. Read through this great pronouncement again, and see how each of the Beatitudes either mentions or directly implies the personal relationship to God, and how every line and phrase of the whole sermon breathes the atmosphere of heaven and bids man be noble because God desires and commands it, because God exemplifies it and because God will reward it.

Without God — without Light

Contrast with this the thousands of sermons that leave God out, preached today from the Sermon on the Mount as the world’s supreme statement on morality. Could anything be any more foolish or

hopeless than the extreme modernist's attempt to create a standard for determining what is good apart from God, who is the Source of all good and the perfect Embodiment of all that is righteous and the ultimate Judge of the world? "Morals" comes from the Latin mores, and means the right relation of man to man. The derivation of "religion" from religio (to bind back) reveals the fact that this is the relationship of man to God. The true religion embraces the whole of morals, and the true morals cannot be constructed, understood, or maintained apart from the true religion. The prevailing immorality of this "new age," with its breakdown of common honesty in the business world and of moral reform in the political realm, with its dearth of love and peace in the home, and its spectacle of such wild and riotous pleasures as disgraced ancient Rome, results from man's casting God out of His world. We suffer not so much from a "forgotten man" as from a "forgotten God." The Vicious Circle of Modernism This is exactly the analysis Paul gives to the world situation that preceded the downfall of the Roman Empire: "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men….God is manifest….knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks: but became vain in their reasonings and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness….they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator" (Romans 1:18-25). What an accurate photograph of this "new age" in which we live! What folly to talk of creating a system of morals on "disinterestedness" when they leave out the God who lives, loves, reveals, commands, rewards, and punishes. How can the atheist "let his light shine" when the light that is in him is darkness? How can he hope to purloin the principle of unselfishness from the Sermon on the Mount, and build upon it a system of morals, when he himself is entrapped in the vicious circle of self-worship? He has no source of authority for morals higher than himself; no model of righteousness better than himself; no person to honor and worship greater than himself.

God Has Spoken The Sermon on the Mount gives an unparalleled analysis of the principles upon which righteousness is based; a unique series of illustrations of how these principles are to be applied to the problems of everyday life; a critical study of the motives of human conduct and their influence upon the quality of our deeds and words; a picture of the earthly and eternal results of human conduct that is transcendent. The throbbing heart of the whole message is God. We are to obey God rather than men, and rejoice when persecution results. We are to take God, the perfect Example, as an ideal rather than men, and strive for His perfection. We are to expect God rather than men to understand properly and reward our efforts. In a world that has forgotten God we cry afresh:

God of our fathers, known of old, ……

Lord God of hosts, be with us yet, Lest we forget, lest we forget!

058. Chapter 37 - The Deity of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount

Chapter 37 - The Deity of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount Attempted Isolation of the Sermon As the atheistic modernist, who attempts to construct a system of morals and a way of life apart from God, finds himself borrowing from the Sermon on the Mount, so the theistic modernist, who claims to believe in God, but rejects, in whole or in part, the claims of Jesus, joins his liberal comrade in making the Sermon on the Mount the chief source for his “social gospel.” The borrowing from the sermon by the one is surreptitious; the endorsement of the sermon by the other is open and effusive. The right-wing modernist who attempts to honor God and dishonor Christ decries the preaching of doctrine: “What the world needs is the Sermon on the Mount. Why preach about the resurrection, quarrel over the virgin birth, or proclaim the atoning death of Christ for the sins of the world? Why not preach a social gospel for all people, whatever their faith — a gospel such as the Sermon on the Mount proclaims?”

Such Isolation a Violation of the New Testament

Several considerations are paramount in analyzing this position: (1) Is the Sermon on the Mount a complete or final declaration of the Christian faith? (2) Can the sermon be dissected and the “social message” stand without its foundation on Christ? (3) Does this sermon itself not imply and declare the deity of Jesus? If the Sermon on the Mount can be taken as a full and final revelation of the Christian gospel, it is strange, as Denney says, that Christ did not go back to heaven after delivering it and the parable of the prodigal son and a few other such sermons. The very fact that Jesus continued to teach and centered the attention of His apostles, and through them of the whole world, upon the crucifixion and resurrection, shows that the attempt to reduce Christianity to a system of morals outlined by a great Teacher violates the whole life of Christ and the program of Christianity as a way of life Redemption is offered through a definite plan of salvation based upon the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and upon the manner of life and the teaching of Jesus. Thus the gospel comes to its climax in the Book of Acts after the accounts of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus have been given by the four Evangelists. Further application and illumination of Jesus’ life and program are given in the rest of the New Testament.

Reasons for the Skeptics’ Emphasis The reason is quite apparent why modernists sing a constant refrain: “The Sermon on the Mount is all the world needs. Let us maintain the Sermon on the Mount and discard the ‘dogma’ of Christ’s deity.” They have abandoned Christianity, but still insist on wearing the name of Christ. They desire to separate enough moral teaching from the rest of the New Testament to furnish them some sort of elevated propaganda without reference to the personal claims and program of Jesus. They would “create a new religion for this new age,” but find themselves forced to go to the New Testament for their material. They attempt to choose material for a system of philosophy without reference to the divine Person of the Son of God. The Advice of Talleyrand

They remind one of the French philosopher who decided to create a new religion for France in the wild excesses of the French Revolution which severed most of the nation from Christianity. He

approached the great French statesman, Talleyrand, for advice as to how to proceed in creating a new religion. Talleyrand replied sarcastically that it should be a very simple task for the philosopher to create a substitute for Christianity: all he needed to do would be to have himself crucified and then raised from the dead!

Revealed Religion In other worlds, Christianity is a supernatural religion — revealed from heaven, based on a divine Person, established by miraculous evidence, offering a definite, divine program, culminating in eternal glory. The attempt to extract from the New Testament a code of morals and isolate this system as “the new religion” for “a new age” is utter folly. The philosophical sects of ancient Greece, such as the Stoics and Epicureans, attempted to expound a way of life: the one, a way of pessimism and self-restraint; the other, a way of blind optimism and self-indulgence. Both alike utterly failed.

Man’s Need

Any modern attempt to proclaim a system of morals apart from the perfect example and the divine Person of the Son of God must likewise fail. Men need example as well as precept. They need to be shown as well as told. They need the thrilling encouragement of the Pioneer who leads the way. Jesus showed the ages how to live and how to die, and came forth Victor over death to give man everlasting hope. Even Stoicism became cold and self-centered, for it had no personal example to follow; no great Person to demand allegiance and self-sacrifice. The similar attempts of modern skeptics only emphasize man’s perpetual folly.

Man needs more than precept and example. He needs more than to be shown how to live even though the precepts be infallible and all-inclusive and the example absolutely perfect; the result is but to leave man humbled, heart-broken, and hopeless because of his continual failure to walk the way of life which has been revealed to him. Man needs a divine Redeemer. There must be actual redemption from sin made possible for man. The death of Christ is God’s answer to man’s supreme need. The Sermon on the Mount does not proclaim the death of Christ, but it is the natural and essential preliminary to that declaration. The sermon can only be comprehended in the light of further declaration which Jesus added to it. The implications of the sermon lead on straight to the cross.

Divine Authority of the Sermon The deity of Christ is the living current which flows through the entire Bible. Read where you will and you cannot proceed far without encountering this current. The effort even to isolate this single sermon fails, for the Sermon on the Mount is founded on the rock of Jesus’ divine person. It can only be comprehended fully when illustrated by His perfect example. His declarations proceeded so directly from His own person and authority that it was this, rather than the amazing content of the sermon, which startled His hearers. Read carefully through the sermon and see how often He expressly presents Himself as the foundation of life, here and hereafter. When this is not openly stated, it is continually implied.

Uniqueness of the Sermon The content of the sermon is also of such unique and supreme character as immediately to place its Author above the sinful world to which it was delivered. Literary critics frequently remark that Shakespeare would be one of the most famous of writers by reason of his poems even if he had never written a single play. If we knew nothing about Jesus at all, with the exception of this single sermon, it would immediately place Him apart from all the rest

of mankind, the insoluble mystery of the ages. Shakespeare, along with all the famous literary men of the world, borrows his moral insight into human conduct from the teaching of Jesus. This sermon is the unapproachable climax of all efforts to state in a single discourse the elemental duties of man toward God and his fellow man.

Inspiration of the Old Testament The Old Testament, by reason of the continual claims of its writers to speak for God, and because of the sublime content of its messages and the miracles which sealed them, proves itself to be uniquely inspired among a world of human productions of the time. The Sermon on the Mount surmounts the Old Testament both by reason of the actual distinctions drawn and principles enunciated, as well as by express claim of Jesus to authority to set it aside even as He proclaimed Himself “the fulfillment of the law” — the actual achievement of the goal for which the law was given.

Contrast of This Sermon and the Old Testament A single line of test will suffice for and the Old Testament measuring the Sermon on the Mount with the Old Testament. This sermon and the entire New Testament concentrate upon the thoughts and intents of the heart. The Old Testament system was one of innumerable regulations and ceremonies which were the prolific ground for the growth of formalism. The prophets cried out in protest against the empty form which carries out the letter, but has no life. In a series of beautiful sayings with which Jesus opened the sermon, He pictured the glory of the ideal life. He spoke with the authority of heaven in declaring the blessings of God upon those who walk in the way of life. His incisive analysis of the perfection man should seek is matched by the absolute assurance of what God will do in return. Man’s thought is turned to search and purge his own heart, seeking the realization of his spiritual need, sorrow over the triumph of evil, humility, eager desire for righteous living, love in his heart toward his fellows, purity of thought and purpose, desire to promote peace and loving-kindness among men, and determination to maintain absolute loyalty to Christ in spite of persecution and suffering. The Authority of Christ

One of the opening declarations of Jesus is that the Old Testament law finds its fulfillment in Him, even though it is so certainly the Word of God and so very precious that “not one jot or tittle” of it can possibly pass away until all for which it was given is fulfilled. “I came to fulfill” is the key to His attitude toward the Old Testament. To this end was the Old Testament law given: that it might prepare the chosen nation for the Christ and might lead them to accept as final and supreme His revelation from heaven. The absolute authority with which Jesus offers His teaching is proof of His deity. Moses received the law from God; the prophets prefaced their words with “Thus saith the Lord.” But Jesus declares: “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time….But I say unto you.” Moses and the prophets were but human messengers delivering God’s message; Jesus is God in the flesh, speaking of His own divine authority. The Secret Sins of Man Unveiled The Old Testament contains the noblest system of morals man had known up to the time of Christ. But the Sermon on the Mount sets up standards of life which are so much higher and more difficult of attainment that the contemplation of it leaves man full of awe and shame. Jesus cut through the crust of conduct into the very essence of life: the thoughts, purposes, and motives of the heart. He laid bare to man the secret origin of his moral failures. He demanded that life be purified at its very source. When any man opens his heart to the Sermon on the Mount, he suddenly becomes conscious of the fact that he is a hypocrite. He is haunted by the acute realization of how vile and impure he has been in the secret recesses of his soul. He can no longer look with a sigh of relief at

his hands, rejoicing that they have never been stained with the blood of his fellow men, for all of the thoughts and desires clothed in hatred and malice which have at times thronged his heart, rise up to condemn him. The nobler the man, the keener his self-realization and the more acute his embarrassment and self-abasement.

Man's Conscience Stirred the by Sermon As a man realizes he is approaching Almighty God for the final judgment with the Sermon on the Mount in his hands, the dreadful specters of his sins haunt him. He is reminded of the situation of Richard III the night before the fatal battle in Bosworth Field when the ghosts of those he had murdered passed by his tent and accused him of his crimes until the wicked king, unable to bear the torture of his conscience, cried out, "My conscience hath a thousand several tongues, And every tongue brings in a several tale, And every tale condemns me for a villain.

Perjury, foul perjury, in the highest degree;

Murder, stern murder, in the dir'st degree;

All several sins, all us'd in each degree, Throng to the bar, crying all, Guilty! Guilty!" The person who can study the Sermon on the Mount without suffering distress of conscience had better look to his conscience. Someone has said, "The greatest of all sins is to be conscious of none." Man is not qualified to judge as to the greatest of sins, but the emphasis of Jesus upon the sins of the self-righteous is in the superlative degree. This is the message of the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee. The luminous gleams of this principle are projected from every angle of the Sermon on the Mount, seeking to penetrate the vain and complacent meditation of men. The whole weight of the sermon is calculated to show to man his exceeding sinfulness. Could any greater contrast be conceived than the manner in which the sermon also reveals the sinlessness of Jesus? There is not in the entire sermon the slightest note of personal confession on the part of Jesus. Who but God could speak thus: with words of such absolute authority, such sublime insight into man's failures and needs, and the consciousness of the perfection of heaven? The Claim to Perfection Implied The ideal which the sermon presents is so pure and complete that it brings to man at once the realization that he has not reached this ideal and that he cannot reach it. The net result is to cause man to cry out in shame and despair. Jesus continually pointed out during His sermon that the first great essential is for man to realize his sin and his hopeless condition without God's mercy and grace. The Sermon on the Mount is the supreme effort to bring man into this mood. At the same time that the sermon unveils the sinfulness of man, it reveals the sinlessness of Jesus. Thus man is not left despairing and hopeless. The sermon reveals the highway to life. It offers God's mercy and love in the person of Jesus Christ. It suggests that in the mystery and majesty of the person of One who united the perfection of man and of God, there is to be found the final salvation of man's lost and ruined life. The serious contemplation of the heights and the depths of the Sermon on the Mount is enough to cause a man to join with Peter in the agonized cry of self-abnegation: "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man." This sermon by Jesus furnishes at once the indictment and the inspiration of the human race. It is as much the necessary prelude to the full gospel preached by Peter at Pentecost as the latter is the inevitable sequel to the Sermon on the Mount. The system of morals proclaimed in the Sermon on the Mount not only is delivered by the personal, infinite authority of Jesus, but it rests upon the perfect example which Jesus gave to the world. Here again is a divine uniqueness in the sermon. As He did not say, "I

say to you by the authority of Moses and the prophets," so He did not say, "Take my teaching, but not my life, as your guide." The infallibility of His authority is matched by the absolute perfection of His life. There is not the slightest note of personal confession of sin or shortcoming in His sermon, even in the midst of the delivery of moral teachings so lofty that the best of men still struggle and strain even to comprehend, not to mention to attain them. The Actual Perfection of Jesus' Life

What is the significance of this but that Jesus claims divine perfection? He had met the devil in the wilderness before He delivered the Sermon on the Mount. "We have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). "For such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people; for this he did once for all, when he offered up himself" (Hebrews 7:26, Hebrews 7:27). As Jesus offered Himself on the cross as the perfect propitiation for the sins of the world, so He offers Himself in the Sermon on the Mount as the perfect Example of the teaching He is giving. It is implied in every line and syllable that He is keeping perfectly the moral and religious teaching He enjoins upon the world. Particularly applicable here is the remark which Godet offers upon the challenge Jesus issued to His enemies to point out a single sin in His life (John 8:46): "Had He been merely a super-eminently holy man with a conscience as tender as such a degree of sanctity implies, He would not have suffered the smallest sin, whether in His life or heart, to pass unperceived; and what hypocrisy it would, in this case, have been to put to others a question whose favorable solution would have rested only on their ignorance of facts which He Himself knew to be real!"

Jesus Presented Himself as the Embodiment of the Divine Program

Added to the infallible authority and the sinless life of Jesus underlying the sermon, there is the absolute identification of Jesus with the program which He presents. After stating the characteristics of the ideal disciple in the Beatitudes, He boldly sums them all up in a proposition of personal devotion of men to Him: "Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you" (Matthew 5:11, Matthew 5:12). The prophets were persecuted by men for their devotion to God; Christians are to endure persecution because of their devotion to Jesus. The identification of Himself with God is decisively stated in this parallel as it is specifically declared in the closing words of the sermon: "he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven."

Judge of the World The calmness with which Jesus proclaims His authority over the Old Testament, His own moral perfection, and the identification of all that is noble with personal devotion to Himself, are climaxed by His declaration that He is to be the judge of the world. He boldly traces the course of all human history, pointing out the swirling crowds pushing on their way through the wide gate to destruction and the few who enter by the narrow gate to life. He predicts the future attitude of the world toward His followers and the persecutions they will endure. He dares to open the gates of heaven and promise eternal reward. He is to be the Judge of the world in that final day: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name do many mighty works? And

then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:21-23). The dramatic ending of this sermon is the vivid picture of a great house falling with a mighty crash amid the howling elements and the raging, relentless floods. It predicts the fate of the foolish man who "heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not." The Sermon as Conclusive Evidence

Jesus repeatedly declared during His ministry that His deity would be clearly established by His resurrection. He indicated that His crucifixion would so establish His divine character and mission as to draw all men to Him. By the resurrection or even by the crucifixion (and they cannot be separated) one may prove the deity of Jesus regardless of the rest of His life. And the Sermon on the Mount — that which the modernists themselves would proclaim as the indivisible minimum of their social gospel — when carefully examined, shows forth Jesus as the Son of God, the Savior of the world and the Judge of the universe.

Chapter 59

059. Book Three The Middle Period

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060. Chapter 1 - The Galilean Campaign

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Why Galilee?

Without any explanation of the national situation to indicate why Galilee was chosen as the locale of the major evangelistic campaign of Jesus, Matthew, Mark, and Luke in their various independent ways record the fact of this concentration of effort in Galilee. When Matthew records the change of residence from Nazareth to Capernaum, he pauses to point out that this great campaign in Galilee was a fulfillment of the prediction of Isaiah (Matthew 4:14-17). The populous circuit about the Sea of Galilee, the country beyond the Jordan, and the poetic title “Galilee of the Gentiles” are cited by Isaiah: “The people which sat in darkness saw a great light.” But the people in Judaea and Idumaea were also “in the region and shadow of death.” Mark merely records as a matter of history that “Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God” (Mark 1:14). After his record of the temptation, Luke says, “And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee; and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about” (Luke 4:14). That Isaiah should have predicted centuries before the coming of Christ the very section of Palestine in which Jesus would concentrate His evangelistic efforts is most impressive. But Jesus did not choose Galilee because Isaiah had made this prediction and He must follow the pattern which the prophecy had set forth. The God who had given the prophet the miraculous vision of where the great Light was to shine out so brightly in the darkness, was also directing the course which Jesus followed. It was no mere mechanical reading of the predictions and deliberate effort to fulfill the prophecy. It is evident there were good and sufficient reasons why Galilee was chosen.

It is plain that it was most appropriate for the concentration of Jesus’ ministry to have been in a populous, accessible section of Palestine. Galilee had these qualifications. The change of residence from Nazareth — small, obscure, isolated in the mountains, off the main routes of travel — to the thriving, bustling, commercial metropolis of Capernaum evidently had this objective. There is also something very appropriate in Jesus’ beginning His ministry here where He had been reared in obscurity. Even discounting Josephus’ tendency to exaggerate his numbers, his declarations that at this time there were 240 cities and villages in Galilee and that even the smaller cities had as many as 25,000 inhabitants, give interesting background information concerning the huge multitudes that surrounded Jesus in the Galilean ministry.

John’s Campaigning

There immediately appears the contrast to the beginning of John’s ministry in the wilderness of Judaea just north of the Dead Sea. This, too, was a most effective setting, considering his isolated youth spent “in the deserts” guided by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:15, Luke 1:80). But to begin to preach in the wilderness rather than in a crowded city seems a strange, if not an impossible method. The best place for an advertisement or a commercial enterprise is where the most people pass by the most often and the slowest. John obviously chose a location alongside the ford of the

Jordan near Jericho, for he was baptizing in the Jordan and carrying on his ministry in the wilderness of Judaea. Here the constant stream of traffic would bring teeming multitudes which would have to halt, at least momentarily, before or after crossing the ford.

Jesus had the advantage of approaching a nation which was already on fire with excited expectation from the proclamations of John that the kingdom of God was about to be established and that the Messiah Himself was even now in the midst. Furthermore, Jesus worked prodigious miracles which were like an alarm bell calling the nation to Him. John had worked no miracles (John 10:41). Thus did the providence of God underscore the mighty miracles of the Messiah. The Jerusalem Campaign The Gospel of John gives us the important in formation as to the early Judaean ministry of Jesus. He thoroughly justifies the abbreviated accounts of the Synoptics by showing that the first miracle of Jesus was worked in Galilee, at Cana, immediately following His return from the temptations in the wilderness and from His brief stay at the scene of John's ministry where six disciples had been won. John also shows that Jesus moved from Nazareth to Capernaum and spent some days there quietly waiting for the Passover season when He went up to the capital and electrified the nation by cleansing the temple and carrying on a ministry of miracles and preaching at Jerusalem and in Judaea. Thus it might be said that the most dramatic and impressive beginning of His ministry was at Jerusalem. This raises the question that, if a populous and accessible section was required, why was not Jerusalem more desirable than Galilee? John also gives us information on this subject. He shows that the campaign in Jerusalem and Judaea lasted nine months; it was December ("four months until harvest") when He talked with the Samaritan woman at Sychar (John 4:35). We often wonder whether Jesus did not preach in Hebron, Beersheba, Joppa, Caesarea, and Ptolemais. We do not have any scenes of His ministry located in these cities. But this probably only illustrates again the fact that these are exceedingly brief accounts. How fascinating to think of Jesus preaching in Bethlehem! The Open Country This first campaign in Judaea would have afforded opportunity to evangelize cities such as Hebron, Beersheba, and Joppa. It is doubtful whether Jesus would have carried on a campaign in Caesarea, the Roman capital on the seacoast, for the same reason that He never seems to have preached in Tiberias, the horribly wicked capital of Herod Antipas. He was close enough so that anyone who really desired to see and hear Him could readily come into His presence. There was no reason to accept the handicaps of the vile surroundings at Tiberias. It is this very thing which seems back of the fact that so much of the Galilean campaign was in the open country, on the mountains, or by the lake shore.

Later Judaean Campaign The later Judaean campaign toward the close of Jesus' ministry also afforded ample opportunity to evangelize cities in the southern sections about Hebron and Gaza. It is rather strange to hear modern archaeologists, waving aloft the results of their explorations in the Negeb, south of the Dead Sea and Palestine, affirm that they can prove that there was in ancient times a considerable population in this part of the Arabian Desert. It is a mere commonplace of the historical records of ancient times that here in the desert south of Palestine was Edom in the Old Testament period and, in the New Testament times, Idumaea. Still farther to the south was Petra and the powerful nation of Arabia. Herod the Great was an Idumaean. His father, Antipater, had risen to power over all Palestine from this region by virtue of the favor of Rome.

Idumaea? The fact that we do not have any record of Jesus' carrying on any ministry in Idumaea does not close the door to such campaigns. But it seems unlikely for the very reason that Jesus

was concentrating where the most could be reached with the greatest effectiveness. The time was short; the campaign was intensive. It also may be significant of the concentration in Galilee that Egypt is not named among the countries from which excited crowds came to join those about Jesus. “His fame went throughout all Syria….There followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan” (Matthew 4:24, Matthew 4:25). Galilee was not only more populous, it was more accessible than the southern part of Palestine, where the desert reared a barrier.

History vs. Theory The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has raised again the question as to why we have no record of Jesus’ preaching to the Essenes. It has been so easy and rather natural to exaggerate the importance of this find of manuscripts. That which would have been an insignificant trifle of written documents when compared with the great wealth of learning in centers such as Jerusalem has been seized as evidence that here in the wilderness of Judaea was the concentration of learning and teachers of Israel. Such perverse and fantastic conclusions afford unbelievers another wild tangent of attack upon the Scripture. The fact that modern scholarship is so elated over this find of manuscripts only underscores our ignorance of how vast a supply of such manuscripts would have been available in the synagogues of Palestine in the first century, and especially in the temple. The efforts to make out that John the Baptist would have studied under the Essenes at Qumran are so desperate that they who construct such theories even think it worthwhile to mention such arguments that their manual mentions a teacher of the Essene community. The attempts to argue that Jesus secured His wisdom and program from the Essenes meet the stone wall of no mention whatsoever of this sect in the New Testament. The obvious conclusion of their argument is that this was deliberate deceit on the part of the Gospel writers; they not only borrowed their ideas and practices from the Essenes, but even refused to mention the existence of this sect in order to conceal their plagiarism!

We have in this whole discussion the continual conflict between those who exalt the plain, historical testimony of the writers of the period and those archaeologists who attempt from their chance findings to piece together their own conflicting re-creation of the history of the period. It is very much like the effort to pick up chance circumstantial evidence and use it at a court trial to deny the steady, intelligent, harmonious testimony of responsible eyewitnesses. When the history is furnished to us by the inspired writers of the Bible, the effort of some modern archaeologists to deny the accounts becomes the more erratic and perverse.

It is most important that we have both in Josephus and Philo testimony concerning the Essenes from contemporary writers. They make it clear that this was an exotic sect which by its very isolation, after the fashion of monks in the Middle Ages, lay outside the main current of life in Palestine of the first century. If any of the Essenes wanted to hear Jesus, He was accessible in various campaigns. There was no need to shunt the mighty campaign into such a short circuit as a ministry to the Essenes. The effort of many modern writers to make the Essenes the teachers of the nation and the originators of the ideas and practices of the New Testament is a typical example of fantastic imagination. Because some Messianic expectation is expressed in the Qumran documents, they, and not John the Baptist, become the voice in the wilderness!

Hostility in Jerusalem In describing how it came to pass that Jesus closed His first campaign in Judaea and turned His evangelistic efforts to Galilee, John gives valuable information as to the

reason for the change: “When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John...He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee” (John 4:1, John 4:3). The growing importance of the campaign of Jesus caused the Pharisees to shift the spearhead of their attack from their bitter enemy, John the Baptist, to this new and more menacing foe, Jesus of Nazareth. Because He must have time to evangelize the nation before the final tragedy of His death, Jesus retired before the increasing plots of assassination. This explains the retirement from Judaea, which was in harmony with similar retirements during the Galilean campaign, but it does not explain the choice of Galilee among the provinces which would afford less bitter hostility and more earnest consideration of His teaching, miracles, and claims. But Galilee was at once farther removed from the capital than southern Judaea, bordering on Idumaea, and was more populous and more accessible.

Galilee, a Fertile Field The fact that all but one of the apostles (Judas Iscariot) were from Galilee is not to be explained merely by the locale of His great ministry. Six of these men had been star students under John the Baptist and had been called to be with Jesus at the Jordan immediately after the period of the temptation. They seem indicative of a deep religious devotion and a strong Messianic expectation in Galilee. The concentration of the Zealots in Galilee and the tempestuous atmosphere they created of rebellion against Rome were also strong evidence of the Messianic fervor of a worldly variety which was found in Galilee. Here the people would not be so closely bound by the prejudiced leadership of the Pharisees and would be a more fertile field for the sowing of the good seed of the kingdom.

Gentiles in Galilee

Meditating upon the extraordinary title Isaiah uses, “Galilee of the Gentiles,” one is moved to wonder just what Isaiah meant by this phrase. Was he using a title with particular meaning to his own generation as the fall of the northern kingdom had produced the infiltration of this whole region by Gentile exiles transplanted here by Assyria? Was this a typical prediction with facets for changing situations through the centuries? Was this one of those prophecies whose fuller meaning was veiled from the prophet himself? In the long, hard struggle to win back Galilee from the Gentiles after the return from Babylon, had come sudden, dramatic climaxes when all the Jews would have to be brought hurriedly out of Galilee to Jerusalem for their own safety. Galilee was a sort of outpost which was hard to secure and maintain.

Matthew in quoting this prophecy from Isaiah plainly sets forth that the Gentile population of Galilee was numerous and powerful in the first century. He cites the prophecy as having specific fulfillment in the ministry of Jesus. There were, of course, the Roman garrisons at key points. But these would be placed all over Palestine, and Galilee had a Jewish ruler, Herod Antipas, in contrast to Judaea, Samaria, and Idumaea, completely and directly under the Roman procurator. The freedom of trade which prevailed in the Roman Empire would bring a constant flow of Gentiles in and out of Galilee. One wonders how many casual hearers of the sermons of Jesus could have been seen in a multitude listening to His preaching during this campaign, Roman soldiers making a quiet investigation for the hidden reason of such great crowds assembling to hear a Jewish speaker or Gentile traders moved to come and observe because of the general excitement and reports of miracles. Absolute freedom of all who would come and hear Him is constantly in evidence in the Galilean campaign.

Jesus constantly was taking His apostles aside for private instruction, but there was not the slightest effort to shut out Gentiles from attending the public sessions. The campaign was not directed to the Gentiles. The severe instructions which Jesus gave to the apostles, as they were sent out on their missionary campaign, to concentrate their efforts on evangelizing the Jews and not to go into any city of the Samaritans or Gentiles, make this clear. The brief ministry among the Samaritans at Sychar had been an isolated exception in Jesus' procedure. The Gentiles who came to Jesus for miraculous aid, such as the centurion of Capernaum and the Syro-Phoenician woman, were clearly rare exceptions. The strong Gentile element in the population was especially evident in Peraea. The section of Galilee east of the sea and of the Jordan River was famous for its Greek culture. Decapolis is a Greek word which means "ten cities," and the title specifies a commercial league of ten cities. The only one of these cities west of the Jordan was Bethshean. It served as the commercial outlet to the West. The imposing ruins of the Greco-Roman architecture in these cities give further evidence of the Gentile element and influence. It is significant that this section east of the Jordan is the last part of Galilee to be reached by Jesus in the Galilean campaign. The feeding of the five thousand was on the northeastern side of the sea, but the crowd came largely from the west, following Him from Capernaum and the neighboring cities. The feeding of the four thousand, however, was at the southeastern end of the lake and represented the climax of a ministry devoted particularly to this Decapolis region. The first approach to this section met with rebuff when the Gadarene demoniac was healed, and Jesus was asked to leave after the drowning of the swine. But the evangelistic work of this man in the region had changed the attitude toward Christ when He returned some months later.

Evangelistic Methods The method of the Galilean campaign combined strong concentration of effort in one central, carefully selected location with wide-sweeping, rapid-moving evangelistic campaigns over the entire province. Capernaum was made the headquarters of the campaign. Peter's home was sufficient to accommodate a crowd which flowed out into the street and blocked the neighborhood. The synagogue was the scene of most exciting encounters with the Pharisees. On some occasions the local Pharisees were reinforced by shock troops sent out from the capital to attempt to entrap Jesus and upset His campaign. The reader of the Gospel narratives is moved to wonder why any of the services should have been held in the home of Peter (with the Pharisees in the front row ready to heckle and offer objections) when the synagogue was open seven days a week. Perhaps the violence of the opposition may have caused such changes of meeting, or the greater freedom that was found may have made it desirable. The weather undoubtedly caused changed methods to meet the rainy, cold weather of winter. The great gatherings of crowds in the out-of-doors on the mountains or by the lake shore would have been in the favorable weather. During all His campaigns there is strong evidence that Jesus selected carefully the locations for these services so that a natural amphitheater would afford the very best acoustics and view.

Jesus resisted the efforts that were made to get Him to concentrate His campaign exclusively in Capernaum or at any other location. This was the mistake which Peter made when he pursued Jesus into the desert, where the Master had spent the early morning hours in prayer. Peter rebuked Him because He was now late for the service in the crowded synagogue in Capernaum, where the excited crowd impatiently awaited His arrival (Mark 1:35-39). Jesus calmly assured Peter that He was not continuing His campaign in Capernaum now: "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth." It is evident that these sudden changes of

movement from concentration in one city to rapid evangelization of a large area were brought about by the prevailing atmosphere.

Sudden Moves When the excitement became so great that the people were more interested in seeing miracles than in hearing the message which explained the purpose of the miracles and the nature of His whole campaign, then Jesus moved on into another section and allowed the excitement to quiet down. When the people were in a calm and thoughtful mood, He would return and renew His campaign. Without doubt the efforts of the Zealots to seize and use His campaign for their own worldly ideas and plans caused Jesus to shift His location or change His methods on a number of occasions. These sudden changes were usually achieved by a departure by boat, which would permit only a very few to follow Him, or by disappearance in the night so that in the morning no one of the crowd would know where He was or when He would come again. They would be compelled to resume their work and to wait patiently for His return. It is interesting to observe that only on “the busy day” of Jesus’ Galilean campaign, which began with the sermon in parables and ended with the healing of the Gadarene demoniac on the eastern shore of the lake, do we have specific mention that other boats put out from the northwestern shore and followed Him as He started across the lake toward the east.

Financial Support

Financial support for this Galilean campaign came from a group of devoted followers. The needs of the thirteen evangelists at work at one time when the apostles were sent forth on their simultaneous campaigns were supplied by the people to whom they ministered (Matthew 10:9-15). But there were occasions when they went forth into the desert or into hostile territory and would need at least a moderate supply of bread. They were accustomed to buying such supplies (John 4:8; Matthew 16:5). Jesus was constantly being entertained in the homes of people of the community where He was preaching. Because we have such fascinating descriptions of scenes in the homes of Pharisees or publicans where Jesus was entertained for dinner, we are not to conclude that this was the ordinary experience of His campaigns. It is rather because these occasions were so unusual and so provocative of exciting reactions and happenings that we have these records. The Pharisees and the publicans, at the opposite extremes of society, were both wealthy and would have the spacious homes for entertaining a large group. But we must balance these occasions off against the many times that Jesus would be in the homes of devoted disciples who were poor and obscure. The scenes in the homes of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus and of Simon the leper in Bethany are noteworthy.

Rugged Veterans

There were undoubtedly many times when these rugged campaigners would sleep on the ground by a campfire in the open or by the roadside because no haven of refuge was open to them. Jesus told His apostles when they were rejected in one city to go to another to find shelter and a place to preach. But the journey to this new location might have been full of such hardships. It is characteristic of the entire account that such minor details as hardships of this kind are brushed aside and left without even any mention, with the rare exception of Jesus’ warning to the scribe who proposed to follow Him in His campaign: “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Matthew 8:20). The refusal of the Samaritans to allow Jesus to remain in their village, which stirred the righteous indignation of

James and John, is another indication of how rugged the life was in His swift-moving campaign.

Devoted Women

Luke lists a group of women, “Mary Magdalene, Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance” (Luke 8:1-3). This is mentioned in immediate connection with a summary of one of the wide, swift campaigns through Galilee. “He went throughout every village and city, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him” (Luke 8:1). The needs of the group were simple, but it must have taken some funds for such a campaign. These were evidently women of wealth (one of them was the wife of the prime minister of Herod Antipas) and gave of their means to support the campaign. Later on, a treasury was kept with Judas Iscariot in charge, and the excess of funds above those required for their simple needs was given to the poor (John 12:4-6). The Apostles in the Campaign When Peter had left all and followed Jesus, we are not to suppose that his wife and mother-in-law (and any others that may have been in the household) were left without a roof over their head. The home in Capernaum was still there. Peter’s mother-in-law was sick of a fever, was healed, and then went back to her ministering to the needs of the group, which included a large number of men for dinner. The home no longer belonged to Peter. It belonged to Christ. Peter did not put his boat up for sale as he left all to follow Jesus. This boat was the financial investment on which his fishing business had been based. It now belonged to Christ. On one occasion after another it was at the command of Jesus. Even when Jesus had been campaigning for a considerable time through Galilee and then suddenly returned to His headquarters at Capernaum, the boat would be ready at His service. Someone must have taken care of that boat. It would take constant effort and care for a boat to be ready part of the time for fishing and part of the time for preaching. Peter’s family evidently was not left without means of support. Perhaps an uncle or some other relative told Peter that he would take over the fishing business and the maintenance of the home. He, too, would gladly have left all to follow the Messiah, but he was getting old now and Jesus was assembling rugged, young men ready for the burdens, the trials, and hazards of the future. At least he could help out by manning this second line of defense. There must have been a host of such humble disciples in this second line of support, men who were eagerly present in the crowds listening to Jesus when this was possible and at all times doing their part to support the great campaign.

“Galilee of the Gentiles” was the chosen field where most of the evangelistic effort of Jesus was devoted. Here in the free air of the provinces where men were less bound by the traditions and prejudices of the scribes, the glorious good news of the kingdom of the King was proclaimed. Here where He had been reared by the providence of God, Jesus had gone forth to reveal and prove His divine identity.

061. Chapter 2 - The Centurion of Capernaum

Chapter 2 - The Centurion of Capernaum Matthew 8:5-13;Luke 7:1-10 An army of occupation in a conquered country is vulnerable to a great degree to temptations of greed, oppression, and riotous living. This is true even today. General MacArthur issued the most solemn warning to the American soldiers being stationed in Japan at the close of the Second World War. He reminded them of what usually happens to an army of occupation.

Rome and the Provinces

Rome did not have enough citizens to furnish armies to occupy all the vast stretch of countries that had been conquered and were now held as provinces of the Roman Empire. By enlisting or drafting the eligible men of the various countries into the Roman army, Rome was able to secure the forces necessary. Of all the nations conquered by the Romans, only the Jews proved absolutely impossible to draft into the Roman army. They resolutely refused to serve, and after many attempts Rome finally abandoned the effort to apply the draft to Palestine. They used recruits from Greece and Samaria to police Palestine. But the Romans were careful to keep these battalions, which were in the provinces, officered by Romans. The great men of Rome sought from their years of service in the troublesome provinces of the Empire to secure the fame and fortune of a triumphal march through the streets of Rome. Lesser officers in the Roman armies would face the opportunities to seize ill-gotten wealth or “waste their substance in riotous living.” It is significant that the Jewish soldiers of the personal army of Herod Antipas, when they had been won to the new life of preparation for the coming of the Messiah and asked John the Baptist what they must now do to live true to their new life, were told by John, “Extort from no man by violence, neither accuse any one wrongfully; and be content with your wages” (Luke 3:14).

Roman Centurions The Roman centurions who appear on the pages of New Testament history are a remarkable group. They bear witness to a high degree of valor, good judgment, and honesty among this stalwart second line of officers in the Roman army. Cornelius, the centurion of Caesarea, immediately comes to mind as the most famous of these officers appearing in the New Testament. The centurion of Capernaum occupies a place almost as high. Among the centurions who enter into the narrative with great credit is the centurion who had charge of the crucifixion of Jesus and who declared at the close of the day of horror and tragedy that he accepted as true the claims of Jesus to be the Son of God. Captain Lysias, who rescued Paul from the mob in Jerusalem and managed to send him safely to the governor at Caesarea, and the centurion who had charge of Paul on the voyage to Rome both show strong character. The political governors of the provinces stand out in contrast with an evil record as examples of Rome’s greed, oppression, and vile living. The Centurion of Capernaum

There can be no doubt that many centurions sought and found worldly treasure and pleasure in their terms of service in the provinces. The centurion of Capernaum found God. It would seem that he had been in charge of the garrison at this important commercial center for a number of years. He had evidently been won to the belief in the one God and had been led to pattern his life after

the noble teaching of the Old Testament. It was in some such manner as this, without actually becoming a proselyte to the Jewish faith, that Cornelius had been praying to God and seeking to serve Him. The Synagogue The centurion of Capernaum had achieved the extraordinary by winning the devoted friendship of the religious leaders in his section of this conquered land. He must have been a man of wealth in his own right or else he had the opportunity to devote a certain amount of the tax money to local improvements, for he had built a Jewish synagogue in Capernaum which had won for him the favor of the people. When the elders (Pharisees, rulers of the synagogue) were sent by the centurion to make his first appeal for help, they told Jesus, “He is worthy that thou shouldest do this for him; for he loveth our nation, and himself built us our synagogue (Luke 7:4).

Amid the ruins of the black basalt buildings of Capernaum, the remains of a beautiful white limestone synagogue have been unearthed and carefully reconstructed. It is a most remarkable building. The pillars that supported the roof were beautifully carved in a heart shape. The stone from which the building was constructed evidently was imported from a distance. There is a high degree of probability that this is the very synagogue which the Roman centurion erected. At their best, the Romans were wise, benevolent administrators and great builders. A large portion of the taxes collected in a province was expended in improvements in that province — improved roads, harbors, water supply for cities, erection of public buildings, maintenance of law and order and the courts of justice. One of the most violent riots Pilate faced during his governorship in Palestine resulted from his move in taking the money from the temple treasury to build for Jerusalem an ambitious aqueduct some distance to the east of the one Solomon had built from the Wady Urtas, south of Bethlehem. The Jews wanted the improved supply, but they resented Pilate’s raid on the temple treasury. The faith and devotion of this centurion would lead one to picture this synagogue in Capernaum as a gift from his own private fortune rather than from wise, generous expenditure of public funds. But whether this was the gift of a rich man or the devotion of a public servant resisting the constant temptation to graft, the Jewish leaders felt profound gratitude. The brevity of the records leaves us without knowledge of how many times this centurion had heard Jesus preach or had observed His mighty miracles. Since Jesus’ campaign was centered here in Capernaum, it is evident that the centurion did not have to depend upon secondhand reports for his information about Jesus. It would have been his immediate duty to investigate the cause of such vast, excited crowds assembling here in the very region where he was responsible for law and order.

Servant or Son? The Greek word pais can mean either child or servant. Thus the account of Matthew would leave us uncertain as to whether this one who was so desperately ill was the son or the servant of the centurion. But Luke makes it quite clear by using the word doulos, which means bond-servant or slave. Luke adds the information, “A certain centurion’s servant, who was dear unto him, was sick and at the point of death” (Luke 7:2). It would not have been necessary to inform the reader that the son of the centurion was dear to him. Both the a.v. and the a.s.v. generally translate douos by the word servant, but it is a question as to how often it should have been rendered bluntly “slave.” Slavery was well-nigh universal in the ancient world. Often an ignorant master would have a highly educated slave (formerly a noble or high official of some conquered nation) who would do his correspondence for him. Many times the relationship of master and slave was one of devoted friendship, as in the case of the centurion of Capernaum and

this servant. Instead of starting a bloody revolution to right the wrong of slavery, Jesus gave forth the grand principles of love for one's fellowmen and of doing unto others as you would have them do unto you, which proved to be the leaven which gradually leavened the entire social structure. The generosity of the centurion was matched by his humility. Where others could have sought worldly grandeur and luxury for themselves, this man had built a house for God in Capernaum. His manner of approach to Jesus shows at once great reverence and great humility. The Elders

Matthew summarizes in his brief account of this miracle. He reports the centurion as saying, "My servant lieth in the house sick of the palsy, grievously tormented" (Matthew 8:6). Luke gives the additional information that this chronic ailment of paralysis has now taken a critical turn and the servant is at the point of death (Luke 7:2). It is Luke who tells the detail of the centurion's sending elders of the Jews to intercede for him and persuade Jesus to come and heal the servant. The word elders means either rulers of a synagogue or the national leaders in Jerusalem who were members of the Sanhedrin. It is plain that these are rulers of the synagogue in Capernaum from the familiar manner in which they speak of their indebtedness to this centurion and his beneficence in building a synagogue for them.

Current Hostility This raises and acute problem as to the identity and attitude of these rulers. The bitter arguments and attacks upon Jesus which had taken place in this synagogue had reached such a furious pitch some months before that the Jewish leaders had actually joined hands with their old enemies, the Herodians, to plot the murder of Jesus (Mark 3:6). Although they had hesitated to make their charge openly, they had "reasoned in their hearts" that Jesus was a blasphemer when He had shocked the multitude by saying to the paralytic who had just been lowered through the roof of the house, "Son, thy sins are forgiven" (Mark 2:5). Jesus had answered their unspoken charge with a devastating reply. Now we have rulers of this synagogue in Capernaum coining to Jesus with the earnest plea that He perform a prodigious miracle and heal the centurion's servant. What a blow to their pride! How they must have had to swallow their prejudice! But if the centurion had come to them asking this favor of them, their indebtedness to him was so great, they could not refuse. Perhaps they even seized the opportunity to give a tremendous test to the power of Jesus. It was thus that they later demanded a sign from heaven (Mark 8:11-13). But Luke says, "And they, when they came, besought him earnestly" (Luke 7:4).

Division of Opinion

There may have been, however, a division of opinion among these rulers at Capernaum, as there was later in Jerusalem. Nicodemus made a heated attack upon the hypocrisy and murderous plots of the members of the Sanhedrin because they had condemned Jesus without a trial, which was contrary to the law, and yet claimed to be putting Jesus to death as a lawbreaker. Their furious reply was like the snarl of a wild beast that had been cornered (John 7:50-52). Joseph of Arimathea later revealed that he was of this minority opinion. On the great day of questions the scribe who asked the question as to the greatest commandment and received such a gracious reply from Jesus can probably be counted of the same attitude as Nicodemus (Mark 12:28-34). The scribe who proposed to follow Jesus and received such a challenge from Jesus in reply is another example (Matthew 8:18-22). Jesus talked of the scribes who had become disciples (Matthew 13:52). Luke does not say that all the rulers of the synagogue came. These elders who made the appeal to Jesus may have been ones who were more fair-minded and friendly. At any

rate, this brief record Luke gives of the elders making the appeal to Jesus for the centurion is packed with exciting drama. If we knew the ideas, motives, and earlier attitude of these elders, we could probe the background with more assurance. Jesus answered their appeal with a ready, calm assent.

Critical Decisions The sudden, menacing turn in the illness of the servant had caused the centurion to go to the elders with his appeal for help in persuading Jesus to come and heal the servant. Like the leper who had boldly approached Jesus for miraculous help, he had more faith in the power of Jesus than in His love and mercy: “If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean” (Mark 1:40). But any doubt the centurion may have had that he was imposing upon Jesus’ goodness to expect Him to come into the home of a Gentile and heal a Gentile was quickly dispelled. The very rulers who were so insistent upon their traditions being kept and upon separation from the Gentiles were the ones now appealing to Jesus to go into the home of this Gentile! What a mixed-up situation these elders found themselves in whether they were playing a political game for favor with the Roman authority or were actually humbling themselves to express their deep gratitude to the centurion. The emotional stress which controls the centurion in this crisis is seen in his sudden reversal of his position and plans. At first, he had decided that the best hope would be to have these elders go and make an appeal to Jesus to come to his house and heal the servant. But after further reflection he decided that such a course was unnecessary. He could obviate the whole difficulty about a Jew entering the home of a Gentile; he could show reverence and faith toward Jesus and at the same time save the life of his servant by asking Jesus to heal the servant at a distance — to speak the word out on the highway. He undoubtedly had heard how Jesus had healed the nobleman’s son here in Capernaum while Jesus was more than twenty miles away at Cana (John 4:43-54). Why had he not thought of this before? He could have saved the elders all this trouble. It would not even have been necessary for Jesus to have interrupted His ministry further by making this journey. The centurion hurried out the highway to meet the procession of people surrounding Jesus (Matthew 8:7, Matthew 8:8). But before he was so bold as to make this personal appeal to Jesus, he sent other friends to make this suggestion to Jesus that it really was not fitting or necessary that He should come into the home of a Gentile. All that was necessary was for Jesus to speak the word and the servant would be healed. It seems from the two accounts that the centurion changed his mind the second time in his excitement and, after having sent the second group of friends to appeal to Jesus, came himself and humbly made his petition. The Centurion’s Faith The declaration of the centurion is most remarkable. He humbly declares his unworthiness to have Jesus come into his home. He boldly states it is entirely unnecessary. He further says that he understands that the entire matter is one of authority — a field in which he himself has had some small experience: “For I also am a man under authority, having under myself soldiers: and I say to this one, Go, and he goeth; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it” (Matthew 8:9). He is saying, “I understand this whole matter is one of authority. I have had some small exercise of authority in my experience. I realize you have authority over all things. You can do whatever you deem is right and good. It is not necessary for you to come into my house. All that is necessary is for you to decide whether this is a proper thing for you to do and then speak the word.” We are told the impression this declaration made upon Jesus. It is not hard to imagine the impact of the declaration upon the various groups present — the apostles, the elders, the second group of friends, and the omnipresent crowd. The Two Accounts

It is possible that Matthew is summarizing throughout; and, upon the ground that what a person does through an agent lie does himself, he omits entirely the account of the two delegations. It is also possible that Luke is giving a summary in which he omits the fact that at the very last the centurion himself came out on the highway and talked to Jesus as they had approached the house.

Both Matthew and Luke declare that Jesus “marveled.” This delivers a deadly blow at the Two-source Theory structure, which supposes that Mark is the one who tells of human reactions of Jesus, while Matthew and Luke carefully avoid stating that Jesus experienced such an attitude as surprise or amazement. Jesus was both God and man. He shared our experiences so far as it was possible. It was possible for Him to feel and declare amazement because there was nothing sinful in such a reaction. We cannot comprehend the union of the human and the divine in Jesus, but we continually see evidence of the one side or the other as it is expressed. The Centurion’s Confession

Joy was paramount in the ringing declaration of Jesus: “Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.” Here was the grand purpose of Jesus’ coming from heaven to earth — that He might bring men to faith in Him that men might thus be redeemed from sin. Here was a grand example of this faith. The centurion, as he made his “good confession,” did not use the Scriptural language “the Christ, the Son of God,” but how wonderfully his great declaration covers the whole field. He says, as it were, “Lord, I surrender all. I believe all.” Whatever Jesus decides to do — He can do. Mere physical limitations do not impede Him. Whatever He decides to do will be right.

Both Matthew and Luke record that this tremendous declaration by Jesus was made to the entire multitude that followed. We are so accustomed to looking for all possible intimations in Luke of the world-wide nature of the gospel, since he was writing to the Greeks, that we are surprised to find it is Matthew alone who records here the thrilling prediction of the salvation of many of the Gentiles in the final day and also the doom of the unbelieving Jews: “Many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 8:11, Matthew 8:12). The whole wide world is included in that phrase “from the east and the west.” How the soul of the centurion must have been exalted as he listened to this prediction of the part Gentiles would have in the final redemption in heaven. There is something chilling and fearful about the phrase the outter darkness. Looking up into the sky flooded with sunshine, we had imagined that, as far as one might see, all is light. One of the shocking discoveries which the space age has brought to us is the fearsome darkness that enshrouds the astronaut being hurled through space — toward the sun and in its rays, light; but in the outer reaches of the visible universe, terrifying darkness. It is thus that heaven and hell will stand in awesome contrast.

Exceedingly gentle and loving is the final word of Jesus to the centurion: “Go thy way; as thou hast believed, so be it unto thee.” Matthew records that the servant was healed in that hour; Luke tells that the elders and friends who had been sent became witnesses to the fact that the miraculous cure had taken place. Verily, “Galilee of the Gentiles, the people that sat in darkness saw a great light, And to them that sat in the region and shadow of death, to them did light spring up” (Matthew

4:15-17).

062. Chapter 3 - At the Gate of Nain

Chapter 3 - At the Gate of Nain

Luke 7:11-17

Nain

Nain is located on the northern slope of Jebel Duhy, now often called Little Hermon, a mountain about twenty-five miles southwest of Capernaum. On its southern slope is located Shunem, the town where Elisha was so hospitably received by the Shunammite woman and her husband and where the resurrection of their child took place (2 Kings 4:8-37). Endor, the home of the witch where Samuel appeared to Saul on the night before his death, is two miles east of Nain (1 Samuel 28:1-19). In modern times the ruins of Nain were first identified by Robinson. The location is precisely where it was said to have been by Eusebius and Jerome. That it was of sufficient size and importance to be a walled city in the first century is shown by Luke's description: "the gate of the city" (Luke 7:12). The Time

Luke declares that this dramatic miracle of the resurrection of the son of the widow of Nain occurred "soon afterwards," after the healing of the centurion's servant. Following a different manuscript reading, the a.v. has "the day after." Nain is about a day's journey from Capernaum. As this is now approaching the southern edge of Galilee and the northern border of Samaria, it gives a clear indication of how intensive the campaign in Galilee was, since it reached at a later time over into Phoenicia to the northwest and to Caesarea Philippi and Mount Hermon to the northeast. On the basis of the manuscript reading that this resurrection was "on the following day" after the healing of the centurion's servant, McGarvey suggests that Jesus arrived at the end of a day's journey from Capernaum and that it was about the sunset hour when the funeral procession was going out of the city. The Bier

Plummer says that the "bier" may not have been a simple stretcher on which the body of the young man was carried, but that it may have been a coffin. He cites the last verse of the book of Genesis and the reference to the coffin in which the body of Joseph was placed in Egypt. He also cites references in Herodotus to the custom of the times. But there is a strong suggestion of poverty as well as tragedy in Luke's description: "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow" (Luke 7:12). It seems evident from the entire narrative that the body of the young man was being carried Out on a bier where it was in full view of the multitude that followed in the funeral procession. If this is true, then everything which happened was in the open to be seen by all present. Inasmuch as the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus was in an inner chamber with only five other witnesses present and Lazarus was called from the recesses of the tomb, it is interesting to observe the fact that this young man is raised in the presence of all. Even in the case of the most elaborate funeral in Palestine in this period, that of Herod the Great, the body was borne in full view of all on a golden bier from Jericho where he had died to Frank Mountain, near Bethlehem, where he had prepared his burial site. Josephus says, "The body was carried upon a golden bier, embroidered

with very precious stones of great variety, and it was covered over with purple, as well as the body itself: he had a diadem upon his head, and above it a crown of gold; he also had a sceptre in his right hand" (Antiq. XVII:VIII:3). Commentators seem to be equally divided as to whether there was a coffin or a simple stretcher in this funeral at Nain. But certainly it was not closed for the body of the young man was immediately accessible. The Crowds

There were two multitudes present on this occasion. One was a multitude which was following Jesus; the other was the funeral procession coming forth from the city. The presence of a multitude following Jesus raises speculation as to whether many of them had come with Him all the way from Capernaum, where the excitement over the healing of the centurion's servant must have been very great, or whether most of them had come from towns near Nain. The sending forth of the seventy on a missionary tour later on shows that there was a large group of disciples who followed Jesus whenever they could. The nature of the crowd coming out of the city was self-evident. Did these people of Nain recognize Jesus at a distance, or was His identity only made known to them as the two crowds met?

Faith

It was the regular procedure of Jesus to require faith on the part of those seeking a miraculous blessing. This has been God's program through the centuries: "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him" (Hebrews 11:6). The demand for faith and the severity of the tests of faith given before the miracle was performed differed with different individuals who had different backgrounds. In the resurrection of Jairus' daughter and of Lazarus the intensity of the appeals made and the faith shown by Jairus and by Mary and Martha is strongly emphasized. When a demon-possessed man found himself in the presence of Jesus, the demon had the man helpless in his power, and the man could not make any appeal or declare or show his faith. The demon did the speaking through the man. But by His divine insight Jesus could read the hearts of these men, and by His divine foresight He could foreknow the outcome. An Unasked Miracle This miracle at the gate of Nain is one of several in which Jesus made the first move before any appeal had been made to Him. People came to Him constantly asking to be cured miraculously of all sorts of dreadful maladies and afflictions. Jesus was always ready to grant their petitions. But in the resurrection of this young man, in the healing of the lame man at the Pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-47), and the healing of the man born blind (John 9:1-41), we find Jesus making the first approach. It is important to study these incidents and see how Jesus proceeded in each case to bring forth intense desire and expectant Jesus' Method faith in the heart before the miracle was performed. He might have raised this young man from the dead at a distance with no suggestion of any connection with his divine Person and power. He might have walked alongside this funeral procession as they passed in the roadway and have raised the young man back to life without a word, a look, or a gesture. But this would have defeated the primary purpose of miracles. It is true that He had the strong motive of sympathy; this is emphasized in this very incident: "He had compassion on her" (Luke 7:13). But as the soul is more important than the body and eternal life in heaven more precious than our temporary stay in this world, so the bringing of obedient faith and salvation to the lost is the supreme objective of these miracles which confirm the truth of His claims and His teaching.

Challenge to Faith

First Jesus spoke to the sorrowing mother. In brevity and explosive content His words must have thrilled not merely the mother, but all who heard: “Weep not.” These words cannot be reduced to ordinary words of comfort spoken at a funeral. All Galilee was ablaze with excitement over His miracles. The funeral procession undoubtedly was led by the mother, with the pallbearers and the bier and then with other mourners following. Even as He spoke these decisive words of challenge and promise they seem to have come to a sudden halt. “He came nigh and touched the bier” (Luke 7:14). What divine sympathy, authority, and power were expressed in that gentle touch. We are apt to pass over the startling nature of this interruption. But if some person today should go out in the street, halt in such peremptory and authoritative fashion a funeral on its way to the cemetery and announce that there was no need for grief and no need to proceed further with the burial plans, that person would instantly be dubbed a maniac. The shocking impact of this interruption on the funeral procession was the instant forerunner of excited hope. The tremendous miracles Jesus had been performing gave an entirely different background to the interruption of this funeral by Jesus. The Dead Are Raised

Luke relates immediately after this miracle the coming of two disciples of John with his question of doubt. In His answer Jesus cited His miracles: “the dead are raised up” (Luke 7:22). This resurrection of the young man justifies entirely the declaration of Jesus. But the manner in which He introduces this evidence seems to suggest that Jesus raised more persons than the three recorded in the Gospel narratives. The fact that Luke is the only Gospel writer who records this miracle at the gate of Nain merely confirms the declaration of John that there were a vast number of miracles, sermons, events, and scenes which the inspired writers did not record. The brevity of the accounts is one of the most impressive proofs of their divine inspiration. At any rate, here at Nain in this exciting moment they knew the marvelous miracles of Jesus, and they knew that the Old Testament prophets Elijah and Elisha had raised the dead. The Lord of Life That Luke should refer to Jesus as “the Lord” on the eve of this mighty miracle is most appropriate. He was God as well as man; He was “the Lord” of life and death. He not only had power on earth to forgive sins (Mark 2:5-12), He could raise the dead, even as He had recently claimed in Jerusalem (John 5:25-29). Luke may have intended his use of the title “the Lord” to lead his readers to compare their faith with the expressions of growing faith uttered by the crowd which witnessed the miracle. Luke calls Jesus “the Lord” in Luke 10:1, Luke 10:41; Luke 11:39; Luke 12:42; Luke 13:15; Luke 17:6; Luke 19:8, Luke 19:31; Luke 22:61. The Divine Summons In the majestic manner of heaven Jesus addressed the dead man: “Young man, I say unto thee, Arise” (Luke 7:14). He spoke to the daughter of Jairus and summoned Lazarus in this same manner. This is the natural course in awakening a person who is asleep. A sharp staccato call of the name of the sleeping person usually suffices. Jesus could raise the dead as easily as we can awaken one asleep. The divine power of Jesus is never more manifest than in raising the dead. “And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother” (Luke 7:15). The tenderness with which Jesus presented the young man to his mother reminds one of the manner in which Elisha called the Shunammite woman and returned her son alive (2 Kings 4:36, 2 Kings 4:37).

Myth?

Modernists attempt to reduce this account to the status of a myth by such terms as “allegorical,” “mythical,” or “spiritual resurrection.” Meyer says, The natural explanation of this miracle as of the awakening of a person only apparently dead so directly conflicts with the Gospel narrative, and

moreover, places Jesus in so injurious a light of dissimulation and pretence, that it is decisively to be rejected, even apart from the fact that in itself it would be improbable, nay monstrous, to suppose that as often as dead people required his help, He should have chanced every time upon people only apparently dead" (Com. on Luke, p. 346).

R.Bultmann thinks he can prove this is myth because the dead man is represented as "the only son of his mother and she a widow." He cites the epileptic boy of Luke 9:38 and Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:42). But Luke is the only one of the Synoptic writers who records the detail that it was the only child in these homes. Even if Bultmann's contention had any force, it would not apply to the accounts of Matthew and Mark. There are three witnesses. Only one specifies this detail. A skeptic who is searching desperately for some clue to attack seems never to consider that this detail is a simple statement of historic fact. The effort to say that there is a climactic creation of myth — (1) on the death bed; (2) in the funeral procession; (3) in the grave four days — meets the instant rebuttal that Luke is the only' writer who records two of these cases of resurrection, and he testifies they occurred in the opposite order: (1) in the funeral procession (Luke 7:11-17); (2) on the death bed (Luke 8:49-56).

Impact on Crowd

There is a difference of opinion among the commentators as to whether the consensus Luke reports from the crowd represents the remarks of two different people or groups of people. "A great prophet is arisen among us: and, God hath visited his people" (Luke 7:16). The punctuation in the a.s.v. indicates the translators felt these were two distinct statements. The a.v. makes this conclusion even more manifest. "A great prophet" suggests instant comparison with the greatest prophets of the Old Testament. W. Manson says, "That 'God has visited his people' need not imply that in the popular judgment the Messianic days have come, but only that a prophet has appeared (cf. Luke 9:18, Luke 9:19)" (Com. on Luke, p. 77). But why should one doubt the Messianic turn in their tribute when we know that this was the first question in the minds of the first hearers of John the Baptist: "all men reasoned in their hearts concerning John, whether haply he were the Christ" (Luke 3:1-38 :l5). How much more would they constantly reason thus concerning Jesus? "A great prophet" falls short of Messianic declaration, but they must have been wrestling with the problem. "Secretly for fear of the Jews" must have been the motif of some. The humble, spiritual ministry of Jesus would have caused many to feel they would have repudiated themselves and their fond Messianic dream of national glory if they had hailed Jesus as the Messiah. The Messiah

"God hath visited his people." Meyer says, "In His appearance they saw the beginning of Messianic deliverance" (Commentary on Luke, p. 346). B. Weiss says, "The others see in Him, as His Messiah, God visiting His people" (Commentary on Luke, p. 58). Evidently someone cried out in the midst of the crowd, as awed silence followed the miracle, "A great prophet is arisen among us," and a general murmur or shout of assent arose from the crowd. Then someone else cried out, "God hath visited his people," and again the crowd gave enthusiastic assent. This second declaration reminds one of Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23 : "And they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." We cannot tell how far anyone in the crowd could have had in mind the supernatural character of the Messiah as they joined in this tribute, "God hath visited His people." But certainly they must have heard of the claim Jesus had made to have the power to forgive sins and the charge of blasphemy the Jews had made against Him. This

was at nearby Capernaum more than a year before. And some of them must have been in Jerusalem at the recent Passover when Jesus had clearly claimed to be deity and the Jews had charged Him with blasphemy, “but also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God” (John 5:18). The Son of God

Some person of deep spiritual discernment in the crowd may have heard His sermon in Jerusalem in which He had claimed to be God and to have the power to raise the dead (John 5:21) and may have spoken now in excited realization that He had proved His claims. Luke records a consensus of the crowd, but the words may have had varied content to different people. Since “A great prophet” falls short of “the Christ,” it is logical that “God has visited” is not an assertion of “the Son of God.” But it is oversimplification to conclude that no one in the crowd could have put deep, mysterious meaning into His words as He uttered this extraordinary tribute: “God hath visited his people.” It is not merely the question as to whether they understood the predictions of the Old Testament that the Messiah would be a supernatural Being who would come on the clouds of heaven, would execute judgment on the wicked, and would reign forever (Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah 9:7; Psalms 2:1-12; Daniel 7:13, Daniel 7:14). It is rather the question as to whether they understood Jesus’ claims to deity (Matthew 9:2-8; Mark 2:5-12; Luke 5:20-26; John 5:17-47), and, in spite of His humble, spiritual campaign, related His prodigious miracles to these claims; whether they had been startled and shocked by the terrified testimony of the demons that He was the Son of God (Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34, Luke 4:41), and whether they had understood the furious charges of blasphemy which the Pharisees had made against Jesus because He “called God his own Father, making himself equal with God” (John 5:18).

063. Chapter 4 - A Chapter of Broken Hearts

Chapter 4 - A Chapter of Broken Hearts Matthew 11:2-30;Luke 7:18-35 The Sermon The eleventh chapter of Matthew is a chapter of broken hearts. Where else in the literature of the world may one find a sermon of such towering proportions? It is filled with the majesty of heaven. It climbs the heights of stormy eloquence and closes with the wistful tenderness of the great invitation. It is of such bewildering beauty that one hesitates to attempt analysis lest a crude touch mar and obscure. What powerful outbursts of righteous indignation! How the lightning flashes of withering sarcasm cause one to shrink back! What peals of thunder shake the world with dreadful warnings of the fate of the defiant and rebellious! From the doubt and despair of John's dungeon cell it lifts to the joyous, glorious light of heaven.

John's Anguish The heart of John the Baptist was broken. He was no coward. He was not afraid to die. Deeper anguish than this tortured his soul in the dungeon cell at Machaerus. It must not have been too great a shock for him when he was arrested and thrown into prison by Herod Antipas. John was quite familiar with the fate of the Old Testament prophets. We do not know whether his blistering denunciation of Herod and his vile way of life had been delivered at court in the very presence of Herod and his mistress Herodias and her daughter Salome, or had been heard at court from more distant reports of John's preaching to the nation from the Jordan Valley. But it had angered Herod and set Herodias afire with rage. The fierce flames of her wrath would not abate until she had achieved the murder of John.

Machaerus

One of the very few historical facts pertinent to the New Testament account but recorded only by secular historians is the statement of Josephus that John was imprisoned and beheaded at the castle of Machaerus on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea. Fascinated by the wild, eerie surroundings and scenery, Herod had built here a castle-fortress which was his winter palace. The ruins have been definitely identified by archaeologists. One may wander amid the crumbling remains and wonder in which of these dungeon cells John was imprisoned. The historical imagination is deeply stirred, and one seems to see the tortured form of John kneeling in prayer on the stone floor as filtering through the narrow slit in the masonry high up on the side the setting sun casts the shadow of a rude cross upon the floor. One can see John leap to his feet and pace the cell crying out in agonized, fierce utterance, "If they so much as touch a hair of His head!" Here was the secret of John's broken heart.

Stark Tragedy

Many readers gloss over the stark tragedy of John's fate by thinking of him as a man of long life, now grown old in the service and rich in the harvest of years of achievement. Lovers of noble music are moved to tears over the early death of Mozart and Schubert in the very midst of their sublime creations, but John was scarcely more than a year older than they were when he was cut down. A little more than thirty years of age when he began his tremendous campaign which

shocked the nation out of its lethargy and worldly living, he came to the end of his earthly service in what seems to have been about three years of incessant, fruitful labor for God. A Court Preacher In prison John continued to store in his soul the stormy messages he would fain shout from the housetops to the nation. And he did have the amazing opportunity to preach during his imprisonment. With a curious fascination Herod summoned John into his court to preach to him. Mark 6:20 reads, “And when he heard him, he was much perplexed; and he heard him gladly.” Following a different manuscript reading, the a.v. has, “And when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.” This suggests partial repentance to meet John’s bold denunciations. But he would not go all the way and give up Herodias. The reading “he was perplexed” suggests that the demands of John’s sermons and the entanglement with Herodias left him in a state of bewildered indecision. That such a wicked king should have “heard gladly” so fearless a preacher fits with the preceding verse which declares, “For Herod feared John, knowing he was a righteous and holy man, and kept him safe.” There was that quality of unshrinking courage in John which excited Herod’s admiration and forced grudging admissions. One wonders whether Herod summoned his entire court to hear John preach on these occasions. Were Herodias and Salome present? What were John’s topics and texts? Was there ever another such “court preacher” as this?

What mighty plans still filled his soul of what he would accomplish to assist the Son of God in establishing the kingdom of heaven! And now suddenly he finds himself in a lonely dungeon facing martyrdom. Life seemed just beginning when “the sun went down with a flaming ray.”

Rehearsal The question of doubt which John sent to Jesus by two of his disciples (Luke 7:18) was not so much an appeal for help as it was a desperate call for Jesus to change His course and program. Those two disciples, still faithful to their first great teacher and thankful that at least they had access to him in the prison cell, must have rehearsed outbursts of wrath as they traveled north along the Jordan River on their mission. Surely they would with this message from John be able to stir Jesus to more decisive action against the villains who corrupted and defiled the life of the nation from their high places. John, their beloved teacher, was about to be killed. A single word of miraculous power from the lips of Jesus could set John free, destroy the wicked leaders, and bring in the kingdom of God. How they must have planned what and how they would speak as they delivered John’s message! The Critical Moment When the two disciples of John finally found themselves in the presence of the Son of God, they discovered that their mission was supremely difficult. As they stood in the outskirts of the vast multitude and watched with awe the mighty miracles which Jesus performed in casting out demons, restoring the sick from all manner of disease, and giving sight to the blind (Luke 7:21), and listened to the heavenly grandeur of His messages to the people, they found it was not going to be an easy task to stand up before such an assembly and say what they had been told by John. A bucket of ice water hurled suddenly into a flaming furnace could hardly be expected to produce more steam. And it would come from many directions as both the bitter foes of Jesus and His devoted followers would hear John’s question. The accounts of both Matthew and Luke indicate that it took these two disciples of John some time to carry out their mission after they had arrived in the midst of the crowd. As they worked their way to the front, they had opportunity to see and to hear the mighty works and words of Jesus.

Impact of the Question When they finally reached the front circle of the vast crowd and, in the democratic procedure of Jesus which constantly permitted questions and comments from the

listeners, found opportunity to speak, this is the question they asked. Coming from the very prophet who had prepared the way for Christ and had announced His presence, what more deadly thing could have been introduced into the discussion than the question, “Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?” Some slight intimation of the impact of this question might be secured from supposing that in the midst of a devout service in a thronged auditorium today someone in the crowd would rise and ask the respected minister whether he was really a messenger of God or only a mountebank. It was John the Baptist who sent this message asking whether they were going to have to wait for someone else to come and do the work the Messiah was supposed to do; and whether, after all the prodigious pronouncements John had made concerning Jesus, it was not now becoming questionable that He was really the Christ. Imagine the shocked, amazed delight of the Pharisees and scribes as they rubbed their hands in glee at this unexpected turn.

What indignation and perplexity must have filled the hearts of the devoted disciples of Jesus. Even though they themselves were also deeply troubled because Jesus had not moved to use His miraculous power to free John from prison and bring to an end the vicious misrule of the wicked in the high places, they must have felt indignation against John as they fought in their hearts a battle with pity and sympathy for him. At least John could have instructed his disciples to ask such an embarrassing question as this in private! Did not Jesus have enough abuse and shameful mistreatment accorded Him on all sides without having to endure such an insulting question from His own forerunner? If they had such thoughts, they missed the whole purpose of John in this bold move.

John did not really doubt so much as he was determined to prod Jesus and to put such tremendous pressure upon Him that He would be forced to make a decisive change in His campaign. The question asked in private would not have produced such pressure. It must be asked publicly in the very presence of both friend and foe that all might hear and that Jesus might be forced to answer in the presence of all. The explosion that resulted has echoed down through the ages in this mighty sermon.

Divine Patience

If ever there was a time for the patience of Jesus to be exhausted and a display of temper to be in evidence, this was the time. Yet see how gentle and kind is His response to these two disciples and to John, and how tremendous in power. He had one simple reply to John. He told the disciples to go back and tell John what they had just seen and heard. Some of the mighty miracles to which Jesus referred undoubtedly were heard from other witnesses, but their firsthand knowledge from this personal experience in the throng sufficed to authenticate all the rest, “the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them” (Matthew 11:5).

What an anticlimax for the ears of a fuming incendiary in a prison cell! He wants a change of procedure that will bring violent overthrow of the enemies of God, and he is given the assurance that “the poor have good tidings preached to them!” But wait, examine the indisputable evidence, the mighty miracles which show that this is the will of God. And go back to examine what the Old Testament prophets had predicted the Messiah would do. Jesus quotes Isaiah in answer to John, thus summoning John to renewed study of the Old Testament. The predictions of the first and the second comings had not been distinguished in the Old Testament. They had been purposely

veiled by God to allow the Messiah to reveal Himself and make known the meaning of the predictions.

John was too excited to see the Messiah coming on the clouds of heaven in flaming fire to bring destruction upon the wicked and to bring succor to the noble. He had not been willing to tarry with the Messianic predictions of humble service, mighty miracles, and sufferings and death for the sins of the world. He himself had declared, “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” But he had not enjoyed contemplating the unsolved mystery in this inspired utterance. Like the Old Testament prophets who bowed their heads in perplexity and anguish of soul over the meaning of the very predictions of the death of the Messiah they had been instructed to make (1 Peter 1:10, 1 Peter 1:11), John the Baptist had predicted that Jesus would be the Lamb of God sacrificed for the sins of the world. But like Peter at Caesarea Philippi, John in great agony was crying out with horrified protest, “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee” (Matthew 16:22). The Father in heaven Himself had made to Peter the grand revelation of the deity and Messiahship of Jesus, but he still had to learn the tragic secret of what “Christ” meant. So with John.

Life’s Darkest Hour

If, after the fashion of ubiquitous modern newspaper reporters interviewing celebrities, one should have questioned John as to the great moment in his career, without doubt John would have said the hour in which He met Jesus in the waters of Jordan and at His insistence had baptized Him “to fulfill all righteousness.” For a second great moment of his life John probably would have set forth the very hour in which he overcame the temptation to the silence of cowardice and security, and boldly denounced Herod Antipas for his flagrant sins. If questioned as to the low point of his great career, John certainly would have named this hour in the dungeon when he fashioned this question of doubt to send to Jesus. It was an hour of downfall, but it was not so great as that of Peter in the trial hall of the high priest. And both had made the good confession before they descended into the slough of despair. Each had a definite, though mistaken, purpose in what he did in the “darkest hour.” Peter had been determined to play the role of a spy and discover at all odds what happened to Jesus. John had made up his mind to make this one, last, desperate appeal to Jesus to change His program and act with decision. A Beatitude of the Dungeon

Jesus, instead of sending John a bitter, harsh word of condemnation because of his hour of weakness, sent him a beatitude — a word of blessing to help him in his perplexity and distress. “Blessed is he whosoever shall not he offended in me.” The Greek word for “offended” (skandolidzo — the English word scandalize comes directly from it) means to put a stumbling block or an impediment in the way so that a person falls over it. John was finding it very dark in the dungeon cell. The sun was going down, or so it seemed, and he found himself stumbling over the fact that he was about to meet the fate of the Old Testament prophets and that Jesus seemed to be walking the same path of tragedy.

How many people have found Jesus a stumbling block because they refused to open their eyes and see His deity, or repent of their sins and realize that He is the Savior, or change their attitude toward life and understand that it is not by worldly power or might, but by God’s Spirit that we may conquer. The gate to life is narrow and the way straitened. The very mystery of the person of Christ and of the divine plan of redemption which He brought to mankind helps to make the gate

narrow. The nobility of Christian living and the sacrificial service which are set before us help to make the way straitened. The Miracles

Surveying this sermon, the reader finds that the defense of Jesus is based on a discrimination between the first and the second comings. This is implicit in the arguments and declarations. it is not clearly stated. Jesus could not as yet speak to the nation openly concerning His second coming. Until He could tell them plainly of His death and departure, references to a second coming would remain obscure. Jesus offered two propositions in defense of His ministry; both of them gave complete answers to the criticism John was making in his question. The first was the fact that Jesus was actually working prodigious miracles. This could only be with the power and approval of God. God was sealing with His high favor the course Jesus was following. John's impatience was not justified. God is ever more loving and merciful than man. The Humble Life of Service The second proposition was not stated, but it is implied — the fact that the Old Testament prophets had predicted the Christ would do just such things as Jesus was accomplishing. This is made clear by quoting from the Old Testament when He describes His own ministry. Isaiah 61:1 had been quoted by Jesus on another memorable occasion when He was facing vicious unbelief at Nazareth. It was the basis for His first recorded sermon. The people of Nazareth were justifying their rejection of Jesus on this same sort of argument that He was not the kind of Messiah predicted in the Old Testament. In picturing the Messiah as proclaiming good news to the poor, Isaiah was predicting the utmost in humility and lowly service.

Future Fulfillment

After defending His own course by the miracles themselves and by the prophecies, Jesus turned to defend John's expectations of what the Messiah must do. In language fearful in its awesome content He pictured the day when the Messiah would lay hold of the ax and cut down the worthless trees. He would take up the winnowing fan and separate the wheat from the chaff. The doom of the wicked is declared in the most solemn warnings. The acts of judgment which the Old Testament had also predicted the Messiah would do and which John longed to see Jesus undertake now, would finally be brought to pass by the Messiah. But this would come at a later time. This is clear to us as we analyze the sermon with the entire New Testament in our hands. Those first hearers would only understand that at some future date, in the day of judgment, Jesus would give final reward to the righteous and final doom to the wicked. He had already declared that He would thus judge the world (Matthew 7:21-23). When the Dead Raised?

Listed among the miracles Jesus declares He had worked is "the dead are raised up" (Matthew 11:5; Luke 7:22). This introduces the problem as to whether the Gospel narratives are in chronological order. Matthew has already recorded the raising of Jairus' daughter (Matthew 9:18-26). it is evident that Matthew has arranged his narrative in topical rather than chronological order. This is a justifiable and effective arrangement of a biography, unless the author has declared he is following the order of time. None of the four evangelists does so declare.

John is of the greatest assistance in helping us to understand the passage of time by his citation of various feasts. Matthew arranges his material in groups of miracles, sermons, controversies, and events. Mark and Luke show that the raising of Jairus' daughter occurred after the sermon in parables, the stilling of the tempest, and the healing of the Gadarene demoniac. Having already recorded these miracles, Matthew, when he records the sermon in parables, proceeds

immediately to the death of John and the return of the apostles from their missionary campaign at the very time that the news of John's death arrives (Matthew 14:12.). If we knew how long the missionary campaign lasted or how much time elapsed between this question sent to Jesus and the death of John, we could speak with more assurance. evidently there is a poor chapter division the scholars of the Middle Ages made at this point in Matthew, as Matthew 11:1 belongs as the close of Matthew 10:42. Both the a.v. and the a.s.v. show this by making a separate paragraph out of Matthew 11:1. Matthew is making a new beginning at Matthew 11:2 in his topical arrangement. It is Luke who gives us the information that Jesus had raised from the dead the son of the widow of Nain. He records this miracle just before the messengers arrive from John. The evidence must have been fresh in the minds of all.

Popularity and Luxury

Jesus shows by the exalted emotional stress of this sermon that His heart is broken over the rejection and unbelief He faces. But first He speaks in defense of John. He could understand John's heart in the dungeon. He could look forward and see John's death in the near future. Any of those in the multitude who were now inclined to condemn John for the question he has sent are sharply challenged. "But what went ye out into the wilderness to behold? a reed shaken with the wind?" (Matthew 11:7). In America instead of speaking of a reed, we might cite a horseweed — tall, slender, pithy, pliable, top-heavy. What a contemptible messenger for God is such a preacher. Lange says that John was not "a reed shaken by the wind, but a mighty oak half-uprooted by the storm." Observe how Jesus strikes out at two of the most deadly weaknesses of preachers — the popularity craze and the lust for riches and luxury. The reed, because it has not sufficient stamina to withstand the elements, yields to every wind that blows. Many preachers are like this; they bend in every direction of the compass as pressure is applied by flattery or by threats. And what a contrast between the dreadful severity of John's manner of life and the luxurious ease of the king's palace! The coarse, scratchy cloth woven of camel's hair was the very opposite of soft raiment. What searing scorn Jesus pours upon the praise of men and the riches of the world as ultimate objectives. Can any preacher read this portion of the sermon and not feel his conscience deeply stirred? A Prophet

They had gone to the desert not to see a weakling or one given to luxurious living, but a prophet. They were correct in this estimate, but their evaluation was not high enough. John was more than a prophet. The Old Testament prophets held their high office with the grand goal of the final coming of God's supreme Messenger — His Son. But they saw Him only from a great distance. John was the immediate forerunner sent to prepare the way. Again Jesus quoted the prophets (Malachi 3:1). Here was further proof of His Messiahship and deity, as it was justification of John's ministry. A little one in the kingdom, when it will be established, will be greater than John because John was never in the kingdom and the relationship of a little one in the kingdom is still closer to Christ than John's had been. The Kingdom The demand of John for decisive action against the wicked would have stirred a most sympathetic chord in the Zealots in the crowd. This was the very thing which they were demanding of Jesus — action against Rome. Jesus turns at this point in His sermon to rebuke them: "...the kingdom of heaven suffered violence, and men of violence take it by force" (Matthew 11:12). This was the constant effort of the Zealots to seize the movement of Jesus and turn it to their violent, military ends. The coming of John had presaged the ending of the Law and the prophets, for the Christ was now at hand (Matthew 11:13). The Pharisees had been

arguing that Jesus could not be the Christ, for Elijah must first come and he had not come (Matthew 17:10). Jesus turns to give rebuttal to this argument at this point in the sermon by declaring that John is the fulfillment of the prediction of Malachi 4:5. The Contrary Generation The climax of the sarcasm of the sermon comes in the comparison of the unbelieving generation to contrary children in the market place who refuse to play either a wedding or a funeral. The two groups of children are playing the mimicry of charades. One group holds up to their ups imaginary pipes with which they propose to play wedding music, but the contrary group only gives a sullen refusal to dance to the rhythm of the imaginary music. Then the cordial group changes their proposal and offer to wail and weep, but the contrary children refuse to beat their breasts in imitation of a funeral. Thus it is with this contrary, unbelieving generation. John had come in the solemn, somber aspect of a funeral “neither eating nor drinking” in the ordinary enjoyment of social life. They had not only rejected his leadership, but they had added the insult that he was not really a prophet of God — he was possessed of a demon. Jesus had come “eating and drinking.” He had entered into the homes of those who had invited Him and had shared good fellowship with them. But the wicked leaders of the nation not only scorn Jesus, they hurl blasphemous slander at Him by charging He is “a gluttonous man and a winebibber.” One of the most powerful strokes in a sermon is seen just here as Jesus does not even attempt to defend Himself against this infamous charge. It was too low, too infamous, too doomed to fall of its own weight in the presence of His actual life. “A friend of publicans and sinners” He had indeed shown Himself to be, but not after the manner of their insinuation. He had not shared the wicked ways of the publicans, and had rather won them to repentance and noble living. Jesus closed His defense of John with the cryptic declaration, “Wisdom is justified by her works” (Matthew 11:19). Luke reports, “...is justified of all her children” (Luke 7:35), which indicates that we have in these reports a summation of a longer sermon. The results of John’s ministry proved the wisdom of the course he had followed, just as the results of Jesus’ ministry were proving the wisdom of His different course.

Denunciation of Unbelief The full force of Jesus’ blazing condemnation now was delivered against the unbelievers of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. In Capernaum and these two suburbs, Chorazin and Bethsaida, Jesus had performed so many mighty works that even such pagan cities as Tyre and Sidon, notorious for their wickedness, would have repented if they had seen such miracles and heard the preaching that accompanied the miraculous proof. As there were no punctuation marks in the oldest Greek manuscripts, the a.v. and the a.s.v. offer alternate translations of Matthew 11:23. Both are possible and attractive. The a.v. makes it a declaration, and following a different manuscript reading translates as present tense “Thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven” by the presence, the preaching, and the miraculous proof of the miracles of Jesus, hut they had failed to realize or to admit it! The a.s.v. renders with a question mark and has a future tense, “Thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted unto heaven?” This is sarcasm. “This is your conceited estimate of yourself and your future glory? You are sadly mistaken.” The a.v. makes the mistake of failing to discriminate between “Hades” and “hell.” The word used here is not gehenna, but Hades. Hades has two meanings (this is the reason the translators transliterated the word into a new English word, instead of translating it and giving its meaning): (1) the grave, irrespective of the character or fate of the dead; (2) the intermediate place of punishment where the wicked are kept until the final judgment. Thus it is possible to give the meaning to the a.s.v. translation that fire, earthquake, or war’s desolation will bring Capernaum down from her present lofty height to utter ruin. This indeed has been the fate of Capernaum. But the entire context shows

clearly that Jesus is speaking of the doom of the wicked at death or in the final judgment and is using Hades in the sense of the place of punishment. Thus the a.v. went directly to the heart of the meaning, even though rendering loosely the Greek word Hades.

Degrees of Punishment This declaration of Jesus makes very clear there will be degrees of punishment for the wicked. Since Sodom was so extremely wicked that God had to destroy the city by a destruction notable in the history of the world; and, since there can be no salvation after death, it is plain that the more tolerable sentence at the final judgment does not mean entrance into heaven. It is rather that Capernaum will receive greater punishment. This does not mean two standards of judgment. There is one standard — the basis of opportunity. Man is responsible for what it has been possible for him to know. A man cannot claim ignorance as an excuse when his ignorance is the result of his deliberate refusal to acquire the saving knowledge which has been sent to him by God.

John's Gethsemane

Jesus' answer to John's question had been epigrammatic in brevity and power. He had closed His message with a beatitude which offered to John a divine blessing. His whole manner had been gentle and sympathetic. Facing a cruel death because of his fidelity to God, John was in dire need of help. He knew where to find surcease for his breaking heart. "I must tell Jesus all my trials." If John had sent this shocking question to the Pharisees and had asked help from the enemies of Jesus, then the problem would indeed have been insoluble. But John knew where to go for succor. The answer Jesus sent hack satisfied his Soul. No more questions of doubt came from the dungeon.

Jesus' Defense

After the messengers of John had departed with their message to John, Jesus turned to the critical defense of Himself before the multitude. John had asked the shocking question, "Who art thou?" Jesus began His defense by showing who John was. On the great day of questions when His enemies demanded His identity and authority, Jesus also referred them to the baptism of John — "from Heaven or of men?" The answer as to who John was would prove who Jesus was. In analyzing the ministry of John, Jesus pointed out the magnificent courage and the complete dedication of John. But the climax of His tribute was John's miraculous inspiration. John was more than a prophet; he was the forerunner of the Christ. Because of this relationship Jesus could say that a greater than John had not been born of woman. He could also say that even a little one actually in the kingdom, when it should be established, would be greater than John.

Jesus' identification of John as the forerunner of the Christ had been couched in the language of the Old Testament prophets, Isaiah and Malachi. The prophets had foretold the deity of Christ. Even the very passage Jesus quotes here affirms it; the Lord is to walk the highway that the forerunner is to prepare.

Jesus then turned to answer the proposition as to how John could now ask such a question if he had been the forerunner inspired and sent of God. Why was Jesus not doing the things that John had predicted? The answer is found in the element of time. The Messiah indeed will finally judge the wicked even as He now grants rescue and salvation to the righteous. But it will be at the final judgment. For the present He must continue His humble ministry of service. The Joy of Jesus The

woes which Jesus pronounced upon the unbelieving cities remind one of the breaking heart of our Lord as He wept over Jerusalem at the triumphal entry. But out of the very midst of His grief Jesus bursts forth in a prayer of joyous thanksgiving and ends the sermon with an invitation so majestic and tender that it is called “The Great Invitation.” Some have suggested that Matthew 11:25 indicates a new beginning and shows that this is not really one sermon, but various bits pieced together. This is the customary pattern of dissection used by the radicals. The phrase at that time means rather at that very moment of extreme grief and of incredible rejection, Jesus thanked God for the divine pattern of redemption offered to man. Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent” in the sense that God has established the principles, but man makes the fateful choice. God burns a man S hand in the sense that God has given fire for man’s use and established the principle that its abuse will be destructive. Man is the one who is guilty of the folly of thrusting his hand into the fire. Man blindfolds himself by his bitter prejudice, and God hides from him the truth because of man’s stubborn refusal to see.

It was a proper subject of rejoicing that God had revealed the truth to “babes” — obscure, untrained, eager, earnest souls ready and willing to hear and obey the Christ. How wonderfully this thanksgiving was vindicated at Pentecost and following. The great movements of history for the renovation of society always come from the bottom up and not from the top down. We can but wonder whether the apostles were present and listened with awe to this thanksgiving as Jesus pronounced this gracious word of praise and glorious prediction of their future. They are not mentioned as being present. One might conclude they were away on their missionary tour from the arrangement of Matthew’s account, but Luke appears to give the chronological order. This would mean that they were present. A Thanksgiving for the Hour of Trial

We are accustomed to being grateful and having a song of thanksgiving when the products of our labor seem abundant and the joys of victory fill our hearts. But when the hour of trial comes, we are apt to complain and to cry out against our fate or even to complain against God. This is all because we are following Christ afar off. We need to come closer and share His suffering, His tasks, His joy. This was a time for Jesus to have become outraged and disgusted with the weakness and folly of men, when He had to face a question of doubt from even the forerunner John. But just as Jesus had a beatitude to send to the dungeon cell, so He has a thanksgiving to God for every humble soul who believes and trusts in Him. “The wise and prudent” went on their presumptuous, selfish ways of rejection and disobedience. But, at least, as “the poor have the gospel preached to them,” those of humble and contrite heart understood the majesty of God when they saw and heard, and they cried, “O Lamb of God, I come.” In the closing paragraph of the sermon Jesus offered surcease to the brokenhearted of all the world. We are facing a dreadful hour of trial in human history. It is easy to grow bitter and morose over the wickedness of the world, the growing power and might of the ungodly, the severity of the suffering which the righteous must endure because of horrors of war and rumors of war. We are tempted to complain and cry to God, “O Lord, how long?” Out of the midst of this flaming utterance of Jesus shall we not carry upon our lips a humble thanksgiving for the harvest? For every soul who has yielded obedience to God and who walks in the way of life with Jesus, we should be thankful The disobedience and truculence of the high and mighty make it hard to bear, but in the midst of every hour of trial Christ can put a song of thanksgiving in our hearts.

“I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes.” The sudden, wistful turn from fierce condemnation to heartbroken pleading to repent even yet and to be saved is one of the most touching moments in the life of Christ. Jesus was facing scorn, derision, callous indifference, and unbelief; John the Baptist was about to be murdered; the day of His own crucifixion was coming closer; yet Jesus found ground for humble thanksgiving to God as He looked into the faces of the faithful disciples before Him. Not all had rejected; not all had proved themselves unworthy of eternal life; not all had sought the pleasures of this world rather than the blessedness of heaven; not all had been so saturated with selfishness that they could not thrill at the presence of the Messiah and His spiritual campaign. The Deity of Christ The Great Invitation was preceded by such a tremendous affirmation of His deity and authority as preceded the giving of the Great Commission. There were many other times that Jesus affirmed His divine authority, but these two are most notable. The radicals charge that it is only John who gives records of such tremendous affirmations of deity and authority. But it is immediately seen that both of these most famous affirmations of authority are in the Gospel of Matthew. There is not a scintilla of evidence against the genuineness of Matthew 11:27. We have here precisely the same declarations of deity that we see in the Gospel of John.

“The Man Nobody Knows” was really the statement of Christ Himself as He affirmed, “No man knoweth the Son, but the Father.” The mystery of the incarnation is so deep that man cannot fathom it, not even with the full Gospel in his hands. He must still say, “I believe,” when he comes to mysteries which he cannot understand. And the revelations of God seen in nature and found in man’s reasonings, yea, even the revelations of God in the prophets had been insufficient when compared to the full and final revelation of the Father in the Son. “He to whomsoever the Son will reveal him” is the one who answers the invitation “Whosoever will may come.” A Supreme Quotation The Shakespearean actor Thomas Keene was once being entertained at a banquet in his honor by a large group of admirers. Someone at the banquet table suggested that each person present should stand and quote his favorite passage from the literature of the world. A buzz of excited whispers went around the table as all tried to speculate what Mr. Keene would quote. Some felt sure it would be something from Hamlet, As You Like It, or King Lear. But when Thomas Keene arose he quoted with simplicity and humility these matchless words, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Even amid the gay life of the theater Thomas Keene had found critical need for Christ, and he had found the all-sufficient answer to his needs in Christ. It is difficult to select a supreme quotation from the lips of our Lord. There are so many incomparable sayings. It depends upon the mood and the hunger of the soul as to which one appeals most to us at any particular time. But certainly we have here one of the most precious declarations of Christ. The Divine Authority The affirmation of deity and universal authority with which this invitation begins is inherent in all that is contained in the invitation itself. Who else but God could invite all the world? The invitation seems at first to be limited, “all ye that labor and are heavy laden,” but sooner or later every human being finds himself in this group. We do not invite all because our homes are too small. During a wild winter storm homes opened to rescue the stranded travelers on the highway are stretched to the utmost, but a house that could only afford standing room to fifty could not intelligently issue an invitation to five thousand. When Jesus invited the uncounted millions of the ages, He declared His deity. “In my Father’s house are many mansions….I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2). There will be no housing shortage in

heaven. We do not invite even all the people we know because our hearts are too small. We do not want some of them. How the love of God shows itself in the divine heart of His Son. These last words of the sermon are directed to the broken hearts of all mankind lost in sin and facing death.

Peace This is not an invitation to inactivity. The rest which Jesus offers is the peace of God, which the world cannot understand or receive unless it turns in humble obedience to the Son of God. It offers the joy of labor and accomplishment. Only those willing to share the yoke of Jesus and learn of Him the way of life may find this heavenly peace. John had brought about this tremendously exciting scene and sermon by demanding why Jesus had not asserted His divine power in majestic fashion to overthrow and punish the enemies of God. Jesus closes His defense with the sublime declaration, “I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Here is the solution for all of life’s perplexities, frustrations, and sufferings. In the glorious light of heaven “the toil of the road will seem nothing when we get to the end of the way.” The broken hearts will be made to rejoice. The heavenly peace is offered to all who will give all.

064. Chapter 5 - Simon the Pharisee

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Luke 7:36-50 First-century Banquets

Various writers of the first century give much detailed information as to the delicate food and the rare, exotic types of food served by the wealthy at their grand banquets. The New Testament writers have nothing to say on this subject. Their silence as to all these varieties of food seems to affirm again, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). A modern account of a great banquet would be replete with listing of menu and descriptions of gorgeous gowns, cloaks, clothes, jewels, and other means of exhibiting wealth. The presence of the great spiritual Teacher at such a banquet in Israel might naturally be expected to hamper the love of show and display, for the Pharisees were especially addicted to the grand manner. The basic articles of diet in Palestine, bread and fish, are mentioned several times in the New Testament as the circumstances of an exciting, spiritual account compel it (Matthew 4:4; Matthew 13:33; Matthew 14:13-21; Matthew 15:32-38; Matthew 16:5-12; Luke 24:41-43). The fatted calf which was served at the season of rejoicing when the father received back home his prodigal boy comes to mind (Luke 15:23, Luke 15:29, Luke 15:30). The rich man “faring sumptuously every day” seems to have gone from one elaborate banquet to another (Luke 16:19). The other tragically rich man exhibited his folly in taking as his life’s motto, “Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry (Luke 12:19).

Jesus had begun His public ministry at a festive occasion where there must have been a very large crowd and extensive preparations. Nevertheless at the wedding feast in Cana we do not find Jesus pictured as seated at the banquet table, but in the outer court with the servants where He performed a prodigious miracle to rescue the embarrassed host from his unexpected dilemma. The large amount of wine Jesus made from the water in the jars probably indicates a very large crowd at the banquet, but it also added to the impressiveness of the miracle and the number of witnesses who would be able to give partial testimony. When the news of the miracle spread through that section of Palestine, great numbers of people would want to come and taste some of this wine of such unique and unparalleled nature. The Slander At this feast in the home of Simon the Pharisee Jesus was seated at the banquet table, was the guest of honor, and was the center of attention. Luke has just recorded the infamous slander which the enemies of Christ had been whispering around, “a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!” Jesus had boldly brought out into the open their backdoor gossip, but He had not stooped to defend Himself against their charge and the accompanying insinuations. Every person could observe and see for himself whether Jesus was this sort of person. It is as if Luke would now give us some inside scenery from which to view this charge against Jesus that he follows the tremendous sermon Jesus preaches on John and the unbelief of the nation with this extraordinary scene in the home of Simon the Pharisee. Luke also is silent as to all the types of food served at this banquet. He says not a word on the subject of what Jesus ate. He pushes aside in manifest disgust the

charge “a gluttonous man and a winebibber,” but on the charge “a friend of publicans and sinners” Luke would have somewhat to say. It is most illuminating and impressive. If Simon had been present when Jesus preached on John and the prevailing unbelief, he undoubtedly, when he had time to think things over, was able to see a strong connection between the instruction given in the sermon and at the banquet in his home. Certainly Luke’s account suggests it to the reader. He would rewrite the charge “a friend of publicans and sinners” to offer the tribute “a friend of sinners, both publicans and Pharisees; in fact, of all lost mankind.”

Simon’s Motives That Jesus would accept the proffered hospitality of a Pharisee whose motives and attitude are at least very questionable is indicative of the love of God for all men and His great desire to win all to repentance. We are moved to wonder how frequently such invitations from rich Pharisees were given and accepted. A similar occasion, in which the whole affair was a trap, is described in Luke 14:1. We are not informed as to whether Simon had invited the apostles to accompany their Teacher. When great feasts were arranged in the spacious homes of the publicans (Luke 5:29), we can be sure that the apostles were always invited. There evidently was a great crowd present at this feast in the mansion of Simon. The presence of a group of Pharisees is clearly indicated in Luke 7:49. The presence of this notorious woman indicates a large crowd was present. If it had been only a small, select group, how could she have gained entrance? But with a large crowd and with a multitude of servants going to and fro, it had not been too difficult for her to slip in unnoticed. In spite of all their exclusiveness and their grand pretense that they must avoid any sort of contact with wicked people and wash off any possible contamination as soon as they returned from the market place, the love of display which ruled the hearts of the Pharisees got the better of their separatism at these banquets. Of what use would be all the exhibition of rich food, luxurious clothes, and brilliant, learned conversation if they did not have sufficient audience to broadcast the affair? Thus it was that the common people were permitted to come into the homes of the rich Pharisees on such occasions and, standing around the edges of the banquet chamber, marvel at the greatness of the great. The Greek verb translated “sat down to meat” is literally rendered in the footnote of the a.s.v. “reclined at table.” Reclining on a couch resting on the left elbow with the right hand free to secure food, the guests could eat and talk in a most leisurely manner. This was the custom of the Greco-Roman world in the first century. Brilliant conversations frequently graced such festive occasions. But the discussion that arose in the home of Simon became intensely personal. The Woman’s Motives

It is implicit in the narrative that this woman was repentant. The preaching of Jesus had touched her heart and won her to repentance and a new life. What she now plans to do is to make a public confession of her sins and a public pledge of her reformation. At the same time she will be able to express her love of God in this tribute to His Son, the Christ. How much she understood of the divine nature of Christ we cannot discern, but this very fact of His deity stands out in the entire narrative. The woman secured an alabaster box of ointment (distinguished from olive oil, but we are not told it was an expensive type of ointment) and came with the definite plan to anoint the feet of Jesus as He sat at meat in the home of this Pharisee. Plummer answers effectively both the tradition-mongers who have spun out the fantastic theory that this sinful woman is to be identified with Mary of Bethany or Mary Magdalene or with both, and also the radicals who try to make out there is confusion in the account which indicates it is fiction. He says, “The conduct both of Jesus and of the woman is unlike either fiction or clumsily distorted fact. His gentle severity toward Simon

and tender reception of the sinner, are as much beyond the reach of invention as the eloquence of her speechless devotion" (I.C.C. on Luke, p. 209).

While the woman had planned this bold, dramatic anointing of the feet of Jesus, she had not anticipated how her own emotions would prove uncontrollable. She surely had not planned to come and weep in public. But when she found herself unable to keep back the tears and saw them falling on the feet of Jesus, she wiped them with her hair. Seeing that she had not been driven off, she kissed His feet repeatedly in spontaneous devotion. The Sensation

It is not hard to imagine the sensation which this created in the banquet room. The excited buzz of conversation must have ceased in a breathless hush or perhaps the Instruction that Jesus was giving continued without the slightest interruption. Here is the first grand affirmation of the deity of Christ in this scene. Who else in the room could have endured such a show of devotion and love in such a public manner from such a person and not have been embarrassed? Even the noblest of persons would have been overwhelmed with the fear that some might conclude he was base. Poor, broken humanity is just that in the presence of God. The identity of sex and variety of sin are merely details.

Simon's Conclusion

Simon had heard and seen Jesus on enough occasions and had heard enough about His miracles, His teaching, and His claims to desire to study Him at close range. It may have taken considerable courage for him to have invited Jesus into his home. He might have had to break with some of his colleagues among the Pharisees. Jesus does not address him as one who is utterly hostile. In fact, Simon might have thought worse things about Jesus than he did. These unspoken things were really the insidious insinuations behind the taunt "friend of publicans and sinners." But if Simon had been more fair-minded and discerning, he would have reflected first upon what would have been the course of any other man at the banquet table if such a show of gratitude and affection had been directed toward him in this manner. Embarrassment, confusion, and rage would have followed in swift succession and would have led to a peremptory demand that the host have this notorious woman removed from the presence. Simon Should have marveled at the fact that none of these things was true of Jesus.

Recalling how many times Jesus had shown miraculous insight into the hearts and lives of the people He met, Simon should have seen that he was witnessing a mighty demonstration of the deity of the sinless Son of God. But Simon's reflections turned in precisely the opposite direction: "This man, if he were a prophet, would have perceived who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, that she is a sinner" (Luke 7:39). There is a strong manuscript difference with much support for the definite article "the" prophet, which would mean "if he were the Christ [as He claims to be]." At any rate, Simon shows that he had been seriously reflecting upon the claims of Jesus and trying to decide whether he believed Jesus to be a prophet. Simon felt he had now settled the question. Jesus was not even a prophet. The reports he had heard about Jesus' having the power which the Old Testament prophets had shown of reading the hearts and lives of people had now been proved untrue. Jesus did not even know what sort of woman this was. His Pharisaical prejudice about "untouchable" sinners from whom the pious Pharisees must remain in complete seclusion governs his judgment. Plummer remarks that the clause that she is a sinner suggests that there is only one sin which the world refuses to forgive in a woman.

Jesus' Reply

Jesus was no more embarrassed by the hostile thoughts of His host than by the humble, repentant devotion of the sinful woman. But Jesus proceeded to challenge Simon directly. More light will now be given on the favorite charge of Pharisees, "a friend of publicans and sinners." Simon has based his rejection of Jesus' claims on his own conclusion that Jesus was unable to read the heart and the past of this woman. Jesus proceeds to lay bare to Simon his own secret thoughts and his own imperfect past. It is as if He said to Simon, "You think I do not know and I cannot tell what this woman is like. I will show you I can discern your own secret thoughts and I can declare your own past." But the manner of Jesus was delicate and skillful with the divine touch. Jesus loved to use illustrations and parables to cause His hostile critics to condemn themselves before they knew it! So far from trying to ignore any longer the attentions of the woman and the knowing glances that have passed around the banquet table among the Pharisees, Jesus now calls all present to hear an important statement: Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee." We wonder whether Simon had a premonition the lightning was about to strike when he heard such a decisive interruption to his thoughts. Simon's answer was a brief assent. "What could be said that could now untie the embarrassing knot which had been tied about His claims even to be a prophet?" Indeed Simon would like to hear what could be said. The Parable The parable presents the account of two debtors, both unable to pay, but the indebtedness of one ten times the amount of the other. The creditor forgave both. Now came the question to Simon, "Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?" The answer of Simon is almost supercilious as he expresses an opinion: "I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most [but what has this to do with your present dilemma?]." Jesus confirmed the answer as correct and then fired point-blank at Simon. He pointed to the woman. He cited the churlish inhospitality of Simon who had invited Him to his home, but had not even had the decency to offer Jesus the ordinary courtesies given to even the humblest and most obscure guest. As we contemplate the flourish with which his fellow Pharisees must have been welcomed with a kiss, with servants and water to wash their feet, and ointment poured on their heads in celebration of the gala occasion, the motives of Simon in inviting Jesus only to insult Him with neglect become the more questionable. Jesus did not choose to give heed to the crude insults that had been thus heaped upon Him, even though He had been an invited guest and was indeed the secret reason for the entire occasion. Now that Jesus does bring up the inhospitable manner of the host, He speaks with direct, devastating force. All the things which the host had deliberately refused to accord to his special Guest, this outcast woman had given — tears of repentance, instead of water; repeated kisses of His feet, instead of a casual salutation; ointment, instead of olive oil.

Divine Authority The atomic bomb which blows asunder Simon's carefully constructed syllogism of condemnation was the astounding declaration of Jesus that He forgave the sins of the woman. Thus the entire scene ends with a declaration of deity which crowns His complete poise and peace of mind during the amazing affair. Most emphatic is the declaration of Jesus to Simon, "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." He did not need to add, "I am talking about you, Simon, with little love and little forgiveness, but still a sinner. You have been meditating about a woman who is a sinner. You need to spend some time over the sins of a certain Pharisee named Simon." Then to make sure that the woman understood that He was forgiving her sins and that all present might

know He was claiming to be God, “He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.” He did not need to add, “Simon, your sins which are not so many are not forgiven, not because they are few or many, but because of your unrepentant heart, your arrogant spirit which seeks the praise of men and cares not for the favor of God.”

Aftermath The host of Pharisees who were present are not listed in the narrative, hut their outraged, unspoken protest against what they considered blasphemy bespeaks their presence at the close: “Who is this that forgiveth sins?” This was the very question with which the occasion began and for whose solution it had been conceived. Simon was undertaking to find out for himself at close range the answer to the question “Who is this?” Simon had attempted to reach the conclusion “not even a prophet.” With a marvelous touch Luke leaves the question unanswered at the close. He does not undertake to record the angry lobby of the Pharisees after Jesus had gone, or their furious denunciations of what they considered blasphemy, or their fierce resentment of the subtle unveiling of their own sinfulness, in spite of all their pretense to piety. It is as if Luke says to the reader, “What do you think? Make up your mind. You, too, cannot avoid answering the fateful question upon which eternal destiny rests, ‘Who is this?” Then the gracious word of dismissal to the woman glorified her faith, for her whole attitude and conduct in the banquet room had been a declaration of her faith in the Son of God even as it had been a humble confession of her own sins, “And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.” “Sweet peace the gift of God’s love.”

065. Chapter 6 - The Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit

Chapter 6 - The Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit Matthew 12:22-37;Mark 3:19-30 Limitations of Our Knowledge A statement of knowledge on any subject may well be prefaced humbly by an admission of the partial character of that knowledge and an admission of the existence of the vast unknown. The more one knows about a topic, the more keenly he realizes the limitations of his knowledge. When we begin to reflect upon the proposition “What Christ Taught about the Holy Spirit,” we find that the best answer and, in fact, the only adequate answer is to hand a person a copy of the Bible. We should always keep in mind that wise maxim “Where the Bible speaks, we speak; where the Bible is silent, we are silent.” Where can one find a theme in consideration of which it is more appropriate to remind oneself of this maxim? The efforts of human creeds and the technical terminology of theological speculation should but spur us back to renewed study of the text of the Bible itself. Any effort to write a discussion of such profound topics invites the writer to substitute his own ideas and theories in the place of the declarations of the Scripture. But we cannot avoid the consideration of the difficult topics, else our devotion to the teaching of the Scripture is lacking in thorough consecration. The Holy Spirit The consideration of the theme of what Christ taught about the Holy Spirit is a necessary preliminary to discussion of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. At first sight we might think that a study of what Christ taught limits us to the Gospel narratives, Acts, and the Epistles. But we also find that it thrusts us back into the Old Testament. Jesus constantly based the final revelation He brought upon an intelligent knowledge of the revelation that God had given through the prophets. From the very first verses of Genesis we find the Holy Spirit mentioned in the Old Testament as active in creation as He brooded over the face of the waters, and as inspiring the messages of the prophets. The incisive manner in which Jesus quoted in His first recorded sermon the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 61:1 immediately directs one back to the multitude of passages in the Old Testament where the prophets declared they were miraculously inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor” (Luke 4:18). The Bible The very mystery of the topic should drive us to remain the more closely to the knowledge of the Bible. But we should not imagine that the Holy Spirit is the only topic clothed in mystery. Consider God, Christ, one’s own self — the soul, for instance; what mystery! Many things known, but how many unknown! Consider death and eternity; what mystery! The promise of Acts 2:38 makes clear that the comforting gift of the Holy Spirit is promised to every penitent believer at baptism. But just how does the Holy Spirit dwell in our hearts? how guide and comfort us? These questions cannot be answered by logic and mathematics. But consider the equally great mystery of the abiding presence of Jesus in our hearts and lives and in the midst of even two or three gathered in His name. Just how does Jesus dwell in us and guide us? Certainly not in contradiction to the revealed Word He has given to us, but in harmony with it. And the admonition to study zealously and constantly that revelation which the Holy Spirit has given to us in the Scripture is paramount in importance. More foolish ideas have been propagated to the square inch about the Holy Spirit and His presence and method of operation in our lives than any other theme one might suggest. Therefore it is the more imperative that we keep the Bible in hand. This is not

to say that we offer a person the Bible instead of the Holy Spirit. For the Holy Spirit is a person. It is a great improvement in translation when the a.s.v. refers to the Holy Spirit as “He.” The translators of the a.v. had been misled by the gender of the Greek noun for “spirit” when they gave the translation “it.” But the fact that the Greek word was neuter does not impinge in the slightest degree upon the actuality of the divine Person, the Holy Spirit. When we insist on constant reference to the Scripture in considering this theme, we need only to remind ourselves that we are permitting the Holy Spirit to speak, for He inspired the writers.

Central Passages The central passage one would quote in this whole discussion of what Jesus taught concerning the Holy Spirit is Matthew 10:19, Matthew 10:20, “But when they deliver you up, be not anxious how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.” If suffering the handicap of being permitted to cite but one passage, this passage should be chosen, for it places the feet on the terra firma of the historic fact of divine revelation, our present possession of that which the Holy Spirit has revealed. Alongside this passage we could assemble a great number of other similar declarations of the miraculous inspiration of the apostles, and their associates upon whom they had laid their hands conferring the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit. In the New Testament church the only persons who worked miracles were the apostles or those on whom the apostles had laid their hands, thus conferring this miraculous power. The comforting gift of the Holy Spirit, promised to all Christians, is clearly distinguished from the miraculous gift. On the basis of the inspiration of the Scriptures, we may turn to the start of the history recorded in the New Testament and see how the Holy Spirit begot the Son of God of the Virgin Mary when Christ left heaven and came to earth to take on the form of a man. We find that John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb. We naturally reflect upon how much more this was true of the Son of God. We find the Holy Spirit coming upon Jesus bodily in the form of a dove at His baptism and henceforth leading Him actively in the campaign to overcome the devil and save lost mankind. We have all this before we quote one word from the lips of Jesus on the subject of the Holy Spirit. The Miraculous Gift and the Comforting Gift

There are two main lines of promise in the teaching of Jesus: (1) the miraculous presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit in the establishment of the church; (2) the presence and comforting guidance of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of the Christians. in approaching the topic of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit it is most important to observe that the central task of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ and make His divine Person known, His saving mission triumphant. “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter [Advocate, Helper, Paraclete], that he may be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him: ye know him; for he abideth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:16, John 14:17). “These things have I spoken unto you, while abiding with you. But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, lie shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you” (John 14:25.). The Filioque Controversy of the early centuries was concerned with the sending of the Holy Spirit into the world by both the Father and the Son. The Spirit did not send the Son; the Son sent the Spirit; the Father sent both. The Holy Spirit and the Son The work of the Holy Spirit is intertwined with the work of the Son. In giving the miraculous information and inspiration to the chosen leaders who have in turn given us the New Testament, even as they led in the establishment of the church, the Holy

Spirit was at every point glorifying and explaining the Person and work of Christ. “It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority. But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:7, Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit was especially to empower the chosen messengers to present the gospel to the world: “It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you. And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment….Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you” John 16:7-14).

It is most important to keep in mind the entire teaching of the Scripture concerning the Person and work of the Holy Spirit when we attempt to study the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. It is axiomatic that we should have before us all the passages which throw light upon this sin. It is a common fault to take simply the two parallel passages in Matthew and Mark and refuse to consider the entirely different occasion and context of the warning recorded in Luke. It is also imperative that we seek light from related passages in the New Testament. it was the climax of vituperation when the Pharisees, unable to deny that Jesus was working miracles, charged that He was actually casting out demons by the power of the devil. By this charge they were identifying the Holy Spirit with the devil. They were assailing Christ, but in so doing were offering the greatest of insults to the Holy Spirit. Again we see how closely the work of the Son and the Spirit is associated. And yet in a study of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit we are faced with the task of trying to discriminate between a word spoken against the Son and speaking against the Holy Spirit.

Three Interpretations

“Therefore I say unto you, Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come” (Matthew 12:31, Matthew 12:32). “Verily I say unto you, All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit, hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin: because they said, He hath an unclean spirit” (Mark 3:28-30). Here are the two central passages. Three general interpretations are advanced: (1) The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit was committed by these Pharisees when they spoke the word that Jesus was in league with the devil and was casting out demons by the power of the devil. Those who hold this view usually maintain that it is not a sin which is committed today, but was simply this charge made against Christ during His ministry. (2) It is the sin of rejecting the invitation of Christ to become His follower. It is committed by everyone who refuses to believe and obey when he hears the gospel. (3) It is the sin of continuous, malicious attacks upon Christ and the Holy Spirit. It is not a single word of insult, but a continuous assault whether by word or deed.

It is plain that (1) and (2) stand at opposite extremes, as (1) would limit the sin to the few who made this vicious charge against Christ during His ministry, while (2) would blanket every person

who rejects the invitation of the gospel with this sin. It is also clear that there is a line of agreement between (2) and (3) in that both views maintain that it is not a single word spoken which, once spoken, can never be retracted by repentance, but that it is a continuous sin which envelopes the whole life.

Against View (1)

Against the first view it must be urged that it seems to be counter to the entire New Testament to hold that a person can speak a single, dreadful word and then never be able to repent of it and reconstruct the life, no matter how great is the desire for forgiveness and redemption. “Whosoever will, may come” is the heart of the gospel. Acts is the inspired interpreter of the Gospel accounts. When we study the scene at Pentecost, did Peter offer a limited gospel invitation? He boldly charged his hearers with the murder of the Son of God. The most vicious enemies of Christ must have been present in the throng watching and listening. When the outcry of the overburdened conscience was, “Brethren, what shall we do?”, the answer of Peter was not, “That depends on what you have done. To those who have spoken the blasphemous word against Christ that He was in league with the devil, there is no hope. But to all others the gospel of redemption is offered.” We have no record of any such limited invitation ever being offered. The whole history of the church records memorable cases of conversion of vicious enemies of Christianity. These men, whether hostile outsiders or apostates, made the most shocking, malicious, blasphemous attacks upon the Holy Spirit, the Son of God, and the Father. But finally they repented and gave themselves to Christ in years of glorious service, even unto martyrdom. The interpreters who insist that this sin is a single declaration spoken on a certain occasion from which the person can never repent and find forgiveness would have to repudiate these extraordinary cases of conversion and deny the actuality of the repentance and the validity of the redemption, or they would have to maintain that, while speaking every vicious attack these enemies of Christ could conceive, they had not actually used the precise attack which is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. The conversion of Saul of Tarsus is the most important case which can be cited. But if a person maintains here is a sin so dreadful that when a person goes so far as this he will never repent and seek forgiveness, then the gospel is not limited. It is still offered to all who will come. But these will not come. In other words, we have here a type of sin of which the charge that Jesus was casting out demons by the power of the devil, instead of the Holy Spirit as He claimed, is an example. It is an “eternal sin” which “shall not be forgiven” not because God will not forgive no matter how much man repents, but because man will not repent, no matter how much God pleads. When position (1) is shifted in this fashion, it becomes position (3).

Against View (2)

Against interpretation (2) it should be pointed out that it completely ignores the word blaspheme, which means to rail against, to assail, to insult with vicious attacks. Furthermore, it completely rubs out the sin itself, since it holds that everyone commits the sin who rejects Christ. Unforgiven sin becomes unforgivable at death. This makes a strong basis for appeal in a revival meeting, but as an interpretation of the Scripture it denies the existence of such a specific sin. And it is a discrimination which should not be hard to make when one compares the attitude of an “almost persuaded, but lost” person in a revival who hesitates to take the critical step and accept Christ, but who would not for all the world say a word against Christ or the Holy Spirit, and the attitude of

the bitter foe of Christ who assails Him with a multitude of insulting epithets and charges. Certainly the context of the charge the Pharisees were making against Christ cannot be overlooked as illustrating what this sin is like. Those who hold to position (2) are want to ask what difference it makes as to the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit since all who reject Christ have the same fate of doom in eternity. But it is a different road which Is traveled. One follows a slow, winding path of continual failure to accept Christ. The other way is the wild leap off the precipice. Mere passive failure to accept Christ does not fit the description of malicious attacks upon Christ and the Holy Spirit. The rich young ruler is a clear example of passive failure to accept by one who revered Christ. The title “The Unpardonable Sin” is often given to the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. This is not a Scriptural term. It suggests that the word spoken is so dreadful that God will not forgive the person no matter how much he seeks forgiveness. If this term is used, it calls for explanation as to why the sin is unpardonable.

Mark 3:22 declares that this blasphemous attack was made by “the scribes that came down from Jerusalem.” These were the learned scholars who were the leaders of the Pharisees in the capital. This same vicious charge was made in the temple about a year later at the Feast of Tabernacles: “Say we not well thou art a Samaritan and hast a demon” (John 8:48); “Now we know thou hast a demon” (John 8:52); “He hath a demon, and is mad; why hear ye him” (John 10:20). The Pharisees who made these attacks were the very persons who arrested, tried, and tortured Jesus, condemned Him to death, and then compelled Pilate to crucify Him. They walked back and forth in front of the cross as Jesus was dying and hurled every blasphemous insult at Him which their wicked minds could invent. And yet Jesus prayed: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:24). It is impossible for God, who is perfect in His holiness, to forgive a man who stubbornly maintains his defiant wickedness and refuses to repent. It is plain that Jesus was praying that the Pharisees might repent in order that God could forgive them. He was praying that their lives might be spared until Pentecost to hear the full gospel of God’s plan to redeem man by the death of His Son on the cross. They did not know what they were doing because they had not yet heard a clear proclamation of the gospel plan of salvation. The very fact that Jesus offered this prayer for these Pharisees who had made and were now making these blasphemous attacks upon Him is strong proof that the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is a continuing sin. It is not a single statement which once uttered can never be forgiven no matter how much a man repents.

Dispensations, the Key

One of the most difficult questions involved in this discussion is the distinction between speaking “a word against the Son of man” and speaking “against the Holy Spirit.” Was this vicious attack which the Pharisees had just made upon Christ speaking “a word against the Son of man,” or was it also “against the Holy Spirit”? Was Jesus saying to the Pharisees that they had now gone too far, that they had committed the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? In what way is it worse to blaspheme against the Spirit than to make a vicious attack upon the Son? In our preliminary study of the person and work of the Holy Spirit we have seen how the work of the Son and the Holy Spirit are intertwined. It would seem that the only discrimination that can be made here is one of time. There have been three grand dispensations: (1) the age of the Father (the Old Testament period); (2) the age of the Son (the incarnation and ministry of Christ); (3) the age of the Holy Spirit (beginning at Pentecost and extending to the judgment). To blaspheme the Holy Spirit is worse than speaking against the Son of man during His ministry because this is now man’s last

opportunity to repent. The Holy Spirit is now the Spokesman through the revealed will of God in the Scriptures. An attack on the Son of God is an attack on the Holy Spirit, just as it is an attack upon the Father. Thus it seems the only discrimination which can be made is one of time. This view emphasizes the fact that the sin is a continuous sin. A Broken Sentence

Those who hold to position (1) offer Mark 3:30 as their cardinal proof, “Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.” They point out that thus the Scripture itself records that this specific charge of being in league with the devil is declared to be the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Certainly no one should attempt to separate the sin from this context. But those who insist this is a positive proof overlook the fact that this is a broken sentence. What is the connection in grammatical structure? To what shall we relate the words because they said? Does this mean that the entire discussion arose because they had said Jesus was in the possession of the devil? or does it affirm an absolute identification of the sin?

Luke’s Record A most powerful argument against those who would limit this sin to this specific charge the Pharisees made and to the apostolic age is the account of Luke when on an entirely different occasion and with a different context Jesus repeated this awesome warning concerning the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. All the pertinent passages must be considered. Luke records the charge of the Pharisees against Jesus (Luke 11:14-26), but he says nothing at that time concerning this warning.

Luke 12:1-12 gives a sermon Jesus delivered especially to His disciples, although it was heard by a vast multitude. The sermon commits to His followers the great task of preaching the Gospel in a hostile world where persecution and death for Christ will be commonplace. “And I say unto you, every one who shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denieth me in the presence of men shall be denied in the presence of the angels of God. And every one who shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven. And when they bring you before the synagogues, and the rulers, and the authorities be not anxious how or what ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Spirit shall teach you in that very hour what ye ought to say” (Luke 12:8-12).

If we had only this passage in Luke, we would immediately conclude that this is a sin which can be committed only by Christians who turn against Christ and assail Him and the Holy Spirit. It would be just as one-sided a view of the matter with the New Testament in our hands, to hold that this is the sin of virulent apostasy, committed only by former Christians, as it is to hold that this was only the sin of the Pharisees who had never made any pretense of accepting Christ. Our view of this sin must be enlarged to take in both these contexts and both occasions on which we know that Christ delivered this solemn warning. Reflecting upon this passage in Luke, one is inclined to take a second look and wonder how clearly this warning was imbedded in the mind of Peter and whether after his denials in the palace of the high priest, the words of this fearful warning kept coining to him. Was it for this reason that Jesus sent to Peter the special message (how comforting it must have been to have this explicit assurance that he was forgiven and was still considered one of the disciples) after the resurrection, “Go tell his disciples and Peter”? (Mark 16:7). Before leaving this passage in Luke, it is important to observe the close connection which Jesus established between the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and the inspired testimony which

the apostles were to give to the world concerning Christ. Immediately the New Testament comes into view and the attitude which men take toward this testimony. The Book of Acts As we turn from the Gospel accounts to the Book of Acts with the thought that Acts is the inspired interpreter of the Gospel narratives, we look for some passage in which the apostles are reminded of this solemn warning Jesus had given and tell us that here is an example of the sin Jesus condemned in such terrible language. We find no such passage. This is most significant. It should warn us that if it were necessary for us to be able to identify absolutely this sin when it is committed, we would have been given such definite information. But this is God's work, not ours. He is the Judge of the world. It is right and proper that we should seek to understand all that Jesus has said, but we must beware of setting up our opinions and conclusions as authoritative.

Although no explicit definition of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is given in Acts, there are three instances which naturally come to mind for investigation. Four people were involved, and both those who had become Christians and one who had been persistently hostile, just as the Pharisees had been, were included. Peter said, "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart?" (Acts 5:3). In what sense was Ananias lying to the Holy Spirit? In harboring the thought and intent that he would be able to deceive Peter and the other apostles, was he not attacking with vicious insult the specific claim of the Holy Spirit to have inspired the apostles so they would be able to read the human heart and the hidden things of life? Here was a sin from which Ananias and Sapphira did not repent; death was their immediate punishment. The sin of Simon the sorcerer of Samaria was a direct assault upon the Holy Spirit as he imagined he could buy with gold and for his own selfish commercialism the conferring of the miraculous power of the Spirit. Peter condemned Simon in such fearful language as makes us think of Jesus' warning. But the account gives us no definite information as to the outcome of Simon's proposed repentance and his appeal for mercy. The language of Peter makes us wonder whether the actual identity of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit in every case was not even revealed to the apostles, "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22). The third instance which comes into view is that other sorcerer Elymas of Cyprus, who openly assailed the truth of Paul's preaching. Observe how Luke reminds us that Paul was especially inspired by the Holy Spirit, "Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fastened his eyes on him, and said, O full of all guile and all villany, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season" (Acts 13:9-11). Again no other information is given as to the further course of Elymas except to describe his helpless condition under the curse of blindness. In publicly attacking as false the truth the Holy Spirit had revealed and that Paul was preaching, Elymas was making the sort of attack which the Pharisees had made.

Epistle to the Hebrews

There are two related passages in the Epistle to the Hebrews which appear to refer directly to the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. In fact, Paul uses the very language, to offer vicious insult to the Holy Spirit, to treat shamefully. The Greek verb enubridzo is a very strong verb meaning to treat with contumely or scornful insolence. Furthermore, Paul piles up descriptive phrases of this dreadful sin; when this description is placed side by side and edge to edge to what Jesus said in His warning about the sin against the Holy Spirit, the statements coincide. Paul makes it clear that

he is talking about a dreadful sin which may be committed by those who once were Christians and now have become enemies of Christ. This pairs off with the context of Jesus' warning in Luke 12:1-12. The two passages in Hebrews are as follows: "For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Hebrews 6:4-6). "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. A man that hath set at nought Moses' law dieth without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:26-30). The Sin Defined

Paul first declares that this is a sin which is committed deliberately or wilfully, and then he proceeds to define what the sin is. He uses again this Greek verb enubridzo, "to make a vicious attack" upon the Holy Spirit. He also combines this description with malicious attacks upon the Son of God, "hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing." The insulting attacks which the modern enemies of Christ make against Him and against the Holy Spirit immediately come to mind. They start out by denying the virgin birth and offering the vicious slander that Jesus was the illegitimate son of Mary and Joseph or Mary and some imaginary Roman soldier stationed in Palestine. They sneer 'it Christ as an ignorant person of the first century who represents the uninformed age in which He lived. They deny His miracles and His claims. They do not charge that lie was in league with the devil and possessed of a demon; they deny that there is any devil or any demons. They not only deny that He was empowered of the Holy Spirit, they deny that there is any such Person as the Holy Spirit. They present their atheism in a new dress with the cynical sneer, "God is dead." The Death of Christ As the death of Christ for the sins of the world is the center of the gospel, so their attacks come to a climax in their ridicule of the proposition that the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse from sin. They attempt to make out that the death of Jesus was no more than the death of any other person. They even charge that Jesus "got just what He deserved when He was put to death. He should have remained in the provinces where he belonged and not come to the capital and attempted to break up the meat trust" (cleansing of the temple). The word used by Paul, "and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing" carries a footnote indicating it can also mean "common." if the meaning "common" is used, then the declaration is that these enemies of Christ declare His death is no different from that of any other person. To say that His blood was "unholy" is to charge that Jesus was a sinner and received His just reward at crucifixion, since He had been a meddler in other men's affairs. Both of these lines of attack have been made against Christ from the earliest days of Christianity until now. When one reads the vulgar, hate-inspired attacks of the Jews of the early centuries as recorded slyly in the Talmud, and then places these alongside the modern attacks of today, they are found parallel to one another and to what Paul describes.

Insult to the Holy Spirit

Inasmuch as Christ declares that the great work of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Son, it is important to see how Paul Unites together the attacks which these apostates from the faith make upon Christ and upon the Holy Spirit. Both the a.v. and the a.s.v. use the language “done despite unto the Spirit of grace.” In light of the fact that this is coupled with the deliberate effort to trample the Son of God into the mire and to ridicule the idea that His death is for the sins of the world, this malicious attack upon the Holy Spirit cannot refer to a mere refusal to submit to the gospel and to the guidance of the Spirit. Paul solemnly declares that “there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins”; they deny and assail the sacrifice for sins which Almighty God has ordained; there is no other. A Continuing Sin The passage in the sixth chapter of Hebrews brings out very clearly that this is a continuing sin, and not a single word that could be uttered and then forgiveness never granted no matter how much the person might repent. Paul heaps up clauses to make sure it is clear to the readers that he is describing persons who were once Christians and enjoyed the redemptive blessings of the gospel. He emphatically introduces the proposition that they had once been partakers of the Holy Spirit. The aorist tense of the verb is particularly emphatic, “and then fell away”; they actually fell away in a dreadful downfall of faith and Christian living. Curiously enough the a.v. translates this “if they shall fall away.” The translators were desperately trying to maintain their theory of “once in grace, always in grace”; “If they shall fall away” (which, of course, they not do if they have really become Christians, is the implication). If the reader, uninformed on Greek grammar, wonders how the two groups of translators could have translated the same passage, one, by an assertion, the other, by a condition — an “if clause,” the explanation is that this is a participle in the Greek. A circumstantial participle can take on the following shades of meaning: time, cause, manner, means, purpose, condition, concession, attendant circumstance. Nine times out of ten a circumstantial participle will mean “time”; so the a.s.v. has “and then fell away.

Why Impossible? When Paul declares that it is impossible to renew such an apostate to repentance, he explains why this is so, “seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.” Seeing means “since.” Since they reject the atoning blood of Jesus Christ and ridicule the offer of redemption which God extends to lost mankind, there is no other gospel, no other means of forgiveness, no other basis for repentance. This is the reason it is impossible to renew them to repentance. This is also a participle in the Greek text, “seeing they crucify.” After having taken the Usual meaning of time for a participle in the phrase “and then fell away,” it is very strange that the a.s.v. translators did not also take the Usual meaning of a participle in “seeing they crucify,” or “because they crucify.” The Greek Text

Evidently there was a strong division of opinion among the translators at this point for the view of the minority of the translators is listed as a footnote, “the while.” In other words, here is the coloring of time given to the participle; it is impossible to renew them to repentance the while they crucify. This becomes the more powerful when one observes that this is a present participle. The elemental meaning of the present tense is continued action. Thus the passage, given its natural rendition, reads, “It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; while they continue to crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh.” This makes the passage perfectly clear and throws most important light on the entire question of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. The very thing which makes this such a dreadful sin is that they assail the very source of light and truth. They must needs then walk in the darkness. So long as they insist on assailing the gospel of Christ,

there is no other means for their redemption. The phrase to themselves is a dative of advantage or disadvantage. They crucify Jesus afresh by their vicious attacks to their own eternal disadvantage. If it is advantage, then the suggestion is that they betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver to gain the favor of the world. The present tense of the verb and the time element in the participle unite to show that this is a continuous sin which Paul is describing. It is the sin of deliberate, malicious, final apostasy from which there is no repentance because they deny the very divine basis of repentance. “The point of no return” is reached by those who commit this sin. Only God knows when a person has gone to this extreme from which he will not return. Luke 12:8-12 fits perfectly with the declaration of Paul in these two passages from the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Sin unto Death The First Epistle of John is filled with the most urgent warnings against false teachers who deny the deity of Christ or the actuality of His incarnation. In concluding his warnings against apostasy, John informs his readers that there is a sin unto death. This sin is different from the ordinary sins that are committed. This sort of discrimination immediately reminds us of the warnings of Jesus concerning the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. 1 John 5:6, 1 John 5:7 introduces the fact that belief in Jesus as the Son of God is the strong basis for the victorious life of the Christian and that the Holy Spirit is the One who bears witness to the deity of Christ. Following this line of argument through the intervening verses, John writes in 1 John 5:16, 1 John 5:17, “If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and God will give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death; not concerning this do I say that he should make request. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.” One of the ways in which the prayers of Christian friends assist is to lead them to help bring the fallen brother to repentance. The providence of God may also change the circumstances of life so that the sinful person will change attitude and repent. The reason the sin unto death is fatal is that it is of such dreadful variety the man will not repent. If he is denying the very divine basis upon which repentance rests, as the context suggests, then it is not possible for him to repent so long as he assails Christ and the Holy Spirit.

It should be noted in this passage that John does not forbid a Christian to pray for another who is sinning the sin unto death. He simply says he does not urge the Christian to pray for such a one. If John had forbidden the Christian to pray for one committing the sin unto death, then it would have been necessary for a Christian to have identified and recognized the sin unto death. This we cannot do. It may seem to us that a person has gone so far that he will never repent, and we therefore turn our prayers and efforts to those who appear to be more fruitful ground in which to sow, cultivate, and harvest. A certain Christian might have personal reasons for continuing to pray for a person who had made himself a particularly vicious enemy of Christ; for instance, he might be related by blood to such a person. John does not forbid it. He simply does not urge prayer for these venomous enemies of Christ. The depraved Roman emperors, such as Nero, come to mind as we think of their terrible persecution of Christians. In modern times we think of a Hitler, Stalin, or a cruel Chinese communist like Mao Tse-Tung.

Conclusions

Summing up conclusions: (1) The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is a deliberate, vicious, continuous attack upon Christ and the Holy Spirit. Since the chief work of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ, an attack upon Christ is an attack upon the Holy Spirit. Mere passive failure to accept Christ is to be distinguished from railing against or assailing the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the

passive failure of any person to become a Christian cannot be the sin to which Jesus refers. (2) The reason Jesus distinguishes between a word spoken against the Son and blasphemy against the Spirit is that at Pentecost, when the church was established, the Holy Spirit became the Leader in the grand campaign to save the lost world. This is now man's last opportunity to be forgiven and be saved. (3) Any definition of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit should be broad enough to cover all the passages which throw light upon the subject. The passages in Matthew and Mark point directly to venomous enemies of Christ who have never made any pretense of believing in Him. In Luke 12:1-12 Jesus directs the warning against apostates. (4) The passages from Hebrews show clearly it is a continuing sin. The passage from 1 John confirms our conclusion that we cannot identify the sin absolutely, but that God knows.

066. Chapter 7 - Interruptions

Chapter 7 - Interruptions Matthew 12:38-50;Mark 3:21,Mark 3:31-35;Luke 8:19-21 The Immense Crowds The enormous multitudes that thronged Jesus at this period of His ministry were so great that He had to take measures to prevent them from pressing upon Him:"…that a little boat should wait on him because of the crowd, lest they should throng him" (Mark 3:9). From such a pulpit He could preach and teach more effectively. These enthusiastic crowds were so demanding that Jesus and His apostles did not even have opportunity to eat: "And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread" (Mark 3:20). The mysterious sermon in parables was Jesus' method of reducing the crowd to a more spiritual assembly.

Misguided Concern

Before Jesus began the sermon in parables, His mother and half brothers, the sons of Joseph and Mary, attempted to interrupt the ministry of Jesus and take Him home for a rest. These half brothers were named James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3). We are not told whether the sisters of Jesus also came in this attempt to interrupt His ministry. The translation his friends does not make clear the identity of these who were trying to save Jesus from destroying Himself. The Greek text is hoi par autou, "the (…....) from the side of him." The noun is omitted in the Greek and must be supplied by the reader. Obviously the choice is between "relatives" and "friends." The word friends is an interpretation. "And when his friends heard it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself" (Mark 3:21). This records the start of this well-meant expedition. In Mark 3:31-35 Mark describes their arrival and the outcome. "And there come his mother and his brethren; and, standing without, they sent unto him, calling him." It seems strange that Mary should have allowed the unbelieving brethren (John 7:5) to persuade her to join in such an ill-advised effort as this. But the brethren evidently used her very devotion to Christ to stir her alarm: John the Baptist facing death in prison; the national leaders plotting the death of Jesus; the ever-increasing pressure of His ministry that allowed not even time to eat or rest, threatening the very limit of any endurance. "Zeal for thy house shall eat me up" was being fulfilled. He was "beside himself" with zeal. When they arrived, they found the crowd so immense and so dense that they could not even approach Jesus. It had been one thing to plan "to lay hold on him"; it was something else to carry out the program, which immediately evaporated in the presence of Jesus. Probably by making signs to some friends in the forefront of the crowd, they were able to get word to Jesus that they wanted to speak to Him. The Rebuff The refusal of the Lord to grant their request was the most humane method of thwarting their plan. His deity shines out in the simple question, "Who is my mother and my brethren?" The universality of the redemption Jesus brought to earth finds sublime expression in His final word, "And looking round on them that sat around about him, he saith, Behold, my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Mark 3:33-35).

Each of the narrators adds a vivid, revealing touch to his record at the dramatic close of this scene. Mark records a searching look with which Jesus probed the hearts of these consecrated

disciples before Him: “And looking round on them that sat round about him, he saith, Behold my mother and my brethren.” Matthew describes a gesture which must have been so tender as to include all the divine yearning and mercy of heaven: “And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!”

Challenge of the Pharisees

Between the start and the close of this friendly expedition to rescue Jesus from His overzealous evangelistic efforts is the record of a hostile effort of His enemies to undermine and upset His ministry. The scribes undertook to spread around a whispering attack that Jesus was in league with the devil and was casting out demons by the power of Satan. Jesus brought their attack into the open and revealed its falsity (Mark 3:22-30). Matthew records that at this time scribes and Pharisees came demanding a sign. This was a clever method of seeking to block the growing influence of Jesus. Their demand of a sign (“a sign from heaven” in the later attempt — Matthew 16:1) carried the insulting implication that the miracles of Jesus had not really been actual. They probably had in mind such a miracle as the parting of the Red Sea with a wall of water on either side of Israel escaping from Egypt or the fire that came down on Mount Carmel to consume the sacrifice at the call of Elijah. The demand for a sign probably carried a sneer at Jesus’ humble spiritual campaign in light of the Old Testament predictions that the Messiah would come on the clouds of heaven and execute judgment on the wicked. This was the sort of temptation the devil had urged on the pinnacle of the temple. The Sign of Jonah

Jesus’ answer to this challenge was a blunt refusal based on the character of “the evil and adulterous generation” and thrilling prediction that such a tremendous miracle would indeed climax His ministry. “The sign of Jonah” would be the all-sufficient evidence as God raised His Son from the dead. The men of Nineveh who repented into a state of harmony with the preaching of Jonah and the Queen of Sheba who came from afar to investigate the incredible reports of Solomon’s wisdom and glory, would rise up in judgment to condemn this rebellious generation which refused to see or hear One greater than Jonah or Solomon.

067. Chapter 8 - The Sermon in Parables

Chapter 8 - The Sermon in Parables Matthew 13:1-53;Mark 4:1-34;Luke 8:4-18 Previous Parables

Parables are frequently found in the Old Testament. In fact, the use of stories and accounts to illustrate hidden truths is universal. But no one else ever has used parables with the peculiar power seen in the teaching of Jesus. Parables are found in His teaching before this great sermon by the lake shore. The Sermon on the Mount contains a large number of “germ parables,” where the idea or the account is suggested, but not fully developed. As the reader comes to the close of the sermon, he finds fully developed parables, such as that of the builders — one, on the rock; the other, on the sand. The Sermon Unique This great sermon in parables represents a dramatic change in the teaching of Jesus in that He spoke on this occasion only in parables and offered no explanation of the parables to the vast multitude. They were perplexed and mystified by this sudden change of method. Even the apostles were deeply troubled. They could not understand the truths that were being illustrated and asked for assistance in interpreting two of the parables They could not understand why Jesus should suddenly become so mysterious in His teaching. Jesus explained to them the reason and His purpose.

Purpose of the Sermon The sermon in parables was a sifting process by which Jesus prevented the violent, worldly, or curious elements in the throngs about Him from becoming so dominant that they would try to take control of His campaign or that they would prevent His maintaining a spiritual atmosphere. The Zealots are not mentioned by name in the Gospel narratives, but we know from Josephus that they were numerous and powerful in Galilee. There can be no doubt that they exercised a strong, negative influence upon the ministry of Jesus. If we knew the circumstances that so frequently caused Jesus to make a swift departure by night to some other field of evangelistic labor, we might learn that the excitement here was at the point of violent explosion in a revolution against Rome headed by the Zealots. It is obvious this was the situation at the feeding of the five thousand. It seems highly probable that the Zealots were also fomenting violent aims now and furnished one of the reasons for Jesus’ change in His teaching methods. The general longing and expectation of the worldly-minded was for a messiah who would bring back the military and political glory of the reigns of David and Solomon. Jesus had to combat this undercurrent throughout His ministry. This sermon in parables was so difficult to understand that the worldly-minded who threatened to corrupt the atmosphere of the multitude were disgusted and turned aside. The spiritually-minded would be stimulated by the difficulty of the sermon to seek the more diligently for the hidden truths. The apostles were told that it was their high privilege to have the truths made plain to them (Matthew 13:10-17). But no prohibition was placed upon them that they should keep the explanations of the parables away from those in the crowd who came to them seeking help in understanding.

Isaiah’s Irony

One of the most difficult passages in the Old Testament is quoted by Jesus in explaining to the apostles His reason for changing to obscure, difficult teaching. Isaiah 6:1-13 is very familiar

because of the thrilling vision of Isaiah, his call to be a prophet, and his courageous response. But the latter part of the chapter is not familiar. The first part is constantly used today in teaching and preaching, but it is never quoted in the New Testament. It is this latter part of the chapter which is repeatedly and emphatically quoted in the New Testament (Matthew 13:14, Matthew 13:15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:40; Acts 28:26, Acts 28:27; Romans 11:8; 2 Corinthians 3:14). Matthew gives a fuller quotation than do Mark and Luke. It is notable that john introduces this passage as his editorial comment on the amazing unbelief with which the entire ministry of Jesus was met. Luke records how Paul quoted this passage to the unbelieving Jews in Rome. Thus it is a sort of epilogue in both the Gospel of John at the close of Jesus' final appeal to the nation and in Acts at the close of Paul's last recorded appeal to the Jews in Rome. His Mother and Brethren

Matthew has just recorded the venomous attacks of the unbelieving Jews which led Jesus to issue His solemn warning concerning the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. He has also given the revealing account of how even the mother and the brethren of Jesus had come undertaking to interrupt His ministry. Evidently the unbelieving brethren of Jesus, the sons of Joseph and Mary (John 7:1-5), had worked on the fears and sympathies of Mary until they had persuaded her to join them in this effort to take Jesus home for a rest. The Present Crisis

It was in the midst of such a hectic crisis in His ministry, with the vast crowds about Him, that He delivered this sermon in parables It is not possible to understand this declaration which God made to Isaiah, and which is quoted by Jesus, except as the sarcasm of despair. God tells Isaiah to go forth and tell the people to close their ears, eyes, and hearts so that they will not hear and repent. God might have to forgive them. Such a sarcastic introduction to a sermon from a pulpit today would certainly shock all the hearers into the most concentrated attention. This was precisely God's purpose for Isaiah's proclamation. It is as if a father has talked, pleaded, prayed, and said everything he can to turn his wayward son from the way of death. Finally in desperation the father uses the sharp sword of irony and says to the boy, "All right, go ahead and jump headfirst into hell!" This is the last thing in the world he wants the boy to do. And by this extreme of irony he tries to Irony shock him into awareness of his deadly peril. It is thus with Isaiah's proclamation. It is thus that Jesus quotes the passage to get the apostles to see the virulent unbelief which surrounds Him and that it is this unbelief which has caused Him suddenly to turn and speak in riddles. We have studied these parables from earliest childhood, and their explanation has become so commonplace it is hard for us to comprehend just how difficult they were for the first hearers. The Assembly The setting of this sermon furnishes a fascinating picture. Jesus was always careful to keep good order in the vast assemblies. Only once is there mention of pushing and crowding which threatened bodily injury (Luke 12:1). It was of the utmost importance to select an amphitheater in which the acoustics would be most favorable. The size of the crowd became so great at Capernaum on this occasion that Jesus entered into a boat (Peter's boat, always at His command?) and used this as a pulpit. Jesus sat in the boat as this was the customary posture for a speaker in a lengthy service. The crowd also usually sat down, but on this occasion they stood. Evidently the crowd was so dense they stood in order that more could be within reach of sight and hearing. Luke does not mention the use of a boat as a pulpit, but like Matthew and Mark he declares the crowd was very large. He alone states that many of the people were from other cities (Luke 8:4). What a picturesque scene this must have made with Jesus seated in the boat teaching the vast multitudes standing close together on the shore. The Interpretation of Parables The Greek

word parabole comes from a compound verb paraballo. Ballo means to throw or cast (in Hellenistic Greek it many times loses its violent force and can mean simply “to lay” or “lead”); the preposition para means “alongside.” Thus a parable is an illustration, a story, an account which is placed alongside a spiritual truth to be made plain. The details of the parable may or may not represent accurately something in the spiritual realm. An allegory differs from a parable in that every detail of the allegory represents something in the spiritual realm that is being illustrated. The most famous allegory in the English language is Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress. The second most famous, and far more difficult to understand, is Spencer’s Fairy Queen. The people who have found themselves perplexed by the parables of Jesus usually have involved themselves in the difficulty of trying to make every detail mean something. But a parable attempts to teach a fundamental principle or several principles. The details may fit or they may be mere scenery, true in the account of the earthly things, but without significance in the revelation of spiritual realities. If the details pair off with spiritual things they illustrate, as they do in the parable of the sower, we rejoice in this additional help in understanding. But if the details do not fit, we should not be disturbed.

Scenery The parable of the Unjust Judge is a good illustration of how details often do not fit. The judge represents God, but he is the very opposite of the character of God. His motives are entirely selfish when he finally grants the petitions of the widow. But Luke states the fundamental principle that is being taught at the outset: “Men ought always to pray and not to faint.” Jesus also states the principle at the close of the parable in profound language; if a wicked judge will grant the petitions for justice of a poor widow just in order to get rid of her, how much more will the righteous, loving God of all grant the prayers of those who persist in seeking His favor and help?

Limitations of Illustrations A study of illustrations shows that while they are illuminating and very helpful to our understanding, if one attempts to demand too much agreement and exact representation, the reader is sure to find himself in trouble. When a dumb animal, such as a sheep, is taken to represent man’s reactions and conduct in life, it becomes plain immediately that this comparison cannot be pressed too far. Only man possesses the intelligence and the spiritual nature which God gave to His choice creation. Still more is it evident that vegetable or inanimate matter, without understanding or will, cannot exactly represent man s experiences. We see this immediately in the parable of the sower; the different kinds of soil were not responsible for their nature, nor could they have the power of choice and change. We must not he disappointed at the limitations of illustrations, but should seek to understand their nature and purpose. There may be discussion and differences of opinion as to exactly what principles and how many principles are being taught in a parable. They are a fascinating subject of analysis, but we should learn at least to seek for the principles anti not be disturbed if the details do not fit.

Seeking the Principles The parables also offer difficulty to some because they do not present in one parable the full gospel. The concentration upon an important principle or several principles compels the limitation of the illustration to the focal objective. Even the most famous of all the parables, that which tells the story of the prodigal son, does not present the complete gospel. There is nothing in the parable that represents or suggests the divine Person and work of Christ. There is not even any messenger of any kind sent to the boy wallowing in his sins in the far country. The parable concentrates on the love of God. There are other principles, but this is central. But it is this very concentration which makes possible the marvelous brevity and simplicity of the parables; it is the secret of their charm and effectiveness. After all, any person who tries to

tell everything he knows in one paragraph is apt to he confused, confusing, and boring. As we survey the parables in this great sermon, it should be of interest to observe the concentration anti its effectiveness. Other truths that need to be revealed can be presented at other times in other parables or in direct teaching. The Parable of the Sower

Jesus Himself gives the name to this parable. Its fitness is immediately apparent. The first words of the parable introduce this main actor. His experiences capture the attention throughout the account. What the sower did and our contemplation of how the sower must have felt as he reacted to the various results of his labors naturally attract our attention. But this is only one side of the parable. It might have been called “The Parable of the Soils.” Here is another central principle of the parable. But Jesus chose to emphasize in this title the glorious good news of redemption for man and the grand opportunity which God has given to man to share in the redemptive campaign. It is as if by this title Jesus underscores our solemn responsibility as Christians and the sublime results when the good seed is permitted to come to its proper harvest. Moreover, we must not forget the critical situation Jesus faced in His ministry as He was surrounded with vast crowds that contained so many who were worldly, unbelieving, selfish, or merely curious. He was giving a penetrating analysis of the what and the why of His own ministry. He was also reaching out across the centuries to instruct all the sowers who would follow after. The Good Seed

“Behold, the sower went forth to sow.” This is true of any sower. It was true even of Jesus. It is possible that some farmer could have been seen on a distant hillside with his sack of grain slung under his left shoulder with his right hand reaching in and out in constant, steady motion as he walked across the field and scattered the grain in a regular, measured swath before him. It is possible, but not necessary. The parable suggests a scene most familiar to all. The mind would immediately re-create the picture. We naturally reflect that all men sow something each day. Not all are good and wise enough to sow the good seed God has provided. We glance at this idea in passing and wonder whether this is one of the principles. It certainly is in the background of the entire parable. The Sower When Christians read this parable, they naturally place themselves in the role of the sower. The title helps us to do this. We are moved to reflect, as we read of the farmer frustrated in much of his efforts, of the many times we have visited, taught, exhorted, pleaded, prayed, and failed even to get people to come to church. We think of the people we helped to win to Christ who have become discouraged or weary and quit, or those who have succumbed again to the lures of the world. Then we rejoice with the farmer in the grand harvest that is reaped finally, and we thank God again for the times when our sowing brought precious sheaves into the divine garner.

Two Principles

What is the central objective of this parable? Or does it have two main objectives? Is it meant as a warning to the messenger or to the hearer? It is to prepare the messenger for that hardest of lessons a farmer has to learn — not all the seed he plants will come to a maximum harvest. It thus throws a glowing shaft of light upon the crisis Jesus is facing in His own ministry. It is to assure the messenger that he will reap a harvest of his sowing if he is faithful. But this parable is also to warn the hearer to beware how lie uses his precious opportunity to hear the message that God is sending to him. The title underscores the first principle; the second is powerfully set forth in the concluding statement, “He that hath ears, let him hear” (Mark 4:9).

What Kind of Soil?

It is easier for the Christian to approach this parable from the viewpoint of the sower. He can commiserate or congratulate himself at will and find endless comfort and satisfaction. It makes him far less comfortable to begin to ask himself, “What kind of soil am I?” After having preached unto many, do I harbor a heart so hard to the preaching of others that the good seed cannot even sprout? Am I shallow ground? Do I tell the preacher at the door what a good sermon it was and then find myself stuttering in dismay when the shut-ins at home ask for the topic, text, and content of the sermon? Am I foul ground too filled with desires for more money, a bigger, finer home, a newer automobile, not to mention the base lures of life? These are very embarrassing questions for all of us. Jesus meant that it should be so. Preachers are notoriously poor listeners. Why is this? Is it conceit? or lack of loving consideration? or impatience? “He that hath ears, let him hear.”

Concentration

One of the greatest weaknesses of our worship is the lack of concentration. If a person doubts this, he should test himself, without any previous plan, by attempting to write down upon his return home from the morning service the list of hymns that were sung, the subject matter which was brought before the throne of God in prayer, the scripture that was read, and an outline of the sermon. After having failed this exam, he could go to church some morning with the deliberate plan to take a written test on the service and to listen to every item with the utmost attention so that he would be able to reproduce as much as possible. Without doubt each of us would be appalled at the difference in what a service meant to us if we really concentrated, as contrasted to what it ordinarily means. The Unfavorable Kinds of Soil

“The wayside” would have been seen in many fields, as the highways were but paths leading through the grainfields. The question immediately arises, did not the sower realize there was little or no chance that any of this seed would germinate? The hard, much-trodden soil would not receive into itself the seed, and the seed would readily be devoured by birds. Why did not the farmer anticipate this and save his good seed and his hard labor? If the sower was the one who had prepared the field, the tangled mass of briars, thistles, and weeds he had contended with in his plowing certainly should have warned him of what would happen to his seed in the foul ground. The rocky soil does not mean ground where stones can be seen everywhere cluttering the surface of the soil. It is rather shallow soil, where the shelf of rock underneath the field is too close to the surface for the ground to have sufficient depth to produce. This might not be apparent to the farmer the first year. But how about this sower the second year? Is he to repeat this program where three-fourths of the grain is lost?

Sowing in Hope

We come to the concentration of parables when such questions are raised. Jesus will give further instruction as to the sowing when He sends the twelve apostles out on their preaching tour. We must not expect everything to be told in one parable. But even in cities where they are finally advised to flee for their lives to some more hospitable hearers, they at least were told to seek first to preach to each city, if any would hear. There is in this parable a sturdy emphasis on the universality of the gospel. The sower is not sluggish or parsimonious. He sows his seed with a generous hand just as far and as wide as he can reach. Let it fall where it will. It will fail in the

beaten path, but who knows what a harvest may come from some seed nestled very close to the beaten path? God blesses the generous sower of the gospel. The more seed he sows, the more he has to sow; his own understanding of the message and appreciation of his responsibility increase with his diligent labors.

Disappointments and Hopes The parable does not state that three-fourths of all the seed sown by this sower failed to bring forth a good harvest. It does not state how large the field was or how much of the field was taken up with public paths or how large the sections of shallow and foul ground were. Such circumstances would differ in various fields. But the picture was true to life as wheat was sown in a given field in tiny, crowded Palestine in the first century, when every foot of tillable soil had to be used. It is also true in the spiritual realm. The parable braces the sower for the disappointments that are sure to come. But is also gives high hopes that the word of God will not return unto Him void. There were three divisions even in the ground which did produce a good harvest. The fertility of the soil was different in various sections of the field.

Broadcasting the Gospel

There are times when the preacher comes from his pulpit feeling beaten and heartsick with disappointment. This parable is meant to prepare us for what we must face in this wicked, unbelieving world. It should help keep our morale high and our resolution unwavering. The parable itself should not produce an impression of frustration. We must cherish the glorious conclusion. We usually shoot at definite targets, but there is a certain amount of broadcasting the gospel to all who will hear in every sermon. This is especially true in swift-moving evangelistic campaigns. This parable should be dear to the heart of every radio preacher; he cannot even see the faces of his audience. Longfellow expresses the zeal of the preacher who sows the good seed in hope.

I shot an arrow into the air, It fell to earth, I knew not where;

For, so swiftly it flew, the sight Could not follow it in its flight.

I breathed a song into the air, It fell to earth, I knew not where; For who has sight so keen and strong, That it can follow the flight of song?

Long, long afterward, in an oak, I found the arrow, still unbroke; And the song, from beginning to end, I found again in the heart of a friend.

Human Responsibility In the explanation of this parable as recorded in Matthew 13:19-23 and in Mark 4:10-20, the participles are masculine gender. Both the a.v. and the a.s.v. translate accurately: “These are they by the wayside, where the word is sown” (Mark 4:15; so Mark 4:16, Mark 4:18, Mark 4:20.) It is an utterly perverse interpretation to attempt to make out that this is a parable on heredity and environment — that the people are the ones who are sown in the hard paths, the shallow ground, or the foul soil. Mark is perfectly clear in his declaration, “the sower soweth the word” (Mark 4:14). The masculine gender of the participles presents a figure of speech — personification. The word that is sown in the heart is now identified with the person who has received the word. Any effort to interpret the persons as being the victims of untoward circumstances for which they had no control contradicts the fundamental teaching of the parable, “Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Mark 4:9). The fact that inanimate soil is taken in the parable to represent intelligent human beings with freedom of the will should guard us against

being led astray by any such false application as to say that a child born into the home of a drunkard and surrounded by all sorts of vile things from infancy is not responsible for the foul soil. We must not expect the details to fit completely. We must seek the principles. The principle here, as far as the hearers are concerned, is the solemn warning of responsibility for what and how we hear. It is the very opposite of an interpretation which would say, “I am the shallow soil; I cannot help it. It is just the way I was made. I am shallow in understanding and fickle in resolution. There is nothing I can do about it.” One might as well take the parable of the lost coin as showing that a person can do nothing but wait until he has been picked up bodily and transported into the kingdom.

One of the great joys of evangelism is to see the weak made strong by following after Christ. The hearer is not to diagnose his condition as hopeless and classify himself in one of the categories of failure. He should mellow the hardness of heart which afflicts him. He should deepen his shallow comprehension, appreciation, and determination. What a joy it is to see a man who has been a drunkard and enslaved with all manner of vice rise up out of it all, cast it aside, and become a noble Christian. This is the significance of this final warning with which the parable closes, “He that hath ears, let him hear.” The Parable of the Tares A second parable also concerns sowing and reaping. It, too, proved so difficult for the apostles that they asked an explanation during a break in the service when they were in “the house” (Matthew 13:36). This parable throws additional light on the situation which Jesus faced with the mixed multitude, many of them following with false ideas and motives. The tares in the midst are the result of the devil’s sowing. The impatience of man for God to move against the wicked and bring swift succor to the long-suffering righteous was the very thing which John the Baptist had exemplified in his question addressed to Jesus. As the first parable had been called the parable of the sower because the sower was the main actor in the parable, the second parable is called the parable of the tares because the tares furnish the main problem in It. In the first parable the seed sown was the word of God. In the second parable the people are sown; the good seed represents the good people God has begotten through the Word. God’s ownership is manifest in this parable, “A man sowed good seed in his field” (Matthew 13:24); “This is my Father’s world.” All the works of God are good. The fact that we do not remain good, but are marred by sin, does not enter into this parable. The simplicity of concentration separates the good from the bad. It is typical of the devil’s work that the enemy should have come by night and sown tares. But again the parable stays by the main principle and does not introduce any idea that the good man should have guarded his field by night and prevented this tragedy. It would be bad enough to sow tares in a spot by themselves, but to sow them throughout the field is the devil’s perfidy. The Problem of Evil The germination took place rapidly, but not until the grain began to “bring forth fruit” did the disastrous situation become evident. The tares were a type of “bearded darnel almost indistinguishable from wheat, while the two are only in the blade.” The servants were shocked and grieved. The question they raised, “Whence then hath it tares,” is one of the most profound philosophical problems — the presence of evil in the world. The servants were not responsible. The devil sowed the tares, but whence came the devil? The New Testament gives a clear answer to this question; the devil was created by God as a good angel, but he rebelled against God and was cast out of heaven with the angels who joined him in the rebellion (Revelation 12:7-9; Jude 1:6; 2 Peter 2:4). This means there was a time when the angels were also in a state of probation. The chief difficulty for us to understand is how the devil chose to become evil without a tempter, but this is the very thing that made his sin so great. No salvation is

offered to the devil. Hebrews 2:14, Hebrews 2:15 describes the purpose of Christ's coming to earth: "that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." The devil had been in heaven and had rejected it and rebelled against God. There is nothing now but unceasing war between God and the devil. This is the fundamental principle of this parable. It is a parable of the judgment. Men are ever more impatient than God. This spirit dominates much of the multitude listening to this sermon by the seashore. They want decisive action from Christ in destroying the wicked immediately. The parable gives assurance that in God's own good time men will be summoned to judgment; the good and the bad will be separated; the good, rewarded; the wicked, punished. The Deity of Christ The parable gives a tremendous affirmation of the deity of Christ. Jesus declares that the householder represents the Son of man. He sows the good seed; He is the Lord of all; He judges all men at the end of the world. In later parables of the judgment delivered at the close of His ministry, Jesus spoke of His second coming (Matthew 25:1-46), but in this earlier sermon it was not possible to speak of the second coming when they did not yet understand about His death and His going away. The Field Is the World

Any effort to make this parable refer only to the church is upset by the plain declaration that the field is the world (Matthew 13:38). All men, good and bad, are represented by the wheat and the tares. It is a recognized rule of exegesis that a word should not be taken in two different senses in the same passage, unless the context compels it, but here the context does compel one to understand that "his kingdom" in Matthew 13:41 is the kingdom of the world. In Matthew 13:38 and Matthew 13:43 it is the kingdom of heaven. To say that the wicked who are judged and punished are the hypocrites in the church, would leave all the wicked out in the world without judgment or punishment. The kingdom of heaven is like unto this man who sowed the good seed in that the church finds itself surrounded by the wicked in this world. In John 17:1-26 Jesus sets forth that they are not rescued immediately because it is their mission to save the lost. They are to be in the world, but not of the world. The fact that vegetation such as wheat and tares is taken to represent men does not permit the parable to present the lessons of human responsibility and the possibility of change from good to bad or vice versa. The parable concentrates on the certainty of judgment and the necessity of delaying the final judgment until the end of the world in order that the righteous may come to their proper maturity. Violent destruction of all the wicked now would uproot many of the righteous. At the close of the explanation of the parable of the sower, Mark reports sharp warnings of Jesus (Mark 4:21-25). The germ parable of the lamp under a bushel, first given in the Sermon on the Mount, is now repeated on this different occasion and to a different audience. On the first occasion it had meant: "Let your light shine." The application here is that this mysterious sermon in parables is meant to be understood and broadcast. The hearers must not put it under a bushel. By hard study they can come to understand it and will be able to put it on the stand. They are warned to give the most concentrated attention and effort: "If any man hath ears to hear, let him hear." This solemn injunction repeated from Mark 4:9 (Matthew 13:9, Matthew 13:43) is most emphatic.

Jesus adds the further command, "Take heed what ye hear" (Mark 4:24). They are to reject false doctrine and to refuse to be led astray by false teachers. They are to receive the word of God and give it forth to others in generous measure. As they diligently hear, study, and proclaim, their precious possession of the gospel and their power to proclaim it will increase. A little parable of the

seed, recorded only by Mark follows at this point in his report of the sermon (Mark 4:26-29). A farmer sows seed in the ground and goes about his other tasks. Day and night the seed germinates and grows. The farmer does not understand the secret of its growth. Finally comes the harvest. The key word in the parable is automate, which in both versions is translated of herself: “The earth bringeth forth fruit of herself” (Mark 4:28). God has created the soil of such nature that when the seed with its mysterious power is planted in the soil, it sprouts and grows as sunshine and rain permit. God has created the human heart with such marvelous qualities of understanding, emotion, and will, that when the divine seed of the word of God is brought into contact with the heart it is the natural result which God has planned: the seed germinates, grows, and yields a harvest. The tragic failure of much seed in the parable of the sower is due to man’s perversity. The seed God furnishes in His revelation is perfect. The human heart God has created is adequate by its very nature. Man must beware how he hears and what he hears.

Two brief parables of the future triumph of the kingdom are now added — the mustard seed and the leaven. The two parables with which the sermon opens, while filled with solemn warnings, might have given a somber cast to the entire sermon.

God’s Triumph But these two brief parables which follow show that God will not only triumph over the wicked in the end, but that during the very process of history there will be tremendous growth of the kingdom and permeating influence over all the world. Science has shown that the seed of tobacco is smaller than the mustard seed, but Jesus was not teaching botany. He was not robbing man of the privilege of discovering that which was within his reach. He was revealing the secrets of heaven and eternity. Jesus was speaking of the seeds that were sown in a garden. Of these seeds the mustard seed was the smallest.

Scenery Details

It would be a mistake to undertake to make the birds represent a definite parallel in the spiritual realm. They are a part of the scenery in the parable. They help to picture the beneficent power and influence of the church. The principle of the parable is the astonishing growth from the smallest of seeds sown in a garden to the largest of the herbs. The parable suggests gradual growth. A woman is the person who is the center of the parable of leaven because a woman was the person who made the bread. It is true to life. It is not necessary to give a hidden meaning to this feature of the parable. The Greek word for measure means about a peck and a half. Three measures would make a large amount of bread. But since they had to bake it in outdoor ovens of clay, it was customary to make large amounts at once.

It is immediately evident that the comparison of the church with leaven does not fit, if one insists on the details being parallel. Leaven is the source of the decay of food. It ordinarily in comparisons carries this obnoxious quality as its main idea. Thus Jesus warned His disciples against “the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (Matthew 16:6). Their evil teaching, example, and influence were to be abhorred. But there is nothing of this aspect of leaven in the parable of the sermon on parables If we seek the principle taught, it is plain that only the permeating nature of yeast is cited. The church is to have a leavening influence on all the wicked world. The Hidden Treasure

Two little parables follow concerning the exceedingly precious character of the kingdom and the fact that to gain it demands and justifies the giving up of everything the world can offer. We see again the mistake of trying to make the details match. Observe the immoral conduct of this man who finds the hidden treasure. He is working in or traveling through another man's land. When he discovers the treasure, he does not go to the owner of the property and reveal this fact to him. He looks in all directions to see that no one is in sight, and then hides the treasure. He buys the land for its own price. But in a parable it is the principle we must seek. It may have been that this very thing had happened and that Jesus was citing a historic incident. People may have looked at one another and whispered, "I heard about this man and the treasure." It teaches the principle of the precious character of the kingdom. It underscores the fact that the man had to sell all that he had to buy the field. It gives forth a grand challenge to all who hear that they must make a complete surrender if they would gain the kingdom. The Central Principle The parable of the pearl of great price has the same basic principle. It sets before us the important nature of our choices in life. If all we had to do was to choose between good and bad, it would not be so difficult. But we must constantly choose between good and better. At times these decisions are supremely difficult. But until we are ready to surrender everything to Christ, we are not fit to be His followers. The pearl fancier knew and loved pearls. He had many goodly pearls. But he knew there must be somewhere a pearl above all others in value. He was not content with mediocrity. He would have the best, even if it cost everything else he possessed.

Examples in Acts

It is interesting to look through the Book of Acts with its fascinating account of conversions in order to see how many of then' seem to be like the hidden-treasure parable and how many resemble the pearl of great price. The man who found the treasure knew nothing of its existence. He came upon it suddenly and with great surprise. The pearl fancier knew there must be a pearl of great price and kept seeking it. Cornelius and the eunuch, both of whom were earnestly seeking the way of life, might well be classified with the pearl fancier. The Philippian jailor, who came suddenly upon the glorious good news of salvation God has sent to the world, is like the man who unexpectedly discovered the hidden treasure.

Parable of the Net The last parable of the series is distinctly a parable of judgment. There is a majestic movement through this entire sermon as first a solemn warning is given to the hearers of their responsibility for receiving and obeying the good news of the kingdom. The parable of the sower was followed by a parable of the judgment which will finally come upon the wicked and bring blessedness to the righteous — the parable of the tares. Two little parables then predict the mighty, eventual triumph of the kingdom of God. Two parables present the challenge of the exceedingly precious character of the kingdom and that the gaining of the kingdom requires the surrender of all worldly objectives. The parable of the net cast into the sea warns that not all those who seek to gain the kingdom will do so. In this parable there is no effort to suggest what will happen to the rest of the fish which are still in the sea. Only those in the net, which plainly represents the catch, are considered. The folly of expecting details to fit again is seen. The fish are taken by force. Death is the fate of all that are taken. An object such as a fish could only in a most limited manner represent intelligent man with freedom of the will. But the principle of this parable is not obscure. There will he two different kinds of people who will be within the net — good and bad. There will be a time of separation. Each will he accorded his proper fate. The part that the angels

will have in the summons to final judgment and the terrible fate of the wicked are emphasized in this parable as in the parable of the tares. The sermon in parables has as a sort of epilogue a germ parable of the householder who had the wisdom to provide things both new and old: fresh garden vegetables and meat — the fresher, the better; the old, long-cherished, precious heirlooms of the household still in constant use. How foolish it would be to reject either because it was old or new regardless of its worth and our need. To say that we will have only new things in our homes would be as foolish as it would be fatal to say we will have only old things. A famous daily newspaper in America carried at its masthead for many years this maxim, “if new and true, not otherwise.” This is a good motto for a newspaper, but what dreadful folly for a life! We should say for our lives, “If true and valuable, whether old or new, not otherwise.” The listeners to this mysterious sermon were evidently saying to themselves, “What strange new teaching is this!” Jesus challenges them to cherish the old which they have as given of God, but to welcome now this new revelation of final glory.

Jesus’ Objectives This profoundly difficult sermon sifted the crowd by offering a rebuff to those who were hardhearted in their unbelief, to those who were shallow in their attitude and endurance, and to those who were engulfed in worldliness. That this was a definite purpose of Jesus is made clear in the private explanation Jesus gave to the disciples (Matthew 13:10-17). But any earnest listeners in the crowd would have been stimulated to diligent study and could have found help in unraveling the difficult parables by continuing as His disciples. The sermon itself carries no such statement of purpose. The conclusion of the sermon is warm and inviting. Particularly intriguing is the almost casual reference to the men of scholarly instincts and attainments who have been attracted to Jesus — “every scribe who hath been made a disciple to the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 13:52). How many such scribes were in this vast crowd listening to this sermon? The conclusion of the sermon offers “an invitation to learning” — heavenly learning.

068. Chapter 9 - Hard Sayings

Chapter 9 - Hard Sayings Matthew 8:18-22;Luke 9:57-62 Accounts of Matthew and Luke

Matthew and Luke give different locations in their narratives to these replies to persons proposing to follow Jesus. Both arrangements give impressive background settings. It is very difficult to determine which is offering the chronological arrangement. It hardly seems probable that such striking requests and replies should have been given twice. In the arrangement of Matthew these exchanges with would-be followers are described just as Jesus was about to enter into a boat and cross to the eastern side of the lake. Following the order of Mark and Luke as to the location of the miracle of stilling the tempest, the conversations with these questioners would be placed just after the sermon in parables and before the stilling of the tempest. Luke places his record of conversations that are very similar at a considerably later time in the ministry of Jesus after the transfiguration scene and in the midst of a private journey through Samaria to the Feast of Tabernacles. It rather seems that Luke introduces this account of these strange replies of Jesus incidentally as further material he is presenting, but not in chronological order. The Scribe

“Teacher, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest….The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” The sermon in parables had ended with a declaration about scribes who were bent on becoming disciples “to the kingdom of heaven.” This implies there were such scholars who were willing to break with their close associates of the very inner circle of the sect of the Pharisees and become followers of Jesus. Such a bold move would require courage and initiative. The experiences of Nicodemus show what they might expect from their former colleagues. But it is also possible that such scholars as made this move might have selfish motives of future grandeur for themselves which they would acquire by being the first of the scholars to join in the messianic movement of Jesus.

Luke does not specify, as does Matthew, that this first questioner was a scribe. This is such a striking detail it makes one wonder again whether it can be possible that these extraordinary replies were repeated to different questioners on different occasions. One would expect Luke to mention the fact if this were actually one of the national leaders who was making this request. To the weight on this side of tile argument must be added the fact that at the close of Luke’s account he relates the question and answer in regard to a third man, a conversation which is not mentioned in Matthew’s Gospel. Those who hold that these are two similar but different groups of conversations, each recorded in its proper setting by Matthew and Luke, would emphasize strongly the fact that this third exchange is recorded by Luke alone. The Crisis

Matthew introduces this account of the coming of the scribe to Jesus with his enthusiastic proposal to follow Him wherever He goes, with the following statement, “Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave commandment to depart unto the other side” (Matthew 8:18). This is precisely the opposite of the conduct we should expect from Christ. The introduction to the account of the sermon on the mount represents that when He saw the multitudes He went up into a mountain, selected a proper amphitheater where all might hear, and delivered this tremendous

sermon. But now when He sees great multitudes, He deliberately departs from their midst by boat. They cannot follow Him, at least not en masse. Why was this? This confirms our conclusion that this was the occasion of the sermon in parables when He sifted the crowd by this difficult sermon. Thus He prevented the worldly and violent elements in the crowd from taking control of His movement. This should throw some light on the ideas and motives of this scribe who, in the midst of the enthusiasm for turning the campaign of Jesus over into a worldly objective of politics and war, decided he would here and now cast in his lot with Jesus. His proposal is so sweeping it seems to leave nothing more that could be asked. To follow Jesus no matter where He went seems to imply also no matter what happens, what must be surrendered, or what sufferings and sacrifices are entailed. It is self-evident from the reply of Jesus that this scribe had not counted the cost. He had not thought through the proposition he submitted. He had little or no idea of what it would mean in the way of hardships, ostracism and persecution. He had only the bright vision of how Jesus could use His miraculous power any time He would to bring in the glorious worldly kingdom which the scribe pictured. This is not specifically stated.

Jesus liked to give cryptic answers which the hearers could solve after deliberate study. The inspired writers of the New Testament do not mar the impact of Jesus' ministry on their readers by inserting unnecessary explanations. The readers of the gospel accounts are also left to solve the riddles. It is clear that Jesus read the heart of this scribe and knew that his motives were selfish and worldly, his outlook and determination shallow and insufficient. At least he needed to be challenged sharply. Not the least of the intriguing features of the account is that we are not told what the result was in each case as various men proposed to follow Jesus and were given blunt rebuffs. We are told later that the rich young ruler went away sorrowing. But we still should like to know whether he came at Pentecost, as the church was established, to confess Christ in fulness of faith and sacrificial devotion.

Impact on Disciples

We are also caused to wonder what the impact of this blunt reply to this scholar was upon the rough and ready men who had been chosen as the apostles of Christ. How did they feel to hear Jesus say in such lonely words, "The Son of man hath not where to lay His head"? Did it shock their exalted ideas of a messianic kingdom of worldly glory? How far were they enmeshed in the popular conceptions? How much was this warning needed in their thinking as in that of the scribe? They knew how true it was that Jesus had no earthly home of His own. Many times they must have camped by the roadside and slept on the hard ground like tough veterans in military campaigns. They could picture readily the grandeur and affluence with which Jesus could have surrounded Himself by means of the miraculous power at His command. When the disciples had left all and followed Jesus, Peter had not sold his house and his boat and turned the money into the evangelistic campaign. His wife and mother-in-law, and whatever other members of the household there may have been, would have needed shelter and protection. The house and the boat were ever at the command of Jesus. Did Peter think, as he heard Jesus make this remark, that he was thankful he could offer his home to Jesus on any and every occasion when Jesus chose to work in Capernaum? And what of their own future? Was this grand messianic kingdom to be of the variety that would leave them also without a place to lay their head? Row many nights did they ponder this saying of Jesus as they lay down on the ground to sleep with no place to stay. When the Samaritan village refused to allow them even to spend the night in their midst, James and John

had been moved to hot indignation.

Luke presents a strong line of contact between the rejection of Jesus by this Samaritan village, even for an overnight stay, and this saying about Jesus having no place to lay His head. He records this saying immediately after his account of the churlish inhospitality of the Samaritan village. Either as the saying was originally delivered or in the mind of Luke as he records another item of interest, there is this definite illustration at hand. Were the apostles now beset by inner protests that it was most shocking that the Messiah should find Himself without a place to lay His head? Verily they had much yet to learn about the spiritual nature and objectives of the kingdom Jesus was about to establish. What humiliation must now have been the part of this scholar. Evidently he had felt he was conferring a very great favor on Jesus to offer in such reckless fashion to follow Him wherever He would go. Having had such a struggle to decide on making such a sweeping proposal to Christ, it must have been shattering to have his offer rejected. Obviously his ideas and motives did not actually match his words. It was not really unconditional surrender he was offering, but a shrewd, selfish move to secure a high place for himself in the kingdom. Here was further miraculous evidence of the power of Jesus to read the human heart as if it were an open book. From the Gospel of Mark we learn that as Jesus left in the boat for the other side of the lake, there were other boats which accompanied Him. The speculation is often suggested that Mark, a young lad, was in one of the other boats. A similar speculation might be added to our thinking as to whether this scholar turned away in disappointment or whether he actually attempted to follow in one of the other boats that were caught in the terrible storm which Jesus stilled by a miracle.

“And another of the disciples said unto Him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus saith unto him, Follow me and leave the dead to bury their own dead.”

Identity of the Man At first sight this appears to be in individual who has already a different relationship with Christ than the rejected scholar. This man is a “disciple” who is proposing to continue his following Jesus. But this thought is checked by the fact that he is called “another disciple.” The scribe must be counted as a disciple in the sense of his general inclination to cast in his lot with Jesus. Luke gives further light on this or a similar incident, “And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father” (Luke 9:59). Here the record makes clear that Jesus gives the command to this man to follow Him. This is in sharp contrast with the refusal implied in His blunt warning to the scribe that he did not realize what it was he was proposing to attempt.

Some hold that this second man must have been one of the apostles who is now seeking permission to return home on this urgent errand. They suggest it was James or John since Zebedee disappears from the narrative at an early time. They surmise his death at this time and hence this request to return home for the funeral. They point out that Jesus selected but twelve apostles and therefore would not be inviting someone outside this circle to follow Him. But the record does not show that Jesus was making this man one of the inner circle. There was a much wider group of followers who were with Jesus when He permitted, and were always at His command when He desired. There was a distinct group of seventy disciples who were trained and sent out on a missionary tour as the twelve had been sent. The twelve apostles were with Jesus in the boat when He left on this occasion, but again we come back to the interesting detail that other

disciples at tempted to follow Jesus on this occasion in other boats. Certainly Jesus invited the rich young ruler to come and follow Him. He was not offering to make him an apostle by this invitation, but only a disciple. The Situation

Some offer the interpretation that the father of this man was not actually dead but only desperately ill. His sickness might last a long time. Hence the refusal because it would entail a considerable break in the man's service to Christ. The record does not say that the father is dead, but this is the implication. The effort to say that the father is only sick and the proposal might mean months of delay in taking up the service of Christ again is plainly an attempt to dilute this hard saying of Jesus and make it seem less heartless. Moreover this explanation contradicts the fundamental teaching of the text. Jesus makes the sharp contrast: burying a dead body vs. ministering to a living soul. To change over the burial of a dead body into the ministry to a living soul destroys the contrast and contradicts the principle.

Christ First The word first stands out in this man's request. instead of making Christ "first" and the doing of God's will in seeking to save souls "first," the man proposes to put something else "first." In his reply Jesus points out that when a person is dead nothing more can be done for him to change his eternal destiny. "It is appointed unto every man once to die, and after this cometh judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). This disciple has not only made a mistake in putting his relationship to any human being before his service to Christ, but he has overlooked the urgent nature of the campaign in which he is engaged, seeking to save lost men while it is still possible to win them to faith, repentance and obedience. Those who are spiritually dead will not fail to take care of the detail of burying the dead body of a loved one. The very necessity of self-preservation would prevent even the most callous from leaving the corpse unburied. It is a beautiful and altogether proper thing for the loved ones to express their devotion, gratitude, and sorrow on the occasion of burying the dead. There is no idea of deprecating this final act of devotion. But the absolute supremacy of devotion to Christ and the exceeding urgency of the task of seeking to save the lost are the lessons which this man has yet to learn.

Funerals

There is a simplicity about the funerals recorded in both the Old and New Testaments which stands in sharp contrast with the pyramids of Egypt and the entire emphasis upon material provisions for the dead and endless ceremonies multiplied in pagan lands. The perversity of unbelief has attempted to make out an argument from this that the Old Testament leaders did not believe in a life after death. But see the simplicity of the record of Stephen's funeral in the New Testament, "And devout men buried Stephen, and made great lamentation over him" (Acts 8:2). In a chapter of The Everlasting Gospel entitled "The Message of Two Ancient Tombs," the contrast is drawn between the amazing treasures buried with Tut-Ankhamen in his tomb in Egypt and the simplicity of Jesus' burial — the one tomb, full after three thousand years; the other, empty on the third day. This shows the contrast seen in both the Old and New Testaments between the attitude of the inspired leaders in both periods and the super-emphasis given in pagan lands to funerals. Our entire attitude toward world evangelization is at fault when we find this reply of Jesus heartless and shocking. If some loved one is still in the burning building and may be saved, is not this the urgent objective rather than sorrowful respect to be paid to one who is now beyond rescue? Our trouble is that we do not have a sufficiently vivid realization of the peril surrounding those without

Christ and the critical need to go to their rescue while it is yet day. “Follow me [in search of the lost and perishing that still may be saved] and leave those who are dead [spiritually dead to the high mission of saving the living] bury their own dead [physically dead and hence no longer in a state where they may be helped spiritually].”

Outcome As in the case of the scribe we are left to surmise what the impact of this shocking reply was upon this disciple. If it was actually one of the twelve apostles who thus was proposing to interrupt his service to Christ, then we can be sure he accepted without question Jesus’ decision (Matthew 8:23). If it was one of the larger group of disciples, we can only conjecture as to what course he followed. Probably most readers of the texts of Matthew and Luke will conclude that the scribe turned back from any further attempt to follow Jesus at this time and that this disciple did exactly the opposite and continued his present discipleship rather than interrupt it by returning to his father’s funeral. But the texts do not actually give us any further information except the hard sayings which Jesus gave in reply.

Objective?

“And another also said, I will follow thee, Lord; but first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house. But Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:61, Luke 9:62). This man introduced by Luke is also already a disciple of Jesus, for he has put his hand to the plow. As in the case of the preceding disciple, he is proposing to interrupt this service to Christ by a return to his home. His plan has to do with the living rather than the dead, but there is no indication that it is evangelistic in nature. Matthew had given a farewell banquet to his old comrades when he abandoned his occupation as tax collector to go with Jesus. But his objective had been evangelistic. He had sought to have all his friends see Jesus and hear Him challenge their corrupt way of life and appeal to them to repent and turn to God. This disciple who desires to return home and bid farewell to all that are in his home does not ask permission to return home and preach the gospel to them.

Concentration The answer to this third man is as blunt and severe as to the two preceding men. It also states a universal principle which is applicable to all the world and all the centuries. To decide to plow is one thing, and to be diligent and consistent and plow a straight furrow by giving all one’s attention to the task is another. This saying makes one think of the magnificent song The Blind Plowman. “Set my feet upon the sod, Turn my face toward the East, And thanks be to God.” The blind plowman can look neither ahead nor to the rear, but his heart is full of the joy of achieving useful work and he seeks careful directions from which to start his day’s plowing. With all concentration he will try to plow a straight furrow with the help of instincts and experience. When any plowman is breaking up land to be planted, his plowing will be uneven if he attempts to look back while the animals are tugging ahead without direction from him. If he is cultivating crops already planted, he will destroy much by the wavering course of his cultivator. This disciple seems recently to have joined the company of Jesus. Farewells to his relatives and friends are still high in his thinking and desires. He has not concentrated on the task of telling others about Jesus. Luke records the response to the second disciple as more definite than “Follow me”; he has, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but go thou and publish abroad the kingdom of God.” This also is the task of this man who would interrupt his work for Christ by farewells to relatives and old friends. To be fit for the kingdom of God, a man must proclaim the kingdom of God. He must plow a straight

furrow.

069. Chapter 10 - The Stilling of the Tempest

Chapter 10 - The Stilling of the Tempest Matthew 8:23-27;Mark 4:35-41;Luke 8:22-25

“What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?” (Matthew 8:27). A storm can become wild and boisterous even on a small lake. The Sea of Galilee is six and a half by twelve miles. It is 682 feet below sea level and is surrounded by high mountains. The winds swoop down on the lake, and a severe storm quickly brings the peril of disaster. The Boat The matter-of-fact narratives do not tell us whose boat it was in which they embarked as they bade farewell to the multitude. We conclude that it was Peter’s boat. His home in Capernaum was headquarters for the campaign. How large a boat was this that could accommodate thirteen passengers and could take on a cargo of fish? The narratives tell of the disciples’ rowing this boat. Undoubtedly it was of such size that each man handled only one oar. And it would certainly have been equipped with sails. Who took care of this boat so that on every occasion it would be ready for His use whenever He arrived, even after a lengthy absence? How many unknown, obscure disciples there must have been in the second line, men who were glad to do the most menial service for Christ. It would take a great deal of work to keep a boat used for fishing enterprise fit for passenger service on short notice. The Time

Mark notes that “on that day when even was come, He saith unto them, Let us go over unto the other side” (Mark 4:35). This definitely establishes that this miracle of the stilling of the tempest occurred on the same day as the delivery of the sermon in parables It is called “the busy day” of Jesus’ ministry. We know of more events that happened on this day than any other with the exception of the last week of Jesus’ ministry. It was afternoon before they started across the lake. Mark adds a significant phrase in describing Jesus’ departure, “And leaving the multitude, they take him with them, even as he was, in the boat” (Mark 4:36). How was this, “even as he was”? Without food or time to procure food, without rest and exhausted from incredible labors. This reminds us of the note John gives of the physical exhaustion of Jesus at Jacob’s well, “Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus by the well” (John 4:6). How quickly Jesus was stirred again to action on both occasions. The call of human need was all that was required. “Thus” sounds very much like “even as he was.” The Master The stern of the boat was the most favorable location for rest as far as space was concerned. And the bow would be more likely to be showered by spray. If the person who manned the tiller of the boat was also here at the stern guiding the course of the craft, the boat was still large enough to allow Jesus to fall asleep here. Mark uses the Greek structure where the noun is omitted after the definite article “the,” and this must be supplied by the reader when he reads how Jesus was asleep “on the (….) for the head.” It was not a mattress sufficient to give comfort to the entire body, but a pillow which sufficed to give rest to the head. We do not know how long Jesus slept thus. It is the only time we have such a scene described. The disciples are recorded as going to sleep in times when Jesus was most intent upon His mission (on the mount of transfiguration and in the garden of Gethsemane). Here on the lake we think of the boat going forward slowly as it sailed under a gentle breeze. They were traveling from the northwest corner of the lake to a point about midway of the eastern side. An hour or two

would certainly have sufficed for an ordinary crossing. The storm seems to have arisen when they were in the middle of the lake. This scene is usually underscored as one that presents in quick succession the humanity and the divinity of Christ. The picture of Jesus so worn out from His labors that He takes this opportunity for a brief rest makes Him seem very close to us in our human frailty. We never read of the disciples interrupting any devotional period in the life of Christ, and it is only when facing the dire menace of the storm that they awaken Jesus from this brief rest. The Storm The word used by Mark and Luke to describe the fury of this storm is onomatopoetic (the sound suggests the meaning), lailaps. Matthew uses the term seismos to describe the storm. The relation of this word to our term seismograph is immediately apparent. The word can mean an earthquake, but it is also a common word for a tempest in that a storm causes a shaking or commotion. The word lailaps used by Mark and Luke means, according to Thayer, “never a single gust of wind, but a storm breaking from black thunderclouds in furious gusts, with floods of rain, and throwing everything topsy-turvy” (Aristotle, De Mundo). “It is a whirlwind revolving from below upwards.”

Even though storms descend very suddenly upon the Sea of Galilee from the surrounding mountains, the disciples must have seen these dark, menacing clouds sweeping down upon them. Were they not tempted to awaken Jesus even as they saw the storm approaching? Is it not remarkable that they were able to control themselves and not awaken Jesus until they were on the point of sinking? If torrents of rain were now descending, then the fact that Jesus was able to sleep with the wild storm bringing the boat to the point of final destruction and with the downpour of rain upon Him, is all the more astonishing. His exhaustion was very great.

Impending Disaster

Mark says, “the waves beat into the boat, insomuch that the boat was now filling” (Mark 4:37). Matthew’s account is perfectly clear in the Greek text, but the translation may leave the reader pondering how it could be possible for a person to be asleep in such a boat, “insomuch that the boat was covered with the waves” (Matthew 8:24). A result clause in Greek is introduced by hoste and can take either the indicative or the infinitive. With the indicative it means the result is actually achieved; with the infinitive it describes a tendency or a partial fulfillment. Hence Matthew says in the Greek, “was about to be covered with the waves.” At every crash of the waves against the side of the boat, the water was being thrown over the gunwale into the boat. The stern of the boat was evidently higher than the side where the waves were crashing over. Luke uses nautical terms with great facility. This does not show that Luke was a sailor any more than his abundant use of medical terms gives any absolute proof that he was a physician. We know he was a physician by the explicit declaration of Paul (Colossians 4:14). Luke’s use of nautical terms shows his high educational background. He says of the storm, “And there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filling with water, and were in jeopardy” (Luke 8:23). They were filling is a nautical term for the condition of a boat which is sinking. With water is added by the translators to assist the understanding of the reader. The a.v. is not quite so accurate in rendering, “and yet they were filled with water.” The process was not as yet complete. Luke also says in typical nautical language of their start and voyage, “They launched forth. But as they sailed he fell asleep” (Luke 8:22, Luke 8:23). The Disciples The action of the disciples in awakening Jesus was a last resort. They felt that death was close at hand. Several of the disciples were fishermen quite accustomed to violent storms on this lake. They had faith enough to believe that if He was awake He could

save them. They did not have faith enough to understand that there was no danger with Jesus in the midst asleep or awake. Thus the first thing Jesus did, when He was awakened, was to rebuke them. Matthew shows that the first thing Jesus said was, “Why are ye fearful? O ye of little faith?” (Matthew 8:26). Mark and Luke record the additional rebuke Jesus gave after the tempest had been stilled. The adverb yet stands out in Mark’s account, “Why are ye fearful? have ye not yet faith?” They had seen so many miracles which proved His claims to deity they should have known that God would not permit them to perish in this storm. Luke records the blunt question, “Where is your faith?” (Luke 8:25). The Accounts The independence of the accounts is most impressive in light of the modern efforts to cut the Gospel narratives up into “sources” and to claim that the writers copied from one another or from similar sources. Professor James Hardy Ropes of Harvard was very emphatic upon the proposition that the source theories must stand or fall upon comparison of both the similarities and the differences in the accounts. The shallow idea of some is that the similarities must be considered, but the differences are to be ignored; this is merely the proposition that favorable facts will be counted, but any facts that would contradict the theory will be suppressed. It is perfectly natural that persons recording the same experience or the same event will tell many of the same details but will have some details that are peculiar to their record. Added to this there is the miraculous inspiration which guided the writers. It is no adequate reply to sneer at this as “the dictation theory of inspiration” and to say that it is not the popular view today. The writers of the Bible claim to have had miraculous guidance of the Holy Spirit. That the writers were permitted to use their own ability is seen in the difference in style of the authors. Luke’s use of nautical terms in this account is an illustration. But certainly the Holy Spirit could have directed the very words a writer used, if there was need for it. That so many of the same events are recorded in the Synoptics is most natural. That so few of the same events (with the exception of the last week) and so many new events were recorded by John who must have had the other three narratives in hand, is a deathblow to the Two-source Theory and to Form Criticism.

Excited Appeals From the three accounts we draw the conclusion that as the disciples awakened Jesus, in their fright and excitement, some cried out one thing to Him and others made appeal in other words. Particularly vivid is Luke’s account as he pictures the repetition of the word Master, “Master, Master, we perish.” This is precisely the manner of awakening someone in a desperate emergency as one lays hold of a shoulder to have touch assist in awakening him; and repeats the name of the person in the efforts to awaken. All three accounts show how sharp and monosyllabic the appeals were: “Save, Lord; we perish” (Matthew 8:25). It was particularly fitting that Matthew should be the one to record that Jesus rebuked the disciples before He rebuked the storm. They had told Jesus they were actually sinking. Mark reports a rebuke to Jesus, as if Jesus, even when asleep, should have shown more regard for them than to have allowed them to come into such jeopardy, “Teacher, carest thou not that we perish?” (Mark 4:38). When they said, “Carest thou not that we perish?” did the disciples mean to imply that a person is responsible for lack of concern when he is unconscious? Was this a wild, incoherent outcry without depth of thought? Did it seem impossible to them that He could actually be sound asleep in the midst of the storm? Was this outcry based on their faith in His mysterious personality and power? Since He could read the human heart, did they also feel instinctively that He knew what was going on, even though asleep? And why did they not say, “Master, you perish”? Was this unmitigated selfishness creeping out unaware that they should express alarm for their lives rather than for His life? Was it not rather that they felt He could surmount and survive no matter what happened, but their survival was in doubt?

Fear The reasons Jesus rebuked the disciples before He rebuked the storm were to show them that there was nothing to fear; it was more important for them to have faith; the storm could not harm Him or them. We hear much of the adage “there is nothing to fear but fear,” but is this true? If a person is blindly walking toward the edge of a great precipice in the dark, is it the truth to tell him there is nothing to fear but fear? We should fear God in the sense of awe, reverence, and complete surrender of our lives to Him, but we should not attempt to deny the actuality of the temptations and perils which surround us or of death that finally overtake us. Wholesome, practical regard for the difficulties we face should constantly be taken into account, but a Christian should walk with his head erect and never succumb to cringing fear. The reason Jesus also rebuked the disciples after the storm was stilled was their need for further reassurance. The tense silence of the sudden cessation of wind and waves gave particular opportunity for this pointed instruction.

Jesus’ Rebukes

All three accounts make it very clear that Jesus addressed both the wind and the sea and that both obeyed Him: “...rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm” (Matthew 8:26); “And he awoke and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm” (Mark 4:39); “And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water; and they ceased, and there was a calm” (Luke 8:24). It is most important to see that Jesus spoke to the sea as well as the wind. Sometimes winds cease suddenly over the Sea of Galilee, as suddenly as they descended upon the lake, but in no instance do wild waves instantly subside into “a great calm.” The Miracle

All efforts of unbelievers to make out that this was not a miracle, but merely a sudden chance cessation of wind such as might be expected any time, attack the writers as guilty of deliberate falsification and would make Jesus a madman who talked nonsense to the winds. The writers do not argue trying to prove it was a miracle; they simply tell what happened. The disciples who were fishermen were experienced in such storms, but even they had given up hope of survival, except for miraculous aid from Jesus. They appealed to Jesus to save them. They did not know how, but they knew He had the miraculous power. He rebuked them because they had not had more faith in Him. Jesus actually spoke to the winds and the sea. Both obeyed His command. Jesus added a further rebuke of their lack of faith. The impact of the miracle on the disciples is stated in such a reserved manner as to give most convincing evidence that this is no invented myth palmed off as history. “What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?” (Matthew 8:27); “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” (Mark 4:41); “Who then is this, that he commandeth even the winds and the water, and they obey him?” (Luke 8:25). The disciples were evidently bailing out the boat and getting it into “shipshape” as they whispered and murmured to one another of their amazement.

Impact on Disciples

Nathaniel had used the title “Son of God” in his declaration of faith at their first meeting, but the disciples are enlarging their conception of this Messianic title. How can Jesus be a man and have such incredible power? They see and know He is a man in their midst, but they sense that He is more than a man. Both Mark and Luke record the fear of the disciples after the storm and sea had been miraculously stilled at a word from Jesus. The use of the aorist tense in describing the instant cessation of wind and waves is most emphatic. The imperfect tense would have indicated

continued action, but the aorist shows the instant obedience to Jesus' command. This was no mere fear in the sense of shock from the close adventure with death. Mark shows that their fear was related to their question as to whether Jesus could possibly be a mere man or whether He was also God. Luke says, "Being afraid they marveled, saying,..." They had been afraid for their lives before in the midst of the storm. They are afraid now of being in the awesome presence of the supernatural. Both in the Old and the New Testaments we find men full of fear when an angel suddenly appeared to them. The presence of Jesus was even more awesome in the stillness of the calm.

Matthew, the eyewitness, simply tells what was said and done, and what happened, as he looked back upon this tense moment when he was saved from death in the storm and saw the wind suddenly cease at Jesus' command and the waves that would have rolled for hours instantly reduced to complete calm. He does not attempt to argue for any conclusions as to the deity of Christ. The facts are quite able to speak for themselves. Mark and Luke, who record the account as they have had it from eyewitnesses, also limit themselves to bare statement of facts. The Holy Spirit obviously exercised a divine restraint upon them for us to have so brief a record. We would have attempted to write a book about this single incident. It is one of the unique features of these inspired accounts that the curtain is raised and lowered on one scene after another with the most condensed account of each. The Other Boats

We cannot help wondering what happened to the other boats that had accompanied Jesus and the apostles. Was this ordinary procedure that others would insist on remaining in the company when Jesus left with His apostles? Did these boatmen turn back and make for the shore when they saw the storm approaching? Were the boats still close enough to see the apostles awaken Jesus and to see what He did as He stretched forth His hands and commanded the wind and the waves to be still? They could hardly have heard what Jesus said. The whistling storm would have drowned out any remote hearing. Was John Mark in one of the other boats? This is the natural speculation since Mark is the only one who notes the fact that these boats followed along with the Master's boat. Did the men in these boats turn back after the storm feeling they had had enough for one day and that they had seen enough for a lifetime? There is nothing to indicate that they were present when Jesus and the apostles landed at Gergesa.

Proof of the Miracle

Skeptics try desperately to escape the force of this stupendous miracle; they argue that the storm happened to cease as suddenly as it had begun and at the very moment Jesus spoke. But when they go through the Bible and try to claim that every miracle was an accident, their arguments are not even funny. Storms on the Sea of Galilee do sometimes cease suddenly, but the waves roll on for a considerable period of time. The lake does not change from the fury of mountainous waves to a level, placid surface in an instant. The evangelists declare that Jesus addressed both the wind and the waves. The eyewitnesses declared that both the wind and the sea obeyed Him. The simple tribute of the astounded disciples constitutes testimony of men expert on storms on this sea, slow to believe in the supernatural character of Christ, and possessed of noble ideals: "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" (Matthew 8:27). Any dishonest person, attempting to inflate a natural event into a miracle by concocting imaginary details, would never have been content with such a modest conclusion as this. Nor would he have let it be known

that the disciples were rebuked for their lack of faith. Nor would he have been content to let the simple record of what happened stand on its own merits without any argument to prove that it actually was a miracle.

Matthew and the other evangelists do not attempt to argue about the reality of the miracle or what it proves; they state the simple facts, and the impression the facts made upon the eyewitnesses; they leave the reader to draw his own conclusions. Nothing could be more powerful than such a record; so brief, so unadorned, so factual.

070. Chapter 11 - The Gadarene Demoniacs

Chapter 11 - The Gadarene Demoniacs Matthew 8:28-34;Mark 5:1-20;Luke 8:26-39 The Three Accounts

“Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee” (Mark 5:19). This beautiful conclusion to this exciting account furnishes further evidence of Jesus’ love and power. So exhausted that He was sleeping in the stern of the boat during the wild storm, Jesus now passes to another crisis in this day so crowded with extraordinary events. A glance at the three accounts immediately causes the fact to stand out that Mark, whose Gospel is so brief, gives by far the longest account of this miracle. He has twenty verses; Luke, fourteen; Matthew, only seven. Yet Matthew and Luke are supposed by the critics to have copied from Mark or from similar sources. Moreover, Matthew mentions the fact that there were two demon-possessed men, whereas Mark and Luke mention only the one who was the dominating personality. The three accounts differ in their manner of describing the location. According to the a.s.v. Matthew says, “the country of the Gadarenes”; Marks says “Gerasenes”; Luke has “Gerasenes,” with “Gergesenes” in a footnote indicating manuscript difference. The a.v. of Matthew 8:28 has “Gergesenes”; Mark 5:1 says “Gadarenes”; Luke 8:37 has “Gadarenes.” The wide variation in the manuscript readings at this point shows the confusion that overtook the scribes copying the manuscripts before them and the feeling that there must be some error in the manuscripts they had.

Dr. Thomson discovered midway in the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee the ruins of a village which bears the Arabic name Khersa. This seems to represent the original title of Gergesa. If Gergesenes in some manuscripts of Matthew or Luke is correct, the reference is to this local village. The manuscripts which have Gadarenes refer to the important city of Gadara some sixteen miles to the southeast of where Jesus landed. It would be natural for the name of the larger city to be given to this district as well as the name of the local village.

Village, County Seat, and Capital

Mark’s reference in “Gerasenes” is to Gerasa, the capital of the whole region, a famous Greco-Roman city fifty miles to the southeast, and the head of this entire Decapolis district. The a.s.v. has “Gerasenes” in both Mark and Luke. It would be natural that these two books which were sent out to the entire Roman world should carry the name of the larger city. An important group of manuscripts of each of the three Gospel narratives contains each of the three readings. This is one of the most puzzling manuscript differences in the Gospel accounts. We cannot be absolutely sure which was the original reading in each narrative, but the reason for a writer to mention any one of the three places is manifest, and the manner in which scribes may have been led to change the text they were copying is also evident. The Value of a Man

One might well write over this account of the healing of the demoniac at Gergesa the motto “How much then is a man of more value than a sheep!” (Matthew 12:12) — and also of more value than

two thousand hogs. The false philosophy of the world, which makes a man of less value than a beast or even inanimate types of earthly treasures, whether expressed in syllogism or in telltale conduct, is placed in the sharpest contrast to the gospel of Jesus, which makes one soul of more value than the whole world of material things. This is one of the most revolutionary things Jesus ever said: “For what shall a man be profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul” (Matthew 16:26).

Blind Commercialism The healing of the demoniac and the drowning of the swine afford an excellent opportunity for the application of this principle. How great is the worth of a man, and how great is our indebtedness to Christ for this fundamental principle which He enunciated so many times and which He finally confirmed with His own death. The people on this eastern side of the lake and in the Decapolis had been so commercialized in their attitude toward life that many of them had not even been sufficiently interested in the spiritual campaign of Jesus to cross over the lake to see and hear. They were so selfish and greedy for profit they could not see above the loss of two thousand swine to the rescue of a human soul. But this event is the bomb which Jesus hurled into the midst to shock them out of their blind devotion to earthly treasures. The Son of God

There is a striking connection between the miracle the stilling of the tempest and this miracle of the casting out of the legion of demons. The self-revelation of Jesus is brought forth by miracles. With awe and fear at the supernatural power Jesus had demonstrated, the apostles had asked one another, “What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him” (Matthew 8:27). The apostles receive immediately the answer to their perplexing question as to the mystery-enshrouded Person of Jesus, when they hear the demons cry out in fright, “What have we to do with thee, Jesus thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before our time” (Matthew 8:29). They need no introduction to Jesus; they instantly identify Him by name and declare His deity, hailing Him in terror as the final Judge of the world. The Demoniacs

Matthew gives us the information that there were two demoniacs. One was evidently so dominating and the other so secondary that Mark and Luke tell only of the one who was all-important and sufficient for the presentation of the miracle. Mark also begins his narration by recording that there was “a man with an unclean spirit” (Mark 5:2). But he later informs the reader that a multitude of demons were in possession of the man. Matthew and Luke also give this same information. It appears from the conversation of Jesus with the demoniac that one of the demons was dominant and spoke for all. This helps to explain Mark’s reduction to “a man with an unclean spirit. The tombs in which the man dwelt were hewn out of rock in former times when this region evidently had a dense population. They doubtless had been abandoned years before. This was the only sort of home or shelter the man could find. Mark describes in the greatest detail the wild conduct of the man driven by the demons: “And no man could any more bind him, no, not with a chain; because that he had often been bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been rent asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces; and no man had strength to tame him. And always night and day, in the tombs and in the mountains, he was crying out, and cutting himself with stones” (Mark 5:3-5). Matthew gives us the additional information that the two demoniacs were so fierce “that no man might pass by that way” (Matthew 8:28). Luke gives the detail that the demoniac was naked — “had worn no clothes” (Luke 8:27). This raises the problem as to how the man could have survived in winter without the protection of clothing. The warmth of the underground tombs would have helped. Luke tells us that on occasion the man was “driven into

the deserts” by the demons. Does this indicate a change of geographical location caused by cold weather? We are not told how he secured food on which to subsist. Since he is represented as attacking and driving off any travelers attempting to pass by that way, food might have been secured by violence. His family and friends may have brought food which they left for him in a convenient place. Wild growth would give meager living to him in the wilderness. Perhaps it is not so remarkable that he could sustain himself in the most primitive fashion when we see that John the Baptist was able to live in the desert. The Meeting When Jesus and the apostles landed on the shore near the habitat of this demoniac, the ordinary situation was instantly reversed. Instead of launching a vicious attack on these intruders into his domain, as he was accustomed to doing, he came running and fell down in worship before Jesus, hailing Him as the Son of God. “And when he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God? I beseech thee, torment me not” (Luke 8:28). Mark tells, “when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshipped him” (Mark 5:6). Inasmuch as the herdsmen who cared for the swine became witnesses to report in the nearby town all that had happened, we can but wonder how much of the conversation they heard. They evidently could see all that happened, although they were “a good way off from them” (Matthew 8:30). Mark reports that the herd of swine was “there on the mountain” (Mark 5:11). Luke says “an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain” (Luke 8:32). Evidently the herdsmen were keeping at a safe distance from the demoniac, but seeking fresh pasture. If a ravine gave them security from the demoniac and still offered proximity for sight and hearing, they may have heard this original outcry of the demoniac and have heard Jesus when He peremptorily cast the demons out. At any rate they could see what happened.

Identity

It is not clear who was being addressed when Jesus asked, “What is thy name? And he said, Legion; for many demons were entered into him” (Luke 8:30). If Jesus was addressing the man and preparing his heart for the miracle, then the demons did not permit the man to give his own name, but compelled him to give the answer “Legion.” If Jesus was addressing the demon who was the leader and spokesman for the multitude of demons, then the purpose of Jesus was probably to make clear that the apostles (and through them to the community and the whole world) the tremendous nature of the miracle. The very obscurity that attaches to the question may indicate that both purposes were in the mind of Christ. Sanday has pointed out how the historic reality of this miracle is strongly confirmed by the use of this Latin word Legion. It is also recorded in Mark 5:9. The introduction of this strange word gives a vivid touch of realism. When the demon attempted to identify himself he was forced to state that a whole legion of demons were together in possession of the man. The number of soldiers in a Roman legion varied at different periods. At the time of Christ it seems to have been about six thousand. The demon who controlled the Legion and spoke for them does not say that there were six thousand demons in the man, but that his name was Legion, for there were many of the demons associated together. No support is found in this incident for the effort of modern unbelievers to maintain that the demon possession seen in the New Testament is nothing more than the split personality of the insane today. The words spoken by the man under the control of the demons do not add up to nonsense. On the contrary, they show not merely keen intelligence, but supernatural knowledge. The manner in which the identity of Jesus and His divine Person are instantly recognized is united with their terror at

impending doom. They do not possess knowledge of the time when they are to be cast into hell, but they do know their fate is sealed: “Art thou come hither to torment us before the time” (Matthew 8:29). They did not think that their time had come.

Appeal of the Demons The difference in the manner of their appeal that “he would not send them out of the country” (Mark 5:10) and that “he would not command them to depart into the abyss” (Luke 8:31) probably is explained by the imperfect tense of the verb, “They kept beseeching him” (Luke 8:31). Both petitions were undoubtedly made by the demons. The Greek word for abyss is used of “the penal part of Hades which is the abode of the demons” (Revelation 9:1-11; Revelation 11:7; Revelation 17:8, Revelation 20:1, Revelation 20:3).

Luke affirms that there was “a herd of many swine feeding on the mountain” (Luke 8:32). Matthew gives the same general estimate, “a herd of many swine” (Matthew 8:30). Mark is more specific as he declares, in number about two thousand” (Mark 5:13). Thus the estimate both of the number of the demons and the number of the swine is general, but it seems there was a plurality of demons for each of the swine. The question as to why the demons asked to be permitted to enter the swine is one of difficulty and interest. Did they not know that the swine would immediately destroy themselves, and thus they would be left immediately in the disembodied state they desired to avoid? or did they have the deliberate intent of destroying the swine and thus bringing tragic rebuff to Jesus in the community as the result of the property loss? We can be certain that Jesus knew what was about to happen. The demons, if their purpose was malicious, did not thwart Him. He knew the swine would be destroyed and the people would drive Him away. But He also knew that the shock of his amazing miracle was necessary to awaken the community to hear the message which Jesus would send throughout their midst by the demoniac, who would become His chosen messenger. The request of the demons to go into the swine was granted. We can no more understand how demons could enter into and take possession of swine than how they could control a human being. But evidently they were only able to drive the swine wild in terror and were not able to control them, for the swine had no will. The location of this scene is made possible by the identification of the ruins of the village of Gergesa (Khersa) and by the fact that this is the only spot on the eastern shore of the lake where the entire terrain fits the description. This was not a precipice from which the swine leaped, but a steep place that led with such sharp descent into the sea there was no stopping of the mad stampede once it was started. It is about midway on the eastern side of the lake.

Why Swine?

It seems strange to hear of such a huge herd of swine being kept in a Jewish country, when we think of the Old Testament law against eating pork. The presence of the swine bears strong witness to the presence of the large Gentile element in the population of the Decapolis. This title is a Greek word meaning “Ten Cities.” These cities were in a league together. There was a strong Greek influence in the whole region. The possibility that the owners of the swine were Jews who were faithless to the Old Testament in this particular is an interesting possibility in light of the destruction of the swine.

Jesus’ Purpose When Jesus granted the demons leave to enter swine, it was not an act of mercy toward the demons, nor was He surprised at what happened. While the immediate sequel to the destruction of the swine would seem to indicate that the purposes of Jesus in His visit to this

country had been thwarted, the ultimate outcome shows that Jesus foresaw the entire significance of the event. He permitted the destruction of the swine knowing that it would awaken the Gergesenes from their indifference and ultimately assist in the salvation of a multitude in the community. Thus the issue turns from the relative value of one soul in contrast to a herd of two thousand swine to the value of a vast number of human beings saved from sin and doom. Added to this is the tremendous witness this miracle has given to all the ages. The Herdsmen The herdsmen fled from the scene in terror and reported to the entire community what had happened. Their occupation was now gone; hence there was no further necessity for them to remain. They probably fled because of their double fear of receiving the blame for what had happened and of suffering some worse calamity if they remained after witnessing such an event. The main thing in their report must have been the dreadful loss of private property in the destruction of the swine. How often this is the main thing which men consider — material loss — and not the rescue of human beings! Certainly the Lord of all the earth, who has created all, controls all, and permits us to use all, has the right to do as He will with His own. The perverted estimate of the value of material things and of a human soul must needs be corrected. The people must be shocked into a realization of their lost condition. The Man The people who heard the exciting news came flocking to see what had happened. Since the herdsmen had been at a distance, their account must have been fragmentary and constituted an enigma which demanded solution. “And they came to see what it was that had come to pass. And they come to Jesus, and behold him that had the legion: and they were afraid” (Mark 5:14, Mark 5:15). The change in the man is complete; to appreciate the points of emphasis, the brief description in Mark must be contrasted to his picture of the man’s former condition. The man is seated calmly, presumably receiving instruction at the feet of Jesus. Before he had been restless and untamable. Not even with ropes and chains had they been able to keep him quiet. He had been naked before, but now he was clothed — a natural token of his return to society. The apostles had undoubtedly given him these clothes from their supply of extra garments in the boat. He had been under the control of the demons before, crying in the mountains and cutting himself. Now he was in his right mind, in full possession of himself. When the crowd saw him thus, “they were afraid.” They could not understand what had happened. They did not know Jesus or His purposes. They had suffered a great loss in the destruction of the herd. They feared lest the miraculous power of Jesus might be used in some other destructive manner. The People The men who had kept the swine continued to explain excitedly to the crowd all that had happened (Mark 5:16; Luke 8:36). What they had seen is emphasized in both these accounts; we cannot be sure how much they heard of the exchanges between Jesus and the demoniac. The result was that the people begged Jesus to leave their country. The healing of the demoniac seemed not so important as the loss of the herd of swine. But the exciting and mysterious circumstances surrounding the whole event may have caused them to act as much from awe and fear as from anger. This is the only time we find Jesus using His miraculous power in a way that had destructive results, with the exception of the cursing of the fig tree. This was by no means the only time that Jesus was rejected and driven out. Two outstanding examples are the rejection and attempted destruction at Nazareth and the threat of death by which Herod Antipas attempted to drive Jesus out of His province. Jesus yielded to the requests of the people that He leave their community. He would return at a later time when they were more in the mood to listen to reason. Meanwhile He would provide accurate information for them as to what had occurred and the great good that had been accomplished by His coming into their midst. The Messenger

“But the man from whom the demons had gone out prayed him that he might be with him” (Luke 8:38). Mark informs us that this pitiful appeal was made just as Jesus “was entering into the boat” (Mark 5:18). It is not hard to understand the man’s urgent plea. His love and gratitude would naturally cause him to desire to remain in Jesus’ company. To be of service to Jesus would be the height of all that life now held for him. Moreover, he need have no fear of any return of demons to take possession of him if he could stay in the presence of Jesus. The entire countryside was filled with wild tales of his conduct during the time he had been under the control of the demons. It would be most embarrassing to go back and face all this. To get out of this whole section and away from his past would seem a most welcome relief and the most desirable course. The people also would be hostile to him, as they were to Jesus, for the loss of the swine. He would have to bear the blame for this in a large measure. As the man looked at Jesus and the disciples departing in the boat and then at the hostile crowd, it must have seemed that he must confront and overcome the world. He had been so long separated from his home and home ties there seemed nothing to bind him to his old community and everything to invite him to start forth anew in life with Jesus. His First Sermon

We often long to have heard at least one sermon from each of the great prophets and leaders of the Old and New Testaments, but the first sermon of this man also stirs our imagination. Did he begin right here by the lake shore to explain, to reason, to appeal, to declare his love and devotion to Jesus? Here was a congregation who needed to hear the facts. Jesus would not permit the man to accompany Him: “And he suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go to thy house unto thy friends, and tell how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and how he had mercy on thee” (Mark 5:19). On how many street corners in Gergesa, Gadara, and Gerasa did this man tell his thrilling experience and argue that a man is worth more than a herd of two thousand swine? How many objectors did he silence with the simple appeal, “How would you feel about it if you had been in my place?” Luke relates how the man covered the entire city with his proclamation. Mark adds the information that his ministry reached out “in Decapolis,” this busy collection of metropolitan cities which as yet were unacquainted with Jesus and His miraculous ministry. The despised outcast became a powerful missionary and proved Jesus’ estimate of his worth. He found he could be of service to Jesus right here where he had lived his life. He faced the extremely difficult task of maintaining an ideal among hostile surroundings. He was no longer on the defensive against any His Powerful Ministry return of demons; he was carrying the battle to the devil with all his might and with prodigious results. How often Christians imagine that they would be zealous and aggressive missionaries if they were in some faraway pagan country telling every person they met on the street about Jesus and His love. But they deceive themselves. If they will not proclaim Christ in their own town, on their own street, in their own home, they would not proclaim Him with any great zeal in a foreign land. The same obstacles and the same excuses would prevail. To preach the gospel in one’s own home and community is so dull, drab, uninviting, so lacking in drama and excitement, so full of embarrassment or of things and people that try the patience! But who else could preach here with such power as this man who knew the country and the people and who offered the living demonstration of Jesus’ love and power? who else could bear such marvelous personal testimony or bring to his people a proper understanding of Jesus?

Victorious Witness

Mark and Luke report that the man went back and told his people “how great things Jesus had done for him.” Men were caused to look above the material and the worldly to God and the spiritual things. No matter how inadequate was his understanding of the divine nature of Jesus, yet he rightly felt that the two propositions were inseparable: what God had done and what Jesus had done for him. While under the possession of the demons he had been the instrument through which they had declared the deity of Christ and His divine control over the fate of mankind and of demons. Now he is in a position to affirm his own faith. His evangelistic ministry thrilled the whole Decapolis, and we find at a later period, when Jesus came to this section for an extended ministry which came to a climax with the feeding of the four thousand, He was received with great joy and enthusiasm. This was largely the result of the faithful preaching of this man who became a John the Baptist for the Master. When the way seems hard, the results barren, and we are tempted to grow despondent and to give up our tasks for something more outstanding, we should take the time to accompany this man as he went from house to house and from village to village proclaiming on the street corners and in the market place how great things the Lord had done for him. What encouragement he has given to all to maintain stoutly their ideals and to continue their labors.

071. Chapter 12 - In the Home of Jairus

Chapter 12 - In the Home of Jairus Matthew 9:18-26;Mark 5:21-41;Luke 8:40-56 The Busy Day The “busy day” of Jesus’ ministry had found the evangelistic company so thronged and overwhelmed that there was not even time to eat or rest. Crossing the lake, Jesus had secured some sleep, but the storm had rudely interrupted His rest. Immediately upon reaching the eastern shore, another exciting episode brought the day’s events to a close. We wonder whether this trip was a night passage across the lake after the sun had set. Did they now find some rest as the boat sailed slowly toward the western side? or did some little cove allow them to find some rest upon their arrival on the western shore before the morning light brought the excited crowd around them again? The Ruler The evangelists record only the crossing and the fact that “a great multitude was gathered unto him; and he was by the sea” (Mark 5:21). In the meantime desperate need had arisen in the home of “one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name” (Mark 5:22). The familiar fashion in which “the synagogue” is mentioned, together with the fact that Jesus has returned, apparently, to His headquarters at Capernaum, leads to the conclusion that this Pharisee was one of the rulers of the very synagogue where the most bitter attacks had been made upon Jesus, even as most of His teaching and miracles had been concentrated here. What had been the attitude of this ruler toward Jesus during all these months of instruction, demonstration, appeal, and controversy? Had he been one of the hostile leaders so keen to interrupt, to object, to heckle, to plot? or had he been convinced deep down in his heart during this period of the campaign, but afraid to take a stand? And what was his status in the synagogue and among his fellow scribes after he had made this appeal to Jesus on behalf of his daughter? The Crisis The hard pressure of tragedy was placed upon him now as his daughter lay dying. There is evidence that in spite of the fierce controversies which had taken place here in Capernaum, the rulers of this synagogue had yielded to circumstance and diplomacy when they had come to Jesus at an earlier time with an appeal for the centurion who was in command of the local Roman garrison and who had been so devout himself as to build a beautiful synagogue for the community. The fact that the ruler came to Jesus with his desperate appeal as soon as the gathering multitude made it known that Jesus had returned into the midst suggests that the abrupt departure of Jesus the day before had prevented an earlier appeal to Him. We are not told what caused the death of the daughter, but it seems to have been a sudden, catastrophic attack. The tragedy must have been a dreadful blow to the parents. This girl was their only child, their pride and joy. She was twelve years old — a beautiful age in the life of a boy or girl when the innocence and helplessness of early youth yield to days of decision and determined purpose. The Ruler’s Faith

Luke declares that the ruler “fell down at Jesus’ feet, and besought him to come into his house: for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying” (Luke 8:41, Luke 8:42). Luke does not say that the ruler worshiped Jesus, but Matthew affirms this (Matthew 9:18). The desperate need of the ruler brought him to take a stand for Christ and make a public declaration of his faith. Both Mark and Luke tell of the father’s request and then of the arrival of the messenger from the home, announcing the actual death of the child. Mark records that the ruler said, “My little

daughter is at the point of death." Luke simply relates the child was dying. Matthew does not tell of the two messages, but condenses the account into the single announcement of the father that his child was dead: "My daughter is even now dead" (Matthew 9:18). If the ruler made a more detailed statement (as is very likely) that his child was at the point of death when he left the house and was probably dead now, further justification is seen for the manner in which Matthew abbreviates the account. The faith of the ruler is boldly stated: "But come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live" (Matthew 9:18; Mark 5:23). His statement of belief implies that he accepted as true the amazing claims to deity which he had heard Jesus make. His comrades had accused Jesus of blasphemy (Mark 2:6). The Woman's Faith As Jesus graciously turned from His preaching ministry to go with the ruler, the vast crowd excitedly pressed upon Him to accompany Him. A woman with an issue of blood, who had worked her way forward in the crowd until she was within reach of Jesus, is described by Luke as having "spent all her living upon physicians, and could not be healed of any" (Luke 8:43). Mark adds the further details, "...and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse" (Mark 5:26).

Matthew and Mark record her belief that if she could but touch the garment of Jesus she would be healed. Luke tells that she "touched the border of his garment" (Luke 8:44). Plummer supposes that she came up behind Jesus in order that He might not see her, but it may have been the only access open to her as she sought to approach Him. Plummer also holds that it was not the hem of Jesus' garment which she touched, but one of the tassels: The square overgarment or Tallith had tassels of three white threads with one of hyacinth at each of the four corners….Of the four corners two hung in front, and two behind. It was easy to touch the latter without the wearer feeling the touch (Commentary on Luke, p. 235). But the translators of both the a.v. and a.s.v. render the word hem. We have no record of Jesus' affecting the decorative additions of a scribe's robe to announce His position and prerogative. The woman had another motive besides concealing her action. If she came up behind Christ so as not to be seen, she could more readily have touched His garment lightly at the shoulder or sleeve than to stoop and lay hold of the hem of His garment. This gesture seems to indicate her great reverence. Her desire to remain unnoticed by Christ did not prevent her from expressing her faith and devotion by this gesture. In the hurry and excitement it passed without being observed by the crowd so intent on keeping as close to Jesus as possible. Her Mistake

She believed she could be healed without the knowledge and will of Jesus. In this she was mistaken, and Jesus did not permit her to leave under such a false impression. The agonized appeal of the woman's heart was granted the moment she touched the hem of Jesus' garment; she was instantly healed. But he immediately stopped and demanded who had touched Him. He did not ask for His own information. The woman had to be corrected in her false idea and the crowd had to be informed as to the miracle. In other cases where those who touched the border of His garment and were healed, they made special request that they might be permitted to do so and thus openly declared their purpose and faith (Matthew 14:36; Mark 6:56). Her Confession of Faith When Jesus demanded who had touched Him, there was general denial by all those about (Luke 8:45). A protest was made that His question was entirely unreasonable since the dense crowd thronged about Him on all sides: "Peter said, and they that were with him, Master, the multitudes press thee and crush thee" (Luke 8:45). This answer carries the sort of rebuke that

Peter was quick to offer to Jesus; the implication is that Jesus was permitting the strain of the hectic campaign to make Him oversensitive. Jesus responded to Peter, “Some one did touch me; for I perceived that power had gone forth from me” (Luke 8:46). The woman, seeing that Jesus had read her heart and had known her purpose and action, came forward to confess her faith and declare the miracle. Jesus’ reply was full of compassion. He called her “Daughter,” not as indicative of her youth, but of His kindness and mercy. “Thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace” declares that the faith of the woman had been the necessary prelude to her approach to Jesus for rescue. The final dismissal, “Go in peace,” seems to indicate forgiveness and the deeper spiritual blessing such as was given to the one leper who returned to give thanks to Christ (Luke 17:19).

Faith Required

It should be noted in both of these miracles that, as is consistently seen in the Gospel narratives, faith was required of those seeking a miraculous blessing from Christ. McGarvey says that the amount of faith shown by those who came varied according to their opportunities to learn and believe. Jesus insisted that this woman declare her faith publicly. She had believed and had acted on her faith, but her faith was incorrect in supposing she could be healed by a touch of the garment of Jesus without His knowledge. That faith was required of those seeking a miraculous blessing does not mean that the power of Jesus was limited, but that the divine plan for the exercise of His power was to lead men to faith and direct request for miraculous aid. The healing of the wicked servant of the high priest in the Garden of Gethsemane, when Peter had cut off his ear, is an exception in the exercise of a miracle of healing. The man made no request for help; he was evidently wicked and unrepentant; the action of Jesus was not mercy granted to a penitent believer, but to correct the false move of Peter and to prevent a bloody riot. The unwelcome interruption and delay caused by the woman must have been a great trial for the ruler to endure. Impatience and frustration must have reached a climax of temptation to doubt when just at this moment a messenger arrived from the home with the message, “Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the teacher.” Jesus answered with a direct challenge to the faith of Jairus: “Fear not: only believe, and she shall be made whole.” A clearer statement that faith was required of those seeking a miraculous blessing could hardly be imagined. God sends the sunshine and the rain upon the just and the unjust regardless of their character or attitude, but those who come to Him to receive a miraculous blessing “must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of those that seek after him” (Hebrews 11:6). The person or persons who made the statement, “Trouble not the teacher,” showed mercy and concern for the overburdened life of Jesus, but lack of faith in His divine Person and power. They, too, received a challenge to greater faith. The disciples and multitude followed in excitement and awe. The Crowd The practical service the apostles were able to render to Jesus is evidenced as the great crowd descended upon the house of Jairus. When the nine apostles were commanded to remain in the street and await His return, their frustration must have been manifest, but their obedience was implicit. This separation of the apostles seems to have taken place before the arrival at the home (Mark 5:17). By setting an example of self-restraint, they helped to keep the crowd orderly. One unruly crowd had already taken possession of the house on the inside. They were about to be thrust out to join the crowd in the street. The Mourners

It seems quite incredible that a man of scholarship, culture, and religious devotion should fill his home with such a wild riot of hired mourners’ wailing and orchestration. But custom has a powerful

hold on conduct. That this took place in his absence may have significance. The hired mourners had obviously been hovering near, waiting for the signal to descend upon the home. Their fierce resentment at any possibility of their losing this choice assignment caused them to become a vocal group of hostile witnesses bearing testimony to the assured fact that the little girl was actually dead. It is not hard to imagine what they said against Jesus to the crowd waiting outside the house. But all they could say would only increase the certainty of the miracle in the end.

Jesus did not argue with these hired mourners. One sharp, decisive rebuke was enough: “Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth” (Mark 5:19). Matthew gives the additional information that He ordered them to leave or at least to stand aside and permit orderly entrance and procedure: “Give place” (Matthew 9:24). By seeming to deny what they knew to be a fact, He gave a challenging affirmation of His deity and of divine power over life and death, which they were unwilling to admit. Jesus delighted to give enigmatic statements which would cause the hearers to think them over and attempt to solve the inner meaning. “They laughed him to scorn,” but their laughter was short-lived. The means by which He “put them all forth” out of the house is not described. It undoubtedly was the same means by which He walked untouched through the mob at Nazareth when they sought to throw Him from the precipice, and the means by which He caused the company of Roman soldiers and the Jewish temple guard to fall on their faces in fright in the Garden of Gethsemane. He had but to unveil His divine Person for them to shrink back in terror. But the angry report to the crowd in the street of what Jesus had said would undoubtedly be coupled with their own testimony of firsthand knowledge that the child was dead. The figurative language Jesus used in describing His absolute mastery over death is most impressive: “The child is not dead, but sleepeth.” He could as easily raise the child from the dead as a mere human being could awaken a comrade from sleep. Jesus used this same figure with the same hidden declaration of His power when He talked with the apostles concerning the death of Lazarus (John 11:11-14). The implication was so shocking and breath-taking that even the apostles on that occasion sought from Him further clarification of His meaning (John 11:12). The Witnesses The three apostles chosen to enter the room became eyewitnesses along with the father and mother (Mark 5:40; Luke 8:51). The testimony to the fact that the child was dead was prolific, and the fact that she came forth from the room alive and well would have continual verification. The five witnesses could testify as to what Jesus said and did. They could testify that no mechanical or magical formula was used. The father and mother would naturally have the most intense desire to be present. The miracle was in no way a secret act, but the flute players and tumult-makers were not allowed to be present in their unbelieving scorn. Since the resurrection of Lazarus was from the tomb, the crowd assembled in the area about the tomb were permitted to be witnesses. But this scene in the home of Jairus was filled with the calm and peace of the divine presence of the Son of God, after the storm of the hired mourners had been quelled. The Miracle

Mark and Luke give precise information as to how Jesus approached the dead child. He took hold of her hand, and addressed her. Mark gives the very Aramaic words which Jesus used: “And taking the child by the hand, he saith unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise” (Mark 5:41). As the young maiden immediately arose and walked about the room, Jesus gave two commands: (1) They were to give her food for restoration of bodily strength. Where the natural means were available, there was no need to resort to further miraculous aid. (2) They were not to go out and make any announcement to the excited crowd in the street or carry on

any campaign of publicizing what had transpired. Those who knew that the girl was dead, that Jesus had declared His purpose to raise her from the dead, and that saw her afterwards alive and well about the house were left to draw their own conclusions.

If we knew how many Zealots were in the crowd seeking constantly to turn Jesus' campaign to their own militaristic aims, we could better understand why Jesus put a curb on such exciting news which would inevitably become known, but would have to filter out. Jesus continually had to keep the excitement of His miracles from overpowering the desire of the people to hear His spiritual message. He faced a day-by-day battle with the Zealots and all other worldly-minded hearers as they sought to take control of His campaign and turn it to selfish ends. Both Mark and Luke record the great amazement which was experienced by those who witnessed the miracle.

072. Chapter 13 - Further Campaigns

Chapter 13 - Further Campaigns Matthew 9:27-34;Matthew 13:54-58;Mark 6:1-6 Campaign Methods When the excitement became so intense in one locality as to prevent careful reflection on His spiritual teaching, Jesus quietly changed His location. Thus He thwarted those who would seize control of His movement. Usually He accomplished these changes by leaving in the boat, as He had done on the day He delivered the great sermon in parables At times He would disappear in the night, and the multitude, overexcited and self-seeking, would be kept from following Him (Mark 1:35-39).

All three Synoptics indicate that Jesus now carried on a wide-sweeping evangelistic campaign: “And Jesus went about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness” (Matthew 9:35). All three place the commission that sent the twelve apostles forth at about this time. Matthew and Mark show that a second effort to win the people of Nazareth occurred. Matthew tells of the healing of two blind men (Matthew 9:27-31). The Blind Men As in the case of the resurrection of Jairus’ daughter, there was general knowledge in the community of the appeal of the blind men and a further effort by Jesus to keep down the excitement afterwards. As Jesus walked along the highway, two blind men followed, crying out to Him for a miracle of healing. Two things made their appeal most exciting: (1) They declared their faith that Jesus could heal their blindness. (2) They saluted Jesus openly as the Messiah: “Thou son of David.” By refusing to halt and accede immediately to the request, Jesus tested their faith. He also finally performed the miracle in an atmosphere of calm and peaceful faith without the presence of any raucous curiosity mongers. Just how far and how closely these blind men were able to follow Jesus would depend upon the rate of speed Jesus used, the physical vigor of the two blind men, and any assistance they had from friends. The text suggests they were close enough to continue their appeal as Jesus walked forward unheeding. He later tested the faith of the Syro-Phoenician woman in the same manner. Their Faith When Jesus went into the home (undoubtedly of some faithful disciple), the blind men boldly followed. Jesus now addressed them. He did not ask them to explain or defend their public declarations that He was the Messiah. Such open discussion would come later in His ministry. He now concentrated on the proposition of their faith in His divine power: “Believe ye that I am able to do this? They say unto him, Yea, Lord” (Matthew 9:28). They had already given abundant proof of this faith by their refusal to turn away in despair when He had refused to halt and grant their first appeals, and by their boldness in entering the home to present themselves before Him. But it was good for their souls to give a direct confession of their faith. If there were present in the home those who had not heard their appeals on the highway, it would add confirmation for them. His Mercy

Just as Jesus had taken hold of the hand of Jairus’ daughter lying still in death, so now Jesus touched the eyes of the blind men. This contact was not necessary. Many times Jesus healed with a word, without such a gesture, or even at a distance from the person healed. There is a gentleness and mercy about the manner of Jesus that wipes away what to these two blind men

might have seemed a hardhearted refusal to hear their agonized cries by the roadside. When Jesus touched their eyes, He touched their hearts. They never forgot the gentle manner of Jesus; this was that for which they had prayed: “Have mercy on us.” Their Disobedience A refrain in these miracles is Jesus’ requirement of faith on the part of those seeking a miraculous blessing: “According to your faith be it done unto you” (Matthew 9:29). Again Jesus commanded them not to go out and carry on a publicity campaign concerning the miracle. Their disobedience is not hard to comprehend. All those who had known them would demand how they were healed. Their gratitude would lead them to overlook the specific command of Christ. But Jesus consistently followed the policy of keeping the miracles from creating so much excitement the people would not be able to hear His teaching. At Nazareth In the midst of this wide-sweeping evangelistic campaign Matthew and Mark record a second attempt of Jesus to win the people of Nazareth (Matthew 13:54-58; Mark 6:1-6). Only Luke tells of the first visit to Nazareth, which had ended in the violent attempt to cast Jesus from the brow of the precipice outside the village (Luke 4:16-30). While some hold that we have here three variant accounts of a single visit to Nazareth, the differences in time and details are so great as to preclude such a view. The dramatic climax of the first visit, which ended in a riot and attempted assassination, is sufficient in itself to prove these were two different campaigns. Nothing could harmonize more completely with the divine character of Jesus and the incredible patience and mercy shown in His entire ministry than that He should return for a second effort to win the people of Nazareth. There is no indication that the disciples were present on the first visit, but they are specifically mentioned as being present at this second visit.

Preaching in the synagogue, which was His usual method in every town and village, was the main effort in both visits to Nazareth. Instead of the excited violence that was stirred by His first sermon, there was now stolid indifference and unbelief. The ground on which they based their rejection of Jesus as the Christ is now openly stated: “He is not our kind of messiah. He is not the messiah promised in the Old Testament. The messiah is to be a king and reign over all the nations in great glory. This man has no crown, no throne, no court, no army, no worldly power or prestige. He is even a member of one of the most obscure families of this obscure village.” They could not deny that Jesus spoke in such marvelous fashion that they were astonished and filled with awe. They could not deny that many mighty miracles had been attributed to Him. But they felt all this was overshadowed by the fact that He had been reared in a humble home in their midst and that members of His family were still present.

Mark and the Virgin Birth

Matthew, who has stated carefully the facts about the virgin birth, reports one line of attack: “Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?” (Matthew 13:55, Matthew 13:56). Mark had begun his narrative with the ministry of John the Baptist. Here he now guards against any misunderstanding in regard to the virgin birth, which he has not recorded, by quoting some of those who said, “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?” (Mark 6:3). The Attacks In these criticisms there is no attack upon the character of Joseph and Mary and no slurs that Jesus was of illegitimate birth. From early Jewish writings, which are so full of bitter hatred of Jesus and the Christians, we know that this was one of the favorite lines of slander used by the Jews. We cannot be sure whether the absence of any reference to such slander in the New Testament means that this was not being attempted at this time or whether the

inspired evangelists felt this line of attack was too low to deserve mention.

It is most significant that no charges of sin or folly are made against Jesus. Here was the village where He had spent thirty years of His life. Was all that could be said against Him that He lacked worldly appurtenances of royalty in His origin and His present campaign? We are reminded of the absolute failure of the trials of Jesus to bring forth any wrongdoing in His life. All that could be said against Him as He was dying on the cross was, “This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” On both occasions the charge was the same: “This man a King? What a king!” The Brethren

We are moved to wonder how many sisters Jesus had. “And his sisters, are they not all with us?” The sisters’ names are not given, but the word alt (feminine gender) in Matthew 13:56 suggests that there were at least three of these sisters. The four half brothers of Jesus are named both by Matthew and Mark. It was only when the worship of the virgin Mary began to arise in the apostate church of Rome that the Christian writers began to conjure up some means of denying that these were the children of Joseph and Mary. Early writers, such as Tertullian, Victorinus of Pettau, Origen, and Helvidius, plainly state that these are the children of Joseph and Mary (J. H. Ropes, I.C.C. on James, pp. 53-74; especially p. 54; T. Zahn, Forschungen, VI, p. 309; especially p. 319). Later writers tried to imagine that Joseph had been married twice and that these were the children of the former marriage or that these were children of a sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. In order to affirm the perpetual virginity of Mary, they had to deny the plain references to the half brothers and such clear statements as Matthew 1:25 and Luke 2:7.

James

John 7:5 informs us that these brothers of Jesus did not believe on Him. When Jesus appeared to James after the resurrection the brethren of Jesus became believers and were present in the devout company of disciples awaiting the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost. James became a great leader of the Jerusalem church and the author of the Epistle of James.

Rejection

Jesus’ reply to their sneers at His lowly origin was to cite the proverb, “A prophet is not without honor save in his own country….” It is significant of the unbelief of His brethren that both Matthew and Mark quote Jesus as adding, “and in his own house.” Thus they both confirm what John tells of their unbelief. The demand for faith as a necessary prerequisite for those seeking a miraculous blessing is strongly underscored in both accounts: “And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief” (Matthew 13:58); “And he could do there no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief” (Mark 6:5, Mark 6:6). This was not because Jesus lacked the miraculous power, but because it was not God’s divine program to force miraculous blessings upon the unbelieving. We pause to wonder how hard it must have been for the apostles to witness and endure this callous rejection of Jesus in His own home and community. What impression did the apostles have of the half brothers of Jesus and vice versa at this time? The growing faith of the apostles had many obstacles to overcome. The grief in the heart of Jesus in these rejections at Nazareth surpasses our imagination.

073. Chapter 14 - The First Mission of the Apostles

Chapter 14 - The First Mission of the Apostles Matthew 9:35-38;Matthew 10:1-42;Matthew 11:1;Mark 6:7-13;Luke 9:1-6 The Two Missions The word mission comes from the Latin verb meaning to send. The Greek word apostle means one sent. The commission which Jesus gave after His resurrection is called “The Great Commission” by way of contrast to this first commission given in such impressive detail in Matthew 10:1-42. We observe immediately that: (1) this first commission was limited to Israel, whereas the great commission was to all the world and to every creature; (2) the first commission carried only the good news that the kingdom of heaven was about to be established, while the great commission offered the full gospel of redemption by the death and resurrection of Christ; (3) the first commission carried the preliminary command to repent, but the plan of salvation in its fulness was the message of the great commission: faith, repentance, confession, baptism; (4) in this first campaign there is no evidence that the apostles met any such violent persecution as predicted, but persecution came with the final sending forth to all the world. The Situation The reasons for this mission of the apostles is eloquently stated by Matthew: “But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36). The Greek word for distressed, used here to describe the multitude, means skinned, flayed, rent, mangled, vexed, annoyed; hence, fatigued, suffering violence, distressed. The Greek word for scattered means cast down and prostrate on the ground, mentally dejected; hence, harassed, importuned, bewildered. These two Greek words describe vividly the picture of sheep being driven in terror, falling exhausted and helpless, torn and mangled by the wild beasts that are chasing and devouring them. This condition of the people was the result of the exciting campaign of Jesus as it confronted the contrary views about what the Messiah should be and do, and the general rejection of Jesus by the leaders of the nation. The basic conflict could be said to have its heartbreaking demonstration now in the imprisonment of John the Baptist. Why should God permit the wicked leaders of the nation to imprison and threaten the life of John? Why did not Jesus rescue John? Why did He not destroy the wicked even as John had predicted, and rule in glory as the Old Testament prophets had foretold? The great need of the people for instruction and help stirred the compassion of Jesus. The field was so great and the harvest so plentiful He did not have time to reach all. He therefore sent out the twelve to assist in preparing the people for His coming into their midst (cf. the case of the seventy, Luke 10:1). The co-op method of education, with mixed periods of study and practical experience, is not the modern invention some suppose. Jesus established the first co-op university. The command of Jesus, “Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he send forth laborers into his harvest,” goes to the very heart of all missionary endeavor. Until a Christian has prayed, the most important thing he can do is to pray. They were urged to pray because the need was so great. How great is the need today! They were about to be sent to help fulfill the need. They would preach in a different mood if they prayed first. They would stop praying or begin doing. The request of our missionaries today for us to pray for them each day opens the door of our hearts to go forward to give and to do. The prayer, “Send forth laborers into his harvest,” leads inevitably to the prayer, “Here am I, Lord, send me.” How many Christians

have allowed weeks, months, and years to pass in their lives without ever having offered this prayer that God may send laborers into His harvest. When Jesus saw the multitudes, He had compassion on them. When we see the teeming crowds in a great city, what do we really see? obstacles in the path of our hurried progress? or lost souls crying out to us for rescue?

Miracles At this time Jesus conferred the miraculous endowment on the apostles so that they could work miracles to confirm the truth of the message they proclaimed. We do not have any record of their undertaking to work miracles after this time when Jesus was in the midst. The nine apostles at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration tried to cast out a demon and failed. But Jesus was not present. When Jesus ascended and Pentecost brought the baptism in the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, then they worked miracles in confirmation of their preaching. But in the ministry of Jesus only during this first mission and that of the seventy do we find the apostles working miracles. The report they brought back of the miracles they had worked emphasized the power they had to cast out demons (Matthew 10:1; Mark 6:13, Mark 6:30; Luke 9:1, Luke 9:6; cf. Luke 10:17). The dramatic character of these miracles made them particularly impressive. But it is noteworthy that in the instructions Jesus gave to the twelve the emphasis is upon the message they were to carry and the methods they were to use. Jesus commanded, “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons: freely ye received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8). They had been freely given this miraculous power and the message concerning the kingdom of heaven. They were to give forth freely. We have no record of their miracles other than healing and casting out demons. We must go to the Book of Acts to find an account of the fulfillment of the promise that they would be able to raise the dead.

Limitations

They were commanded to limit their evangelistic efforts to the Jews. There is no account of Jesus’ ever attempting to exclude Gentiles from the multitudes who heard Him preach. His was no secret mission. Gentiles who came seeking miraculous aid were graciously received and helped, as in the case of the centurion, or severely tested, as in the case of the Syro-Phoenician woman before her request was granted. The apostles were not prohibited from preaching to Gentiles who might be in the crowds they addressed, but they were not to carry on any specific mission to the Gentiles: “Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans” (Luke 9:5). After several rude rebuffs and rejections in Jewish towns and villages, the apostles might have remembered with longing the glorious reception Jesus had experienced at Sychar among the Samaritans and might have decided to go into Samaria and carry on a mission to the Samaritans. But the gospel must be preached first to the Jews, God’s chosen people who had been specially prepared by the giving of the Old Testament revelation. Later on, the Gentiles and all the world should hear, but now time presses, and they will not finish their work of preliminary evangelization of Israel until Jesus will have overtaken them and have taken over the campaign completely (Matthew 10:23).

There is nothing to indicate that they were to proclaim Jesus as the Christ. This message was forbidden even after the good confession at Caesarea Philippi. They did not understand as yet what was the nature and mission of the Messiah. They were learning rapidly, but they still had much to learn. The people had false ideas that must not be inflated. And yet these messengers were proclaiming the immediate approach of the kingdom of God, and a kingdom demands a king.

They were to glorify Christ and prepare the people to hear Him in obedient faith. The implications must have been present in their preaching, but they allowed Jesus to reveal Himself as the Christ. The Extent of the Campaign

We are unable to define the limits of this campaign of the apostles either as to time or distance. Commentators have made all sorts of guesses, which range from a few days to many months. In light of all the instructions Jesus gave, it seems highly improbable that the evangelistic effort lasted only a few days. We wonder what brought the campaign to a close. Did Jesus specify when they started just how long they were to be gone and when they would reassemble? Did the tragic news of John's death bring the apostles hurrying in from all directions? How far did they travel? Did they limit their campaign to Galilee, or did they go through Judaea also? Did they preach in such political and commercial centers as Caesarea and Ptolemais? We never read of Jesus' preaching in a host of other cities and towns. But this does not mean that Jesus did not preach in these cities. It is rather that our gospel narratives are so brief. Since the apostles were sent forth urgently to reach cities and towns Jesus had not been able to visit, they may have gone to many of these places. The Methods The apostles were sent forth among the chosen people who had been instructed and trained in the Old Testament to care for their spiritual leaders. As a challenge to their faith and to the generosity of their hearers, they were to refrain from taking special equipment and supplies: no extra supply of money, clothing, shoes, or staff. Mark reports, "….save a staff only"; while Matthew says, "...nor staff" (Matthew 10:10; Mark 6:8). A well-provided traveler would have one staff for assistance in climbing and another over his shoulder from which clothing and supplies would be suspended. Mark also has, "Go shod with sandals"; Matthew says, "...nor shoes." The verb used in Matthew's account is important, "Get you no They were not to procure extra equipment. They were not to go barefoot, for the mission was urgent, but they were not to secure an extra pair of shoes (an exceedingly comfortable possession in constant traveling). If they were accustomed to using a staff, well and good; but they were not to buy one especially for this mission. The reason given, "for the laborer is worthy of his hire," challenged both the missionaries and the hearers.

Universal in application are the practical methods urged by Jesus of making a survey of the community, establishing a center of evangelism in the home of some devout person, continuing from house to house in evangelistic efforts, and changing from one city to another when the situation became so explosive that the preservation of the message demanded it. The method found so practical and successful in establishing new churches today is this very method urged by Jesus. They were to make a careful survey of the community: "search out who in it is worthy" (Matthew 10:11). They were to inquire who was esteemed in the community as a lover of God and his fellowmen. This location would be the most likely place to establish headquarters. Mark records the instruction, "Wheresoever ye enter into a house, there abide till ye depart thence" (Mark 6:10). This may sound as if favoritism is being shown — a fatal weakness in a preacher. But the prohibition was against attempting to improve their living conditions by moving from some poverty-stricken home (a most probable beginning) to the luxurious home of some rich man. In approaching this first home, the two messengers should give the customary spiritual salutation of wishing peace from God to come upon the house. If the reception was cordial, then they could proceed to explain their mission. "But if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you (Matthew 10:13). If the home did not live up to its reputation in the community by a display of hospitality,

there was nothing lost by being courteous. If you wish peace to others and they resent it, then your peace undiminished in value and untarnished in the use can return in silence to your own storehouse.

If no one in an entire city or village would receive them, then they were to warn all solemnly that their blood was on their own head in this rejection of God's messengers: "Shake off the dust of your feet" (Matthew 10:14). The fearful statement of Jesus, "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city," cannot mean that the people of these notorious cities who were so wicked God had to destroy them, will be saved in the day of judgment (salvation after death!). It can only mean degrees of punishment in hell; the disobedient with the greatest opportunity to hear God's messages and commands will receive the most fearful condemnation.

After witnessing the rejection and persecution continually accorded Jesus by the wicked leaders, if any apostle had any ideas of an unbroken succession of achievements in each community, this dream world would have been shattered by the stern warning of arrest, trials, persecution, imprisonment, and death. What a prospect was set before these sturdy men as they went out to preach for Jesus. Not even the closest ties of blood relationship would avail to protect them from the fierce wrath of the devil: "Brother shall deliver up brother to death, and the father his child: and children shall rise up against parents, and cause them to be put to death" (Matthew 10:21). The most severe warnings given in this sermon to the twelve were not fulfilled in this mission, but that they were warned now gave them time to think over the prospect ahead. This early warning would prepare their hearts to be steadfast. In this first campaign they would be on their guard to preserve their lives. They would meet enough opposition now to justify the warning. A half century ago it was heard in many pulpits that the days of the persecution of Christians had passed. The Colosseum in Rome, empty and silent, was held to be typical of the new age in which Christianity was popular. But true Christianity has never been popular in this wicked world. What a rude awakening has been given to those who proclaimed this super-optimism. The murderous hand of communism has reached out to slay countless millions of Christians in our own time. We have heard great and fitting protests and lament over the millions of Jews slain by the atheistic dictators. We should not forget also the vast number of Christian martyrs in this generation. No record declares that these first messengers sent forth to proclaim the kingdom of God received any such violent persecution. But it must have returned to them with an ominous sound as their mission suddenly closed with the tragic news of the murder of John the Baptist. The declaration, "Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come" is manifestly difficult. Some commentators have given the emphasis to have gone through and say it means that thorough evangelization would not be accomplished. Others have underscored the cities of Israel and have taken this to mean all the cities in all the world where there were Jews (1) but they were strictly forbidden to go outside Palestine). Radical critics charge that Jesus mistakenly thought He would return again immediately, but this is gratuitous. Jesus was talking to these apostles about this temporary mission which was to last a few weeks or months at most. Jesus has not as yet died, been raised, and ascended. This fact seems to shut out the efforts to make the phrase the Son of man be come refer to the destruction of Jerusalem or to the establishment of the church at Pentecost. We know that in the sending forth of the seventy Jesus specifically declared He was following them and they were to prepare the cities for His coming (Luke 10:1). If this was also the

method of this mission of the twelve, then Jesus is saying that He will overtake them in their campaign before they have had time to cover all the territory assigned. At the end of the mission the apostles all seem to be assembled again at Capernaum. But Jesus in His own campaign must have overtaken some of them while they were still at work. These may have sent out urgently to summon the others at the news of John's death.

Miraculous Inspiration

One of the strongest declarations of the New Testament writers that they were miraculously inspired by the Holy Spirit in their writing for the ages the account of the life of Christ, is to be found imbedded in the historical narration of what was said and done by Jesus. Matthew records how Jesus gave a warning not to be "anxious how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you" (Matthew 10:19). As he writes the promise he makes a categorical claim of his own inspiration. This is the most powerful sort of affirmation that could be made.

Warnings and Promises The warning of the terrible days of persecution ahead was followed by the reminder that this is the very sort of experience Jesus was having. They must not expect the disciple to be above his teacher. We cannot tell how far they could see beyond this warning to final persecution and death implied for Jesus Himself. They did not see this very clearly, or they would not have been so shocked when Jesus began at Caesarea Philippi to make clear, definite predictions of His approaching death. But they must have shuddered and wondered. The assurances that the divine secrets of the gospel would finally be made plain to all, gave hope. Jesus is not telling them in the ear secretly to avoid any suffering Himself. It was because the full message could not as yet be understood; the proclamation from the housetops must await the time of God's choosing. The hope of heaven was the final assurance they were given as they went forth. They were not to fear the wicked servants of the devil who could do no more than kill the body. They were to fear God with righteous reverence, knowing that His power is absolute and His love unfailing. The sparrow that falls in death can become the reminder that God cares. If they confessed Christ faithfully before men, He would confess them and welcome them in heaven. The blunt warning, "I came not to send peace, but a sword" is the Hebraism — a limited negative meaning "not only, but also." If they reflected deeply on His warning, "And he that doth not take his cross and follow after me, is not worthy of me," they must have sensed tragedy ahead for Jesus, as well as for themselves. Hundreds of victims had been crucified by the Romans in Palestine. They knew what a cross meant. But Jesus delivered so many mysterious, enigmatic declarations that they may have wondered how much this was to be taken literally.

One of the favorite sayings of Jesus closes this paragraph: "He that findeth his life [in the sense of worldly self-seeking] shall lose it [in the eternal, spiritual sense of salvation]; and he that loseth his life [not for any cause, such as the death of the gangster in the midst of his crimes or the death of the autoist in the midst of his folly, but] for my sake shall find it [in the glory of heaven and eternal blessedness]." The reward of a prophet as distinguished from the reward of a righteous man lies beyond our knowledge, but this is another of the many indications that there will be degrees of reward in heaven. And not even the slightest service we perform for Christ will be overlooked by Him. "He that receiveth you receiveth me" (Matthew 10:40). Therefore, a humble service done "in the name of a disciple" (under the instruction and example of a faithful disciple) would be done in

the name of Christ.

074. Chapter 15 - The Death of John the Baptist

Chapter 15 - The Death of John the Baptist Matthew 14:1-12;Mark 6:14-29;Luke 9:7-9 Impact on Galilean Campaign At the close of the mission of the twelve the shocking news of John's martyrdom spread over the land. In fact, this sudden turn of events probably brought the apostles hurrying back to Christ, either by summons or by their own strong desire to be near Him and to hear what He had to say concerning the tragic event. They must have meditated much upon the warnings of future persecution and death Jesus had just given them. As the imprisonment of John had been the prelude to the tremendous Galilean campaign which Jesus had been carrying on now for more than a year, so now the news of John's death brings this campaign to an exciting climax.

Josephus' Account

Practically no historic facts concerning the ministry of Jesus are made known to us by sources outside the four Gospel narratives. An important exception is Josephus' record of the death of John the Baptist. He specifically declares that John was imprisoned and beheaded at Machaerus, the fortress and winter palace of Herod Antipas, which was situated amid the isolated grandeur of the eastern shore of the Dead Sea. There is no reason to doubt the accuracy of this statement. Writing to the Roman world to explain and defend the religion and history of the Jewish people, Josephus used every opportunity to gain favor for the Jews with the Romans. The fierce persecution of the Christians appears to have been the motive of his almost complete omission of any reference to Jesus of Nazareth. But the death of John he used as an occasion to present an example of the diligent effort of Jewish rulers to suppress any sort of incipient uprising against Rome. Thus Herod is represented as being moved by his fear that the people might arise in revolt against Rome because of their excitement over John's ministry. It is most surprising that Josephus did not record the characteristic episode of the notorious family history of the Herods which actually caused the death of John. He delighted to describe such conduct. But Josephus evidently felt here was too good an opportunity to argue the case for the zeal of the Jews to sustain the good government of Rome. Herod himself probably sent such a report to Rome, claiming that he had just suppressed the beginning of a revolution against Rome by executing the leader of the troublemakers. This sort of approach was used by the Jewish leaders before Pilate in seeking the conviction of Jesus.

Herod and Jesus The restraint which the inspired writers show at every point in their narratives is in evidence here, as in every reference to Judas Iscariot. They do not insert any epithets or excited condemnation into their simple narration of facts. All three Synoptists introduce their account of the death of John by describing the tremendous impact which the campaign of Jesus had made upon the court of Herod. Seven simultaneous evangelistic campaigns were evidently stirring great interest, especially in Galilee. But the urgent cause of Herod's interest was his guilty conscience. After Herod the Great had in a fit of mad jealousy murdered his beloved wife Marianne, he had wandered about his palace in a state of dazed insanity, calling out in vain, "Marianne, Marianne."

His son, Herod the Little, after his murder of John the Baptist, finds himself driven to foolish ideas by his guilty conscience. Luke's account of the death of John is exceedingly brief. Mark's account is in the greatest detail, but it is Luke who informs us that this nonsense about Jesus being John the Baptist risen from the dead had been started among the whisperings of his court. "And Herod said, John I beheaded: but who is this, about whom I hear such things? And he sought to see him" (Mark 9:9).

Inasmuch as the greater part of Jesus' ministry was carried on within a radius of ten or fifteen miles of Tiberias, the capital of Herod's provinces of Galilee and Peraea, it would seem a very simple matter for anyone who desired to see and hear Jesus. He preached continually in the open air to vast crowds. But "uneasy lies the head that wears the crown," and Herod, like other monarchs, lived in constant dread of assassination. Besides fearing for his life, Herod would have been highly embarrassed a second time if he had been seen in the crowd about Jesus and received any such blast of condemnation as John had delivered against him. One of the highlights of the imprisonment of John had been Herod's invitation to preach in the semi-privacy of his court. Herod did not see Jesus until Pilate sent Christ to him for trial: "Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad: for he was of a long time desirous to see him, because he had heard concerning him; and he hoped to see some miracle done by him" (Luke 23:8). The guilty conscience of Herod, when stirred by the silly whisperings of his courtiers, began to cause him to imagine that John the Baptist had returned to torture him for his crime. Since John had announced the coming of Christ, had baptized Him, and had carried on a simultaneous ministry with Christ for nearly a year before his imprisonment, the foolish idea that Jesus was John risen from the dead seems incredible stupidity. But it is not any greater nonsense than his father had conjured up as he wandered around his palace imagining that Marianne could still respond to his call! Some suppose that Herod Antipas was in Rome during this period of Jesus' ministry — that he went to Rome immediately after his murder of John. A trip to the imperial city would have given him a chance to explain to the Roman authorities the good turn he had done in executing this trouble-making prophet whose followers threatened revolution against Rome. But it is hardly necessary to seek such an explanation of Herod's conscience-stricken ideas. He was a drunken sot so engrossed in his licentious court life that we need not be surprised at his ignorant folly. None of the Gospel writers felt it necessary to explain how Herod could entertain such an idea.

Tiberias

There is no evidence that Jesus ever preached in Tiberias, the capital of Herod Antipas. It was only a few miles south of Capernaum, Jesus' headquarters, and anyone in Tiberias who desired to hear Jesus could readily do so. The reputation of Tiberias as being the vilest of the vile in the Roman Empire had been spread abroad by Roman writers who visited Tiberias, shared its voluptuous life, and went away to write of its exceeding wickedness. When Herod had built Tiberias, he was enamored by the beautiful scenery and climate about the Sea of Galilee. Favorable territory for a city was hard to secure. But reverence for the graves of the dead had caused a cemetery to be preserved here. Herod seized the land, dug up the graves, and built his city. Unable to find sufficient inhabitants to inhabit such a city, he had emptied the jails and prisons to secure a beginning population. The city continued to live up to its beginning. This site was not a favorable location for Jesus' evangelistic campaigns. And in Jerusalem when brought before Herod on trial for His life, Jesus observed absolute silence. His contempt for such a villain was

shown by His silence.

Herodias

Bad as Herod was, his mistress, Herodias, was worse. She was the one who had compelled Herod to imprison John after he had dared to condemn their adultery. Herod Antipas had been courteously received in Rome by his brother, Herod Philip. (This son of Herod the Great is not to be confused with Philip, tetrarch of Trachonitis, where Caesarea Philippi was the capital. Philip was a common name in the family, as was Antipater.) Herod Antipas had rewarded the hospitality of his brother in Rome by stealing his wife. Herodias wanted to be a queen. The two made arrangements for Antipas to return to Galilee, get rid of his wife, and then have Herodias come to be his consort. Antipas had married a daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia. She had heard of what was going on in Rome, and, remembering what Herod the Great had done to Marianne, she asked Antipas for permission to go for a visit to the Castle of Machaerus. Once here with a little group of retainers, she fled across the desert south of the Dead Sea to Petra, the capital of Arabia. Aretas immediately made war on Antipas and overwhelmed him in battle. But the Romans intervened to compel Aretas to desist and return to his own country. Since it had almost cost Herod his life and his kingdom to obtain Herodias, perhaps all ‘this hectic confusion helped him to get confused ideas about Christ. Herodias remained Herod’s evil genius, for the end of his reign and his exile came as the result of his final yielding to her nagging demands that he go to Rome and ask to be made a king instead of a governor. This move gave his many enemies the chance to conspire against him and brought his downfall.

We are not told where and when John the Baptist had condemned Herod and Herodias as guilty of adultery. John may have preached on this subject to the multitudes in his ministry up and down the Jordan Valley. The report would have quickly come to the court of Herod. But in this condemnation John may have faced Herod and Herodias in person. Machaerus was close to his center of operations.

John and Herod

Although Herod had yielded so far as to imprison John, he did not want to kill him: “And Herodias set herself against him, and desired to kill him; and she could not; for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and kept him safe” (Mark 6:19, Mark 6:20). This situation suggests plots, bribery, and attempts to bring about assassination, but Herod was too shrewd and kept John “safe” from the murderous rage of Herodias. Matthew informs us that even when he would have yielded to the demands of Herodias, “he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet” (Matthew 14:5).

During this imprisonment Herod invited John to preach before him in his court: “And when he heard him, he was much perplexed; and he heard him gladly” (Mark 6:20). A slight difference in the spelling of the Greek word causes some ancient manuscripts to read did many things instead of was much perplexed. In spite of his wicked character Herod seems to have been fascinated by the sheer courage of John, “be heard him gladly.” A preacher who did not know which word would be his last was speaking as God directed regardless of the consequences. Both readings, was much perplexed and did many things, fit the context and are very thought provoking. Herod, through the fearless preaching of John, looked into the blazing fires of hell. He was much

perplexed as he peered at the coming doom and looked around at the entanglement with Herodias, which he was not prepared to break. Did many things suggests the feeble, halfhearted acts of repentance which the irresolute person, unwilling to quit his life of sin, uses as a stopgap to salve his conscience.

Salome

Shrewd as Herod was, Herodias was shrewder. A drunken ruler committing himself in the presence of roistering courtiers would have to save face. The birthday celebration gave her the opportunity she sought. Machaerus, while midway on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea, was still in the territory ruled by Herod. Both Galilee and Peraea were in his domain. All the military, political, and social leaders of his province were assembled at Machaerus for this birthday celebration. The climax came when Herodias' own daughter Salome, put on a voluptuous dance before the assembly. Evidently no other women were present, for Salome had to go outside the banquet chamber to consult with her mother. In the vile drinking parties of the Roman Empire of the period, prostitutes often presented such exhibitions. Rarely did a woman of position or respectability so debase herself. By the introduction of a single word Mark indicates how low the mother and daughter sank in this performance: "the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced." Grand opera, which delights to seize upon such scenes as this, has introduced it in the opera Salome in "The Dance of the Seven Veils." The Head of John the Baptist

Herod's rash promise to give Salome anything she desired, even to one-half his kingdom, seems to have been a surprise to her because she went out to consult with her mother. Perhaps this offer was too high a stake to be rejected even for the chance to secure revenge on John the Baptist. But the infuriated mother was obdurate. Herod realized too late how he had been duped. Because of all his bluff and bluster in the presence of the crowd, Herod did not see how he could back down. What a picture for the close of this drinking party — a young maiden triumphantly carrying away on a platter the bloody head of the prophet of God. And what did Herodias do with this object? How long did she keep it? Tradition says that she seized a bodkin and thrust it through the tongue of John. But we wonder; did she want this object in her boudoir as the night hours ticked off and as she fought a losing battle with her conscience to gain the sleep she had murdered? The disciples of John had been permitted to visit him in his dungeon cell. They now are summoned and permitted to bury the headless body. They hurry northward to tell Jesus what had happened. Where else could they go, and what else could they do? "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

075. Chapter 16 - The Feeding of the Five Thousand

Chapter 16 - The Feeding of the Five Thousand Matthew 14:13-21;Mark 6:30-44;Luke 9:10-17;John 6:1-15 The Crisis The tragic news of John’s death must have filled all Judaea and Galilee with wailing and mourning. The crowds about Jesus would have been particularly excited to learn what Jesus had to say about this sad event. Fanatical Zealots would have been critical of Jesus for not intervening to save John. All would have been brokenhearted over the tragedy. The return of the twelve apostles from their mission just at this time (whether by summons, by previous arrangement, or their own identical decisions), increased the excitement. Jesus found this one of the times when he needed solitude and communion with God. The disciples also needed to be given careful instruction. They were eager to report to Jesus all they had accomplished and experienced. They would have many unanswered questions, especially in regard to the murder of John. Those among the multitude who desired spiritual instruction and consolation needed to be separated from the hostile and fanatical elements. There would be no private session in which admission would be only by invitation, but a test of faith and desire would be given to sift the crowd.

Privacy

Using His oft-repeated method of sifting the crowd, Jesus in the sight and hearing of all commanded the disciples to prepare the boat for departure to the other side of the lake. If Jesus had actually desired to be rid of the multitude, He might have turned the prow of the boat to the southeast at an angle which would have made it impossible for any to follow, except in boats. But as it was, Jesus had the apostles guide the boat straight across the northern end of the lake. A slow voyage across gave Jesus and the apostles the only opportunity for rest and spiritual communion together which this hectic day afforded. “Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while” was the gracious invitation to the disciples exhausted after their strenuous campaign. The word desert in the New Testament does not mean waterless, but uninhabited. Here is an excellent place to prove it. The scene of the feeding of the five thousand was an uninhabited section on the shore of the lake; it is called a desert place. The Greek word eremos means empty. The Crowd The crowd was quick to see that while Jesus was leaving, He was traveling in a direction and at a rate of speed which furnished an invitation to those who desired to follow. It is a fascinating picture which the crowd made strung out along the lake front for miles, with every person exerting himself to the utmost, running or at least hurrying as best he could. The strong and youthful would be far ahead; the infirm and aged would be far behind. From other towns and villages others would join in the race. The race from Capernaum would lead alongside Bethsaida and Chorazin; Bethsaida Julias on the eastern side of Jordan would not be too far off the course. The Jordan River, after its rapid descent from Lake Huleh, spreads out in a wide, shallow stream as it enters the Sea of Galilee. It would not have been much of an obstacle to the hurrying crowd.

We are continually moved to speculate as to how large the crowds around Jesus were. They are called multitudes, but how large is a multitude? Here is a selected crowd, one that had the faith and determination to go to great lengths to be in this assembly. Both Matthew and Mark estimate the crowd at five thousand men. Matthew specifically mentions that women and children were present but not included in the count. It was customary to count only the men. Some surmise that there would be few women and children present, but this is a strange supposition. The lake is six miles wide at this point and the trip around the end of the lake would not have been more than eight to ten miles at most. “The Bridge of Jacob’s Daughters” is eight miles up the Jordan from the northern end of the lake, but a ford would have given the multitude immediate crossing near the lake. The interest of the women and the young people would certainly have been as intense as that of the men. Women were freely permitted to share these preaching sessions. There may have been more women and children present than men. The Scripture does not exclude this possibility. When we calculate the number of people in the towns and cities about the northern end of the lake, the problem still remains as to what percentage of the total population was sufficiently interested to make this trip into the desert on the chance of being able to overtake and be with Jesus. Josephus specifies 25,000 inhabitants as a sort of average for these towns in Galilee. If this figure even approaches an accurate estimate, then it is plain that wicked lives, greedy pursuits, and indifference took its toll even of the crowds about Jesus. We must remember, however, that this was a selected crowd who had endured great hardship to be present. The same seems to he true of the four thousand at a later time. Crowds on the mountainside or the lake shore in the suburbs of a large city might well have been larger. The Scripture certainly does not indicate that it was extraordinary for so many people to be in attendance at a preaching service held by Jesus. Instead, the number is cited to emphasize the magnitude of the miracle. The Arrival

Critics undertake to establish a contradiction between the Synoptics and John as to the time the multitude arrived. Matthew and Luke, and especially Mark, declare that the crowd arrived first, while John is said to declare that Jesus arrived first. Gould represents John as saying “that Jesus spent some time in the mountain with His disciples before the multitude came to Him.” But this is not true (John 6:3-6). Plummer says helplessly, “No evangelist tells us how long Jesus and the disciples enjoyed their privacy before the multitudes arrived.” But Mark explicitly affirms that the crowd outran the boat; and, when Jesus and the apostles disembarked, they found the crowd (Mark 6:33). John declares, “Jesus therefore lifting up his eyes, and seeing that a great multitude cometh unto him...” (John 6:5). It is plain that the strong and youthful in the crowd outran both the boat and the greater part of the multitude. These were on the shore when the boat landed. But stretched along the lake shore in plain view were thousands of others, not able to keep up with the speedy, but hurrying as fast as they were able. Jesus saw the multitude coming and selected an amphitheater where all would be able to hear and see. By the time the weak stragglers had arrived, Jesus was seated with His disciples prepared to teach and to heal. The accounts are wonderfully independent and harmonious.

Christ’s Plan

John is very clear in his affirmation that Jesus was following a definite plan: “….for he himself knew what he would do” (John 6:6). The move from the environs of bustling Capernaum had blocked for the moment any move by the Zealots to start a violent revolution in protest against John’s death. This element is in the crowd and undertakes to seize control of the work of Jesus

after the miracle. But the desert site placed them at a great disadvantage. The test of faith that was applied to all who endured the hardship of the journey in order to be with Jesus produced an atmosphere of faith. The strong proof of the reality of the miracle which was afforded by the location is an important element in the plan of Jesus. The crowd is suddenly assembled in such great excitement that no one is quite sure where the destination is, and no one has time to secure any food before he starts. If the miracle had taken place in the outskirts of a city such as Capernaum, it would have given hostile critics the chance to insist that the food was procured from a nearby market.

Christ's Mercy

Jesus had also been moved to leave Capernaum because of His deep concern for His disciples and desire for privacy. The disciples needed both rest and instruction, but compassion for the multitudes had caused Jesus to send the apostles forth on their first missionary campaign; this same pity fills His heart as He looks upon them now. The temptation would have been great for many leaders to become angry at the persistence of the crowd, but divine mercy ruled the heart of Jesus. Luke says, "He welcomed them" (Luke 9:11). This Greek verb, when applied to persons, means to welcome to hospitality and home. In the quiet and beauty of mountain and lake shore Jesus welcomed them; "This is my Father's world."

Burton says that Jesus as the divine Host made the desert "a room of the Father's house, carpeted with grass and ablaze with flowers; and Jesus, by His welcome, transforms the desert into a guest-chamber, where in a new way He keeps the Passover with His disciples" (Com. on Luke, p. 272). One must question whether Jesus is keeping in any way the Passover here in the desert. The new dispensation is rising up independent of the old.

Gould remarks with an air of cynicism concerning this reception of the multitude from whom He had just attempted to escape, "It is a distinctly human change of purpose, such as foreknowledge would have prevented." But John declares that Jesus was following a definite plan; "He himself knew what he would do" (John 6:6). The crossing of the lake had given some most important time for Jesus to be with His disciples. The long season of prayer on the mountaintop during the night that followed afforded Jesus the private communion He had desired to have with the Father. His compassion on the multitude had been shown in the wonderful day of ministration. The Zealots were balked in their attempt to turn His movement into a military revolt. His disciples were separated from the Zealots during the hours of His prayer on the mountain. The two miracles of the feeding of the five thousand and the walking on the water, enabled Him to accomplish these objectives and rejoin His disciples. Verily, "He himself knew what he would do."

Luke informs us of the sermon topic for this exciting occasion. It is the same subject Jesus continually discussed during His ministry: "He...spake to them of the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:11). But what overtones this sermon must have carried as an in memoriam to John the Baptist and to the Old Testament prophets who had endured martyrdom before him. The people desired above all else to hear Jesus now in light of the sudden news of John's death. But the message Jesus preached must have been of one pattern with all that He had already declared to them concerning the spiritual nature of the kingdom and the necessity of enduring suffering in this wicked world as a good soldier of Christ. The suffering of Christ Himself for the sins of men was ever a cardinal theme in the preaching of Jesus. The reason for the urgent need for prayer in the life of Jesus at

this time is that the death of John lifted high His own cross before Him. We would expect this to have been reflected in the sermon Jesus preached. Miracles of healing also took place during this exciting service. Occasional conferences with His disciples seem to indicate that sessions of teaching, preaching, and healing were intermingled. The New Crisis The trip around the end of the lake had afforded one test of faith. Jesus now began to apply other tests to stimulate the faith of the disciples and finally the multitude. Mark specifically informs us that Jesus and His apostles had not had leisure to eat while on the western shore because of the pressure of the multitude: “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 6:31). Even though the need for food must have been great even at the start of the great service on the mountainside, Jesus ministered first to the needs of the sick and infirm by miracles of healing and second to the spiritual needs of all by His preaching. But as the day wore on, the need for food became critical. John says that Jesus first broached this subject to the apostles. When Jesus approached Philip with the problem, John assures us that He was not seeking advice from Philip, but that He knew what he would do: “Whence are we to buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do” (John 6:5, John 6:6). Proving Philip — testing his faith — immediately involved testing the faith of all the apostles. One can see Philip urgently seeking consultation with Peter and the other apostles. What a dilemna! Philip had answered that two hundred shillings of bread would not have afforded even a morsel for so many people. No money in any such amount; no market place in which to buy, if they had the money; and Jesus seemed to lay the responsibility on their shoulders: “Are we to buy bread?” The apostles are left to struggle with this new crisis for what was probably some hours. Then the responsibility becomes too great. They come to Jesus entreating Him to send the people home before it is too late and tragedy results. They urge that the people be dismissed to go to ‘the villages and country round about, and lodge, and get provisions: for we are here in a desert place” (Luke 9:12). But Jesus calmly puts further pressure upon the apostles by saying, “Give ye them to eat (Luke 9:13). He then commands the apostles to investigate and see how much food is available among the multitude. John tells us that it was a young lad who had five loaves and two fishes and that Andrew was the apostle who discovered this fact.

There is a considerable lapse of time indicated between John 6:7 and John 6:8 in John 6:1-71. How long a time would it take the apostles to go among a crowd of some ten thousand people and find out whether anyone in the crowd had any food? The crowd was still assembled at will, listening to the teaching and preaching of Jesus. The apostles would have divided up the throng and have gone through the midst asking, “Does anyone here have any food?” Now the pressure is being applied to the crowd. What sense of calamity must have swept the crowd as they realized their predicament. They had been so intent on the marvelous service that they had forgotten all about physical food. But when it was deliberately mentioned at Jesus’ command, every person must have suddenly become conscious of his exhausted condition and his dire need of food. The test of faith is about to be applied this time to the multitude. The Lad The question as to why only this lad should have had food immediately suggests that he did not start with them. He must have been going to a different destination and have been attracted to the crowd in their desperate race around the end of the lake. It is thus that boys today respond to the exciting impulse of fire engines roaring down the city streets. But when we consider the fact that this boy still had his lunch after all these hours of the service, then we find a most interesting basis for estimating his character. What

temptations to nibble had been resisted! Moreover, when Jesus peremptorily commanded that this pitiful handful of food be brought to Him, it is clearly implied that the boy gladly gave the food to Jesus. The lunch was not enough to satisfy his own ravenous hunger now. But in the hands of Jesus it became enough to feed a vast multitude. The Banquet Assembly The crowd had been stirred to a deep sense of need by the period of investigation to determine whether any food was in the midst. Next they had seen Jesus ask that the little lunch of this lad be brought to Him. Finally they were challenged to believe that Jesus would be able to satisfy the hunger of everyone from this infinitesimal supply. They were commanded to sit in carefully arranged groups for the meal Jesus was about to provide.

Matthew and John record that Jesus had the apostles go among the crowd and command them to sit down in preparation to eat. Mark and Luke specify that the apostles were to divide them into small groups. The accounts are strikingly independent. Luke says, “Make them sit down in companies about fifty each” (Luke 9:14). Mark says, “...all should sit down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds and by fifties” (Mark 6:39, Mark 6:40). The Greek word translated ranks means fundamentally “garden beds” and can only be translated ranks or divisions by a metaphor. This term is a particularly vivid and poetic touch in Mark. The lanes of green grass and the solid groups of people dressed in gay colors of the East looked just like a flower garden. “And they sat down in garden beds, by hundreds and by fifties.” The whole mountainside must have been alive with the beautiful wild flowers that abound in Palestine in early spring. This must have made the scene even more attractive. “Law and order” was always the first principle in Jesus’ handling the vast multitudes that thronged His ministry. All would now be able to hear and see. All could be readily served with aisles for the apostles to use in going from one group to another. It would be easily ascertained whether all had been served and whether anyone desired more food. An estimate of the number in the crowd was more readily made by reason of this orderly arrangement. The people probably were permitted to follow their own inclinations as families and friends grouped together or people who happened to be near together now changed to orderly formation. There seems to have been no effort at mathematical exactness in the arrangement. And the estimate of the number present is general — about five thousand; furthermore, no estimate is given of the number of women and children, who usually sat apart from the men in the regular assembly of the synagogue. The Time The writers do not specify the exact time of day. Matthew says, “The time is already past” ; Mark affirms, “The day was now far spent” ; Luke records, “The day began to wear away.” These statements make it clear it was well past noon when Jesus took up the task of feeding the multitude. The trip across the lake, the preaching, teaching, and healing consumed the early part of the afternoon. The preparations for feeding so great a crowd must have taken some time, and the meal itself was eaten at leisure. John indicates that when He had fed the multitude and dismissed them, “even was come.” The disciples evidently lingered in their boat close enough to shore to see whether lie would return to them in spite of His strange command for them to cross the lake. By the time they really started to make their voyage, John says, “It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them” (John 6:17). The Miracle The Gospel writers record the miracle with amazing brevity. They do not undertake to describe the exact manner in which the increase took place. It seems that the miracle took place in the hands of Jesus. As He broke off the loaves and fishes, they were increased. McGarvey in his early commentary on Matthew and Mark says, “The increase had occurred by the instantaneous restoration of the size of the loaf, as each man broke off a piece more than sufficient for himself.

Thus the miracle was witnessed by each one of the five thousand, and it was really resolved into five thousand repetitions of the same miracle" (p. 131). But if this were the process, then the miracle was really performed in the hands of the apostles and the people, more than in the hands of Christ.

Jesus obviously was the center of interest as the One working the miracle. Moreover, these were small loaves such as would be appropriate for a boy. They were probably more like our buns than our large loaves of bread. And would the apostles undertake to carry just what their hands would hold in serving so many thousands of people? This is possible since the crowd has been arranged in orderly groups so that the apostles could approach each person. But would a person hold in his hands sufficient food for himself in his present starved condition? Is there any reason that there was not a second and a third serving until all were satisfied? The incidental manner in which the "baskets" are introduced as the means for collecting the fragments suggests that they had been in use in distributing the food as well. Baskets could be passed readily from one person to another down a row. It may be added in favor of McGarvey's view that the increase of the meal and the oil in the home of the widow of Sarepta took place in the hands of the widow rather than in the prophet's hands and was continuous from day to day. If baskets were used and the supply of food in each basket was not exhausted so long as there was further demand, then there would have been no need for the apostles to return to Jesus for additional supply. There is a possibility, however, that the miracle remained continuous in the hands of Jesus as the apostles came back and forth for added supply of food. At any rate, the original miracle in the hands of Jesus as He filled the twelve baskets would have been visible to all, for this was the sort of location Jesus had chosen for the service. The miracle was first performed in the hands of Jesus, regardless of how the continuous action of the miracle followed. Luke indicates this clearly when he says,"…..and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude."

Before Jesus broke the loaves and the fishes for distribution, He looked up to heaven as He gave thanks to God for the meal they were about to share. There was something about the look of Jesus which the disciples never forgot. As in giving the Lord's Supper, Jesus first blessed and then broke the loaf. When we pause to give thanks before our meals, we are following the example Jesus gave us in the two miraculous feedings and in the home at Emmaus, where He revealed at last His identity to the two disciples. The Baskets The Greek word for basket is the same in all four accounts. It means the wallet that Jews usually carried with them on long journeys, such as to the Passover. In the feeding of the four thousand the Greek word is different and means a big hamper such as might be used to carry a large amount of grain. The wallets used on this occasion may have belonged to the apostles. They had been forbidden to take a wallet with them on their recent missionary campaign, but these knapsacks may have been a permanent part of the equipment of the boat, since they often went into desert places where it would have been appropriate for them to take food. Their purchase of bread at Sychar (John 4:8) and their conscience-stricken remembrance that they had forgotten to buy bread before crossing the lake on a later occasion (Matthew 16:7), lead us to expect that they ordinarily had such equipment at hand in case Jesus suddenly ordered them to a long journey in uncertain terrain. There probably would have been a number of such wallets in the possession of some in the crowd, people who were getting ready to travel and did not have time to bestow their wallet before the race around the lake was started. The apostles may have borrowed the baskets from some in the crowd. This line of investigation

leads us to wonder how the boy carried his lunch, and after all these hours, had it still in edible condition. He probably had carried it in a small wallet. The Fragments The gathering up of the fragments taught a wonderful lesson on conservation for those present and for all time. It also furnishes clinching evidence as to the miracle. Here is proof that every person in the immense crowd had completely satisfied his hunger. It immediately raises the question as to whether some of the people kept in their hands all the food they wished to take home to friends and relatives to whom they would bear witness of the miracle. There is no statement here, as in the case of turning the water to wine, that the food which was miraculously increased was of extraordinary quality. The great amount of wine left to the bridegroom at the close of the wedding feast in Cana undoubtedly enabled many to come from the surrounding country on hearing of the miracle and taste some of the extraordinary wine which Jesus had made. We are caused to wonder whether from the feeding of the five thousand such evidence was not carried to other thousands. The indication of the text is that whatever the people did not care to use was collected in baskets. And what was done with this supply of excess food? Mark's account reads as if the bread was collected in separate containers from the fishes: "And they took up broken pieces, twelve basketfuls, and also of the fishes" (Mark 6:43). The bread would keep longer and would be more usable.

We conclude that this food, although so simple, was beyond comparison in excellence. Needy persons may have been glad to receive it. Upon hearing of the nature of the miracle, the desire to taste some of this leftover bread and fish may have been great. The scraps could have been fed to animals. If the baskets were borrowed from some of the people in the crowd, we can assume that the owner took care of the basket and its contents at the close of the day. If the baskets belonged to the apostles, some of the other disciples may have volunteered to see that good use was made of the contents and to return the basket in due time.

Radical Attack on the Miracle

Hostile critics, such as Paulus, Holzmann, and Bacon, attempt to deny the miracle and affirm that this was a purely ordinary meal which was inflated into a miracle by the monstrous lying of the Gospel writers. The popular novel The Robe, by Lloyd Douglas, undertakes to present this skeptical attack as to what actually happened. He holds that since everyone was going on such a long journey each one took his own lunch. This flatly declares that the Gospel narratives falsify the facts in their representations of the manner in which the race began around the lake, the conditions prevailing before the start, the explicit testimony that a thorough search was made to find any food in the people's possession, and that they found no one who had anything to eat except the lad. The radicals hold that Jesus taught until dinner time, took out His lunch, and began to eat, advising everybody else to do likewise. Thus, as He caused everybody to eat their lunch by setting the example, the story got started that He had fed the multitude! The Defense In reply to this attack the following facts are to be considered: This theory contradicts at every point the Gospel writers, two of whom were eyewitnesses; it vilifies the authors. At the time the Gospel narratives were written many of the great multitude were still alive. These eyewitnesses could verify the account of the Gospel writers or else denounce them as liars trying to invent a miracle out of a natural event. It must be remembered that not all these witnesses were friendly to the spiritual ministry of Jesus, as is manifest in the debate the next day in the synagogue in Capernaum. They argued against Jesus the next day, but they did not attempt to deny the reality

of the miracle. The extraordinary restraint shown in the narration bears the seal of historic reality. The food was of the simplest variety. An inventor would have pictured “little table come and little table go away,” with all the luxurious food of the region. There was no food brought down from heaven, but the little lunch of a lad was increased to feed the multitude. Fiction writers would have made the creation of food a commonplace in the ministry of Jesus. There are just two occasions when Jesus performed this kind of miracle. The element of conservation seen in the gathering of the fragments carries a remarkable element of authenticity. If each person had his own lunch, why should there have been twelve baskets of food left over? What right would the apostles have had to take away from the individuals what was their own property? The radicals have searched the literature of the world in vain to find any sort of story similar enough to have suggested this account. They have failed completely. Whence this record, if no miracle occurred? The restrained fashion in which the testimony is given has a peculiarly powerful element in Jesus’ refusal of the crown at the last. The extreme brevity and simplicity of the account and the inclusion of so many vivid and unintentional details are most convincing. The manner in which the miracle fits into the sweep of events in the ministry of Jesus makes invention impossible. The fact should not be overlooked that this scene represents the climax of the Galilean ministry. Popular enthusiasm grew steadily until this event, but His campaign collapsed with His refusal to become a worldly messiah. His sermon the next day on the bread of life and the ensuing debate with the Zealots drove many others away. Even though the disciples were puzzled and disheartened at the tragic turn of events, they still clung to Him. From this time Jesus spent more time in seclusion training His disciples. The time of His death was now approaching.

Evidences of Faith The evidence for faith being required before this miracle was performed immediately raises the question as to whether anyone was seeking miraculous aid. Jesus did not perform the miracle suddenly and unexpectedly, but only after careful preparation. He was at great pains to bring the apostles and the crowd into the state of mind where they were seeking help and to stir their expectancy and faith before He fed them.

He deliberately caused the multitude to follow Him into a desert place, where they had no food and where none was available.

He first placed the problem of the exhausted, famished multitude before the apostles to make them think it over and to feel the responsibility in the matter (John 6:5, John 6:6).

Later in the day when the disciples begged Him to send the crowd away before it was too late, He laid the responsibility upon them again (Matthew 14:15; Mark 6:35, Mark 6:36; Luke 9:12). They were staggered by the command that they should feed the multitude, and they could only repeat the suggestion made by Philip earlier in the day (Matthew 14:16; Mark 6:37; Luke 9:13; John 6:7).

He then demanded that they go through the thousands of people and inquire whether anyone had any food. This search served two purposes: (a) It made them give proof of their faith by seeking out a handful of food to enable Jesus to feed thousands of people. (b) It suddenly stirred the sense of critical need and the expectancy of the crowd (Mark 6:38).

Andrew, evidently searching through the section of the multitude which had been assigned to him for questioning, found a lad with five loaves and two fishes. Though doubtful of the importance of his discovery, he reported it to Jesus (John 6:9; Matthew 14:17; Mark 6:38; Luke 9:13.)

Jesus told the apostles to go and tell the boy that He desired to have his lunch. This command required faith on their part and on that of the boy (John 6:9).

After the crowd was stirred by the inquiries of the apostles and the procedure of securing the little lunch from this boy, they were commanded to sit down in regular formations for orderly serving of the meal. It required faith for the apostles to deliver and the crowd to obey such instruction when only five loaves and two fishes were in sight.

John's narrative makes plain that some of those who shared the miracle had defective faith in the sense that they did not understand or endorse the spiritual campaign of Jesus. These persons were the fanatical Zealots eager to start a rebellion against Rome. We are not told about the impact of the miracle upon the apostles, but we can judge how great it was from their amazed protests earlier in the day when faced with the prospect of having to feed so great a crowd. But the tremendous effect of the miracle upon the Zealots is made manifest by their rash plot to seize Jesus and make Him king — their kind of messiah. They had enough faith to obey the commands of Jesus to prepare for the meal when food was not yet in evidence, but they did not have enough faith to accept His spiritual program. They can be likened to the nine lepers, who had enough faith to obey and go on their way to show themselves to the priest, but not enough gratitude to return and give thanks to Jesus. They were like the people who had faith to ask to be healed and to obey the tests of faith, but who failed to obey His command to maintain silence concerning the miracle. The Independence of the Accounts The independence of the four accounts is most impressive. This miracle is the only one Jesus worked during His ministry which is recorded by all four writers. This testifies both to the mighty character of the miracle and the critical importance of the event in the entire movement of Jesus' ministry. Radical scholars attempt to spin out fanciful dreams about their Two-source Theory and Form Criticism, by which they endeavor to show that the writers of our Gospel narratives copied from one another or from common sources. But see what difficulties they meet in the accounts of this miracle. It is inevitable that persons sharing the same church service, or the same picnic, or a thrilling experience of any kind would report some of the same details. They could not report the entire experience and not report some of the same things. The all-important details appear in each of the narratives, but the differences in details are impressive.

■ Since John wrote his Gospel in the next to last, or last decade of the first century, whereas the Synoptic writers published their works at the middle of the century, we should expect that John would show clearly that he was copying from the others if this were the procedure. Of course, the entire basis of this radical attack is the assumption that these narratives were written late and not by eyewitnesses or those in immediate contact with eyewitnesses. John wrote this narrative a generation after the Synoptics, yet observe the new elements in his account and the vivid narration, which testifies to the fact that here is the work of an eyewitness.

■ John tells us that Jesus first laid the responsibility of feeding the multitude upon the hearts of the apostles by His question to Philip (John 6:5-7).

■ All four reports tell that the apostles found but five loaves and two fishes, but only John records that Andrew found and reported to Jesus that there was a lad in the crowd who had five loaves and two fishes.

- John alone tells of the effect that the miracle produced on the crowd and the effort of the Zealots to seize Jesus and compel Him to be their kind of messiah.
- John is the only one who reports that the Passover was near(John 6:4).
- John reports that these were barley loaves which the boy had (John 6:13).

Equally impressive is the evidence for independent writing when we examine the new details in the other three narratives. Matthew is the only writer who tells us that women and children were present (Matthew 14:21). Matthew gives us the emphatic declaration that the news of John's death had a strong part in the departure of Jesus to be alone with His disciples (Matthew 14:13). Only Matthew and Mark report the season of prayer on the mountain after the miracle and the dismissal of the crowd (Matthew 14:23; Mark 6:46).

Mark is the only one who relates for us the important detail that they had no time to eat amid the hectic ministry in Capernaum (Mark 6:31). This picture of excitement prevailing before the start of the race is important in showing why no one in the crowd had any food with him. They had not even had time to eat when the market place was at hand. Mark alone tells us that the crowd outran the boat and arrived first (Mark 6:33). The efforts to show a contradiction between Mark and John at this point is in itself a deadly blow at the Two-source Theory. Mark is the one who tells specifically that Jesus commanded the apostles to make a systematic search of the crowd to find out whether any food was available. We should have to imply this from the other accounts, but Mark states it (Mark 6:38). Mark gives us the vivid touch that the crowd sat down in "garden beds" (Mark 6:40). He tells us specifically of the collection of fragments of the fishes (Mark 6:43).

Luke informs us of the subject of Jesus' sermon on this critical occasion (Luke 9:11). Mark indicates also a general teaching period and a wide range of discussion: "He began to teach them many things" (Mark 6:34). Matthew and Luke tell of the miracles of healing that took place during the day (Matthew 14:14; Luke 9:11). In all this presentation there is the vividness of eyewitnesses or reporters who were in immediate touch with eyewitnesses. There is also the unique miraculous guidance of the Holy Spirit which Jesus had promised to them. Who of us could ever have achieved the brevity of these narratives in reporting so astounding a miracle?

Power of the Evidence When challenged to cite miracles of Jesus most indubitable in their nature, we are accustomed to referring to these two miracles that followed in quick succession: the feeding of the five thousand and the walking on the water. The feeding of the five thousand had so many witnesses that there was no possibility of fraud. A magician can fool a great crowd because his hands can move faster than the eyes of the people who watch. But here was a miracle in which everyone of the thousands present had a part. They all shared the feast. After all, there is a closely restricted limit to the amount of paraphernalia that a magician can hide up his sleeves or on his person. When a full meal is furnished to five or ten thousand people, the very enormous extent of the miracle becomes clinching proof.

Those who imagine and then charge that the Gospel writers falsified the accounts and made into a miracle a normal meal, face again the overwhelming pressure of the many thousands of witnesses. Was there no person of truth in all these thousands? Just as the great number excludes magical fraud so it excludes lying about what happened. Even the Zealots, who were least in sympathy with the objectives of Jesus, did not undertake to deny the reality of the miracle.

As we follow the course of the debate the following day in the synagogue at Capernaum, we shall see the full force of this evidence. These who were so determined to follow their worldly pattern for a messiah, were themselves most impressed by the miracle. The death of John the Baptist had thrust a question mark over the ministry of Jesus. John had with dynamic vehemence predicted that the Messiah would destroy the wicked and bring about the reign of the kingdom of God. How could this be when Jesus had quietly permitted John to be murdered by the wicked rulers? Did not Jesus have the power to save John? There was imperative need for this prodigious miracle at just this juncture in the ministry of Jesus. There was physical need to rescue the people in their famished condition in the desert. Jesus had brought this critical need about by His sudden and unexpected departure by boat and by the direction and speed of the boat. However, the need for presentation of evidence for the incredible miraculous power of Jesus was a situation which had arisen from the death of John the Baptist. Comfort and consolation were offered to the grieving multitude in Jesus' teaching and preaching on this day. The majesty of His divine Person and the wisdom of His program were demonstrated by this stupendous miracle.

076. Chapter 17 - The Watch in the Night: The Walking on the Water

Chapter 17 - The Watch in the Night: The Walking on the Water Matthew 14:22-33;Mark 6:45-52;John 6:16-21 The Zealots The tremendously exciting events of this busy day when the five thousand were fed was followed by a lonely watch in the night. The Zealots were quick to see that a person who could feed so many thousands of people from a little handful of food could destroy a legion of Roman soldiers at a word. Here was the highway to world conquest. Such a miracle as they had witnessed could provide the most luxurious living without labor or effort of any kind. That this is the kind of people they were and the kind of objectives they had is evident in the accounts of what followed the miracle.

It seems strange that, after seeing this miraculous power of Jesus, they could have imagined that they would be able to take Jesus by force and compel Him to be their kind of messiah. But the perversity and stupidity of men is always strange. It was becoming increasingly evident that Jesus would not use His miraculous power to defend Himself. That He had not prevented the death of John added further evidence. The spiritual messages on this fateful day in the desert must have confirmed this conclusion. This fact later emboldened the leaders in Jerusalem to seize Him and put Him to death; they realized He would not use His miraculous power to defend Himself. Therefore, the action of these Zealots is of the same pattern and has the same basis. If He would not turn His miraculous power upon them to defend Himself, then perhaps they could compel Him to use His miraculous power to effect their dreams. The Struggle

Jesus might have thwarted their effort by walking straight through their midst as He did when the mob in Nazareth attempted to cast Him from the precipice. He may indeed have revealed His divine Person sufficiently here by the sea and caused them to hesitate, to shrink back, and to fear to put their plot into action. But if this was all that happened, the same battle would have to be fought out the next day. As a matter of fact, this was exactly what happened the next day, but the miracle by which Jesus overcame them was of such kind as left them in a rather helpless condition in their further efforts. The Disciples With the multitude strongly swayed by the Zealots' plot to seize Jesus and make Him king by force, the entire demeanor of Jesus must have been very severe as He commanded the multitudes to leave and go to their homes. But the first step in breaking up the Zealots' plot was to command the apostles to get into the boat and go to the other side of the lake. These disciples could be depended upon to obey His command to leave. As long as they remained in the multitude the people would conclude that their presence was the guarantee of Jesus' speedy return, and they would refuse to leave. If the apostles left, the futility of their attempting to remain in defiance of Jesus' command would be more evident. This move to send the apostles away was also necessary to split them off from the influence of the Zealots with their exciting propaganda of a glorious, worldly messiah. It is not hard to picture what would have ensued; the apostles would be surrounded by Zealot leaders with their passionate harangue. Jesus left the apostles, but He did not leave them to this corrupting influence. He commanded them to leave. John does not mention the Zealots by name, but he shows that there was a hard core of militant leaders in the midst that was gaining control of the multitude. Their move

capitalized on the miracle and was most contagious. The multitude was swept to a public declaration of their faith that Jesus was indeed the Messiah: “This is of a truth the prophet that cometh into the world” (John 6:14). This was the faith which Jesus sought to create, but their idea of what the Messiah should be and do was sadly confused. That the disciples did not obey the command to leave with any alacrity is evident in the narratives. This situation was something entirely new in their experience, that Jesus should at this exciting moment dismiss them in such peremptory fashion and tell them to cross the lake while He stayed here on the northeastern shore. Matthew and Mark both show the stern manner of Jesus’ command when they record, “And straightway he constrained the disciples to enter into the boat, and to go before him unto the other side” (Matthew 14:22; cf. Mark 6:45). To have left Jesus at all was unparalleled and most disturbing, but to leave Him in the midst of the crowd, now becoming unruly, must have been a particularly unwelcome command. John’s account shows that the disciples were slow to obey this order to cross the lake without Him. All three accounts state that evening had come when Jesus dismissed the multitude and went up into the solitude of the mountain. John follows this with the statement, “And it was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them” (John 6:17). This verse suggests that while they got into the boat to start in the direction of Capernaum, their efforts were halfhearted; they lingered near enough to be in sight as long as the light lasted so that, if Jesus should reappear and desire to have them take Him on board, they could be readily summoned by a gesture from the shore. This was no longer feasible after dark. If the wind had risen to heavy proportions, their tarrying offshore would have become a very difficult matter. John says of the conditions on the lake as they were starting their return voyage, “And the sea was rising by reason of a great wind that blew” (John 6:18). The wind was blowing full force against them; the heavy waves were beginning to surround them. The Watch in the Night

Jesus was keeping a watch in the night upon the mountaintop. Matthew and Mark state Jesus’ purpose in going up into the recesses of the mountain. The loneliness of His situation must have been oppressive. “He was there alone” (Matthew 14:23; cf. Mark 6:47). He was alone in that He was separated from His apostles. Here must have been one of the hours in the ministry of Jesus when there was a sublime fulfillment of that precious saying, “For I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me (John 8:16). Jesus was experiencing an hour of loneliness in a world full of selfish designs, slow to receive the divine plan of redemption. On this mountaintop the devil seems to have been pressing again the temptation to bow the knee and obtain the kingdoms of the world without having to die on the cross. Such a prospect was the very scheme the Zealots were urging — worldly grandeur amid world conquest. The death of John would have been reminding Jesus of the nearness of His own death by crucifixion. The worldliness of the people, their refusal to accept His spiritual teaching, their unwillingness to be led by Him, and their bold determination to compel Him to become their kind of messiah all added to His distress. The watch in the night on the mountaintop was another Gethsemane. His period of prayer lasted some eight hours. He had climbed the mountain in the sunset hour. He rejoined the disciples in the fourth watch — three to six a.m. The Watch on the Beach

Another watch in the night was being kept on the seashore at the foot of the mountain. When the great multitude dispersed and left for their homes in obedience to Jesus’ command, the stubborn, determined Zealot leaders remained intent on their plan to seize Jesus and force Him to become their king. They evidently rested on the axiom, “All that goes up comes down.” All they needed to

do was to set a most vigilant watch to prevent the possibility of His descending and passing through their midst during the night. With the morning light they would be able to take Him. What interesting discussions they must have had as they pondered their perplexing failure to seize Him at their first attempt. What bold resolutions must have occupied the hours of their watching. The Storm The disciples had watched in vain for the return of Jesus before they finally turned in despairing obedience to His command to cross the lake. Critics attempt to argue that the time and distances do not harmonize in the account. The lake is about six miles wide at this point. It is argued that they could not have been five or six hours in going only three miles. John specifies that they had rowed some twenty or thirty furlongs when Jesus came to them (John 6:19). But the critics evidently have not had much nautical experience. The contrary wind and the mountainous waves prevented them from using sails. They rowed for hours, gaining only inch by inch on the storm. Matthew says they were “distressed by the waves” (Matthew 14:24); Mark says, “distressed in rowing, for the wind was contrary unto them” (Mark 6:48); John shows that the storm was upon them even when they were starting the voyage in earnest; “And the sea was rising by reason of a great wind that blew” (John 6:18).

What a watch in the night the disciples kept during these hours when they were facing death in the storm. It was a desperate watch to see that the boat was kept trim with the waves, as they were in constant peril of capsizing. While Jesus prayed, the disciples kept a watch in which they did not need to be exhorted to stay awake. The near presence of death kept them alert. A storm at sea in the night is always the sailor’s terror. Jesus had been with them when the storm had threatened to sink their boat before. When they awakened Him, He had instantly stilled the storm and the tempest of waves. But now they were alone. As Jesus prayed in a world so selfish and so slow to accept God’s gracious invitation, the loneliness He experienced was shared in perplexed manner by the disciples who were also alone.

Destination

Mark says that Jesus commanded them to cross the lake to Bethsaida (Mark 6:45). At that time they were on the northeastern shore near Bethsaida Julias (Luke 9:10). This city was the commercial center Philip had built. The Bethsaida toward which Jesus commanded them to cross was a suburb of Capernaum on the northwestern shore. John confirms this identification when he says,”...were going over the sea unto Capernaum” (John 6:17). The general direction toward Capernaum and Bethsaida was the same. A powerful wind from the northwest was bearing them out of their course. They had been told to go to Bethsaida. They were trying now to make Capernaum. The actual landing the next morning was in the plain of Gennesaret just south of Capernaum (Mark 6:53).

Jesus Comes The accounts give no indication of a rainstorm, but this could have been a part of the storm which they faced. The three accounts make plain that Jesus first appeared to them in the distance, walking on the water. They did not recognize Him. What they saw was so utterly incredible, they thought it must be a ghost — some spiritual apparition which was beyond their understanding. All their practical experience was contradicted by what they saw. They were helplessly bestormed, but the figure they saw was not only walking on the surface of the water, but was advancing toward them in the teeth of the storm. The artists who picture Jesus walking on the placid surface of the lake are in error. They have overlooked the storm, which all three writers

emphasize. What was seen was a figure first lifted high on the crest of a wave, then disappearing into the trough of the sea to reappear on another wave. The brief accounts do not relate what sort of light enabled the apostles at some distance to see Jesus approaching in the night. Since the Passover was near; the moon was full. The lake could have been flooded with light during this wind storm. If broken clouds accompanied the wind, the moonlight would have been off and on. If a belated rainstorm, coming in the early days of the dry season, lashed the lake into a fury that night, then intermittent streaks of lightning could have given fearsome vision of the approaching figure. A further possibility is suggested by the fact that Matthew and Mark do not attempt to give the exact time when Jesus rejoined the disciples. They report that it was “the fourth watch,” which was from three to six a.m. We have leaped to the conclusion that it was nearer to three than six a.m. We have always pictured this as a night scene, but the Scripture does not so state. If it was nearer six a.m., then the dawn was breaking and would have afforded light. There is something, however, about the flavor of the entire narrative that covers it with the melancholy mantle, “And it was now dark and Jesus had not yet come.”

Terror in the Night

Jesus did not approach the boat on a direct course. He followed a parallel course, which would take Him past the boat. Mark says, “He cometh unto them, walking on the sea; and He would have passed by them” (Mark 6:48). Such a manner of approach would reduce the terror which might have paralyzed them and left the boat to capsize. They would be able to gain clear and unmistakable vision of what seemed impossible. They would never be able to become confused and imagine that they had rescued Jesus from the storm that night. He was advancing in the face of the storm and would have passed them by. They were helpless in the boat amid the storm; He was in no way dependent upon the boat.

We are reminded of how Jesus started to pass on by the house where the two going to Emmaus were to abide. It was a test of their faith. Had they not invited Him to enter in with them, He would have gone on. The disciples in the storm were still overwhelmed with fear. They did not appeal to Jesus or address Him. They were not as yet sure of the person’s identity or even the nature of the sight. As they cried out in fright, Jesus answered them in words forever cherished by storm-tossed Christians, “Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid” (Matthew 14:27; Mark 6:50; John 6:20).

Matthew alone tells of the bold challenge of Peter and the amazing experience that followed. Here again we see the independence of the accounts. If Matthew copied from Mark, instead of being directed by the Holy Spirit, then how does it happen that Matthew’s gospel contains an incident not recorded by Mark? Since Mark wrote at the direction of Peter, his account tends to omit events which glorify Peter. That he should have dared to walk on the water, and should have succeeded at first, was most remarkable in spite of his ultimate failure and the rebuke Jesus administered. Matthew wrote as an eyewitness telling what he saw and heard. If the worship of Jesus as the Son of God arose as a myth by gradual accretions, we should expect the Gospel of John to be the one which records that the disciples worshiped Jesus and declared that He was indeed the Son of God at the close of this prodigious miracle. That it is Matthew who records the fact delivers a deadly blow to the entire critical theory.

Mark’s Account

Mark's account has the following unique items: (1) Jesus saw them in their distress because of the storm, and on account of this came to them. The text implies miraculous vision; from the land Jesus had watched their course during the night (Mark 6:47, Mark 6:48). (2) Jesus did not approach the boat directly, but would have passed them by (Mark 6:48). (3) Their hearts were still hardened even though they were amazed at the miracle (Mark 6:52). John is the only one to inform us definitely as to the time they started across the lake in earnest and the distance they had traveled when Jesus came to them (John 6:17, John 6:19). He also tells that immediately after this exciting experience in the middle of the lake, they found themselves at their destination on the northwestern shore.

Peter's Experience

Those who accuse Peter of cowardice because of his denials in the court of the high priest overlook the fact that not even the succession of attacks and covert threats were able to drive Peter out of the court that fateful night. Their estimate of Peter as a coward certainly does not fit this extraordinary scene amid the storm in the sea. It was characteristic of Peter that he should speak first and think afterwards. It was an exciting moment; his joy and relief at hearing Jesus' voice and apparently seeing the Person he most loved, was struggling with a strong undercurrent of doubt as to the possibility of what he saw; his reckless disregard of the possible consequence to himself was also characteristic. Peter was a brave man. He was a born leader of men; impulsive, but courageous. Amid the storm at night he was quick to challenge the words of Jesus and to seek further proof of the reality of His presence.

Jesus' answer is a marvel of brevity, insight, and divine power: "Come." To disembark from a boat at night in such a storm was no small undertaking. When Peter left the boat, he actually walked on the water. But as he got farther away from the boat and had not yet reached the side of Jesus, "he saw the wind," i.e., he realized the extreme intensity of the wind by experiencing its terrifying effects. When Peter turned his gaze from Jesus to the storm, he forgot Jesus' divine power and could think only of the terrible power of the gale. Fear and doubt assailed him, and he began to sink. It was not doubt as to the reality of Jesus' presence, who was now closer to him, but doubt as to his ability to walk any longer and to survive the storm. It was not faith, but the divine power of Jesus which had enabled him to walk on the sea. But faith was the essential prerequisite to his receiving this miraculous power. When Peter began to close his heart through doubt, he began to sink. His despairing cry, "Lord, save me" is in sharp contrast with the calm rebuke given by Jesus: "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt" (Matthew 14:31). As in the stilling of the tempest, the storm instantly ceased when Peter and Christ entered the boat (Matthew 14:32; Mark 6:51). Their faith and their understanding of the mystery that Jesus was both God and man had increased since the stilling of the tempest. Then they had in amazement inquired of one another how He could be a man in their midst.

After the walking on the water they worship Him as God and openly declare their faith that He is the Son of God. What a close to this amazing scene as we see all the disciples drenched from the wild spray of the storm, falling at Jesus' feet in reverent worship and declaring His deity. The very forces of nature, the wind and the waves, which had suddenly arrested in their course, declare, as it were, by their sudden cessation, "Amen." The Calm When John records that "straightway the boat was at the land whither they were going" (John 6:21), we cannot be sure whether he means

another miracle then took place, or that in contrast to the scant progress made during the desperate battle with the storm, they now rowed quickly over the calm surface to the other shore. The least that can be implied from John's statement is that the sea became peaceful immediately, even as the wind suddenly ceased when Jesus and Peter entered the boat.

Attack of Critics The attack of the critics upon this miracle is as feeble as their effort against the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. Even though Gould is so far from conservative in many of his positions, he defends this miracle against the ridiculous attacks made by hostile writers. Commenting on Mark 6:34 ("When they saw him walking on the sea"), he says,

It is one of the absurdities of rationalizing exegesis, that this has been made to mean on the shore of the sea, or in view of the obvious fact that the author cannot possibly have meant that, that the story, as it stands, is supposed to have arisen from a mythical handling of so commonplace an event as walking on the shore (I.C.C. on Mark, p. 122).

They suppose that the disciples saw Jesus walking on the shore and the authors deliberately invented the falsehood that He overcame the force of gravity and walked on the water! As in the case of the miraculous feeding, they have to contradict the accounts in one detail after another. All three writers affirm that Jesus approached the boat walking on the water. Matthew and Mark declare that the boat was in the midst of the sea (not alongside the shore); John specifies that they were in the middle of the lake about twenty or thirty furlongs (about three miles) from the eastern shore, where they had started. To all that believe the gospel there is nothing impossible in the declaration of Mark 6:47, Mark 6:48 that Jesus, while still on the shore, could by miraculous vision see the disciples imperiled in the boat. But to the rationalist, who denies the miraculous altogether, it is impossible for the apostles to have seen Jesus three miles away in the night amid the storm. Mark clearly affirms that the disciples did not see Jesus until He approached the boat walking on the water. Matthew and John assert the same fact. Matthew's account of how Peter walked toward Jesus on the water must also be ruled out by these unbelievers as pure myth. That they claim the disciples only saw Jesus walking along the shore reveals how feeble their analysis is.

Looking back across the years and reflecting on this dreadful watch in the night and the glorious reunion with the Lord, the apostles must have treasured this as one of their most precious recollections. How fearfully death and life had been intertwined on that night! What triumphant confirmation of their faith! What assurance in hours of trial! Looking back across the centuries at this scene, humble Christians have been reminded of their own redemption amid the storm-swept experiences of life.

I was sinking deep in sin, Far from the peaceful shore, Very deeply stained within, Sinking to rise no more; But the Master of the sea Heard my despairing cry, From the water lifted me,

Now safe am I

Love lifted me.

077. Chapter 18 - The Debate with the Zealots

Chapter 18 - The Debate with the Zealots Matthew 14:34-36;Mark 6:53-56;John 6:22-71 The Multitude

Mark declares that when “they came to the land unto Gennesaret,’ “they moored to the shore” (Mark 6:53). Whether this means there was time to change to dry clothes and get some little rest before dawn we are not told. When they disembarked from the boat, the crowd immediately began to swarm about them. Mark reports that the people “ran around about that whole region, and began to carry about on their beds those that were sick, where they heard he was...” (Mark 6:55). Like a smoldering forest fire awakened by the wind, excitement broke out afresh with the arrival of Jesus in the plain of Gennesaret. The people who first recognized Him rushed out to carry the report from village to village, and the sick were brought to be healed even by touching the hem of His garment (Matthew 14:36; Mark 6:56). Evidently many of these had sought Jesus the day before but had found that He had departed to the other side of the lake. The Scripture makes clear that all the people who came to Jesus to be healed at any time were healed. But there is no suggestion that all the people in any section were healed. Nazareth illustrates quite the contrary. That so many people within reach of Capernaum should be in need of healing may seem surprising, but Jesus seems to have been campaigning elsewhere while the apostles were away on their mission. Immediately upon His return the day before, He had left the crowd and crossed the lake. If He had been absent for some months, there would have been the natural number of people who had become sick or disabled. His fame was continually spreading to more distant places, and the unfortunate were being brought to Him to be cured. Many of these folks may have been waiting for days and have been disappointed the day before that they had not been able to reach Him before He crossed the lake. The Zealots

John does not tell of this healing ministry but plunges immediately into the account of the exciting encounter between Jesus and the Zealots in the synagogue in Capernaum. The only notice that John seems to give to this hurrying to and fro of the multitude in the plain of Gennesaret to be healed is the statement that the Zealots, who had camped through the night in the plain at the foot of the mountain, discovered with the morning light that Jesus had escaped through their midst in spite of their vigilant watch. John describes the determined crowd that had remained: “On the morrow the multitude that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there….When the multitude therefore saw that Jesus was not there” (John 6:22, John 6:24). Obviously they did not see that Jesus was not there by searching all the mountain range whence He had disappeared. That would have been a futile task. They were standing on the beach studying the mysterious disappearance of Jesus from their midst. There was no other boat in that section of the lake. They had been very sure of this. That Jesus was not now on their side of the lake must have been instantly plain to them by looking across the lake to see the blurred figures of great crowds running to and fro in the Plain of Gennesaret. They knew what that meant. The Crossing Their method of crossing the lake was characteristic. They hitchhiked a voyage across. Verily, as Jesus told them later this morning, they were after more loaves and fishes with no labor

attached. They could have walked around the end of the lake as they had come. But the fishing fleet, which had come in the early morning hours from Tiberias, nearly eight miles to the southwest, was now in the most favorable location for fishing. Here the Jordan brought in fresh supplies of food to the fish. By hailing some of the boats nearest them, they could have a chance to tell the fishermen of the amazing miracle and could persuade them to take them across the lake to where Jesus was. By the time they arrived in the Plain of Gennesaret the early-morning healing session was over, and Jesus was teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum (John 6:59). The Issue This discourse is usually called “The Sermon on the Bread of Life.” The sermon was so mysterious and profound that it completed the downfall of His popularity which crumbled under His refusal of the crown the Zealots had offered the day before. They decided that if He would not be their kind of messiah, they would not be His kind of disciples. But more than the deep and difficult character of this message turned the popular current against Him. It was really a debate with the Zealots. Their demand for a military messiah to lead them in revolt against Rome had a strong following in Galilee. Having failed in their plot to seize Jesus and compel Him to join their worldly enterprise, they now resort to the sullen effort to discredit His spiritual campaign by furious debate. Perhaps these Zealots could be called the most ungrateful people who ever shared a miracle that Jesus worked. The manner in which John refers to the miracle of feeding the multitude is noteworthy: “...the place where they ate the bread after Jesus had given thanks” (John 6:23). Does this reflect an unforgettable moment as they listened to Jesus’ prayer of thanksgiving? or is it an implied rebuke to the ingratitude which is now shown by the Zealots and their following? Yesterday they were crying out in triumphant joy that Jesus was indeed the Christ, and they immediately plotted to take over His campaign and turn it to their selfish purposes. Today they give cold rebuff and rejection to Jesus and even cast cynical sneers at His miracles and claims. The Debate This circumstance does not mean that Jesus was now on the defensive. He kept the offense for God in His firm possession. Before the Zealots rebuffed Jesus, He had rebuffed and rejected their worldly objectives. He had refused, as He had in the wilderness, to bow the knee to Satan in order to have the kingdoms of the earth. Because of bitter frustration in their reckless efforts to bend Jesus to their will, the Zealots now meet Jesus in open debate. There was a sufficient number of these Zealots and their followers, who had kept watch at the foot of the mountain through the night, for John to call them a “multitude.” When they made their way into the teaching session now in progress in the synagogue at Capernaum, they must have crowded the building to the utmost. They immediately proceed to challenge Jesus. There was a wonderful spirit of democracy in His services; anyone might ask a question, add a remark, or raise an objection at any time. Much of the teaching of Jesus and some of His sermons come out of the give-and-take of this kind of spirited discussion. A sermon as exalted and fervent as the Sermon on the Mount, the Sermon on John the Baptist and the unbelieving cities might not allow for any interruption, but under ordinary circumstances there was free discussion. Thus has Christianity survived and grown. The Zealots are not specifically mentioned by John. There were present a large number of these men who were seeking to seize the ministry of Jesus and turn it to their own aims. They are still called a “multitude” (a.s.v. John 6:22), although the a.v. translates “the people.” Twice they are called “the Jews” (John 6:41, John 6:52). This terminology is John’s characteristic method of citing Jews who were unbelieving and hostile. It is significant that there is no mention of scribes or Pharisees We should expect them to be present in the synagogue at Capernaum (John 6:59). There is no evidence that the Pharisees followed Jesus into the desert the previous day. The miracle of

feeding the five thousand seems to have been shared only by those who believed. But these selfish, worldly leaders had a very faulty kind of faith as they sought to turn Jesus' purposes in their own direction. With the thwarting of their plot their selfish faith is turned into cold unbelief. Perhaps John does not specify they are members of the political party seeking to start a rebellion against Rome because there were others joined with them in this effort to turn Jesus' movement from its spiritual aims. The Pharisees seem to be allowing the Zealots to carry the brunt of the battle against Jesus in this discussion. After this fashion the Pharisees and Sadducees took turns in the debates during the final week of Jesus' ministry.

There are four separate rounds in the debate. This exchange is called "The Sermon on the Bread of Life." Indeed the heart of Jesus' message lies here, but the manner of the discussion was a debate. The Zealots tried to take the initiative. They asked four challenging questions in succession, but Jesus' answers were detailed and overpowering. They found themselves unable to comprehend or to deny. They lapsed into whispered objections (John 6:41, John 6:42), and then to disagreement among themselves (John 6:52). That they did see that Jesus was claiming to be God as well as man is made very clear by their resort to the argument that Jesus certainly was a human being as others, with a father and a mother known to them (John 6:42). This sermon is filled with tremendous affirmations of deity. The Zealots selected as the clearest, most objectionable of these, "I am come down out of heaven." They felt that they could contradict Him by citing His birth as a human being. But Jesus had said more than His descent from heaven. He had affirmed that He was "the Bread which came down out of heaven." He specified that He was the Bread of life — "the true bread which my Father giveth you," "the food which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you." The sermon revolves around the figure of bread because it is the aftermath of the previous day's feeding of the five thousand and the present desire to have Jesus provide food for them daily without work on their part. They were typical "something for nothing" enthusiasts. The Miracle and the Sermon

A. B. Bruce raises the question in his Training of the Twelve as to whether the sermon arose out of the miracle or the miracle was worked in order to make an introduction to the sermon. He holds that the miracle was not worked because the crowd was in real distress; they could have reached home by being sent home a little earlier. Jesus performed the miracle in order to introduce this sermon which by its supreme difficulty screened the crowd. The curiosity seekers and the selfish were caused to leave in disgust. But there is a strong emphasis on the compassion of Jesus for this crowd in their plight as sheep without a shepherd. Their souls were in deep distress over the news of John's death; their bodies were exhausted from continuing with Jesus. The sermon arose naturally out of the miracle, but Jesus' foreknowledge may have caused both of these reasons to have been combined.

Since miracles had the purpose of proving Jesus' claims to be the Son of God, and since the miracle on the lake shore had been brought to a sudden, dramatic conclusion by the plot to seize Him and make Him an earthly king, the scene on the following day fits into His whole program of mercy and instruction. These leaders, who were now hostile, bore unconscious testimony to the miracle by which He had crossed the lake. They had seen the disciples enter into the boat and leave. They had seen Jesus go up into the mountain. They watched vigilantly to prevent His passing through their midst and escaping their plot. They had experienced the storm. They had seen the fleet from Tiberias arrive in the early dawn after the storm. They sensed another miracle

and sought immediate verification as they asked Jesus how He had come across. Since their purpose was evil, Jesus did not satisfy their curiosity with a direct answer. He forced them back on the defensive by revealing their worldly ideas and designs. They had not really wanted to see miracles that revealed God's grandeur and purposes for them, but only miracles that would secure riches and glory without effort. The strong emphasis which Jesus places upon work is noteworthy.

Faith and Salvation The Zealots demanded, then, what sort of work was expected of them. In reply Jesus calls faith work: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:29). Faith is not a meritorious work in the sense of enabling us to earn salvation, but it is a work which we must do in order to receive God's grace. There is "a will to believe." No one else can make this decision of life for us. The Zealots lapsed back into the characteristic demand of the Pharisees that Jesus show them a further and greater miracle than they had witnessed the day before. By way of degrading the impressiveness of the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, they cited the fact that Moses had fed a whole nation each day for years in the wilderness with manna. The answer of Jesus was a plain declaration of His deity. It was not Moses who gave the manna; it was God. It was not a mere man who had fed the five thousand. He is the Bread of God come down from heaven. They promptly challenged Jesus to prove His claim and give them this mysterious bread. Jesus answered with the majestic declaration Of deity: "I am the bread of life." No one would ever hunger or thirst after coming to Him for the essence of life.

Jesus informs them that He had anticipated their rejection of Him. God foreknows who will reject and, in the sense of foreknowing what men will do, He gives to Jesus those who of their own free choice, come to Him. The next phrase confirms this interpretation: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." God does not overpower a man and give him to Jesus by compelling his acceptance. Man chooses and accepts or rejects for himself. God knows beforehand what man will do. In this sense He gives men to Jesus. As the old Negro preacher explained predestination to his congregation: "The Lord says, 'Yes'; the devil says, 'No.' And I casts the deciding vote." Continually in this sermon salvation is declared to be the gift of God. It is also repeatedly set forth that there is something which man must do in order to receive the gift. The acceptance of God's gracious gift of redemption requires us to believe in Christ and obey Him — to give Him our lives.

Hypocrisy of the Zealots In this entire discussion the insincerity of these Jewish leaders is evident in their arguments and their demands for further miracles. They are sparring for time; they are determined not to yield their selfish ambitions; they do not want to be convinced; they only hope to entangle Jesus. They had seen the miracle the day before and had been convinced Jesus was the Christ. They are merely trying now to defend their selfish objectives. While their reference to Moses was subtle, Jesus boldly took up this challenge and pointed out the difference between Christ and all earthly leaders; they are of earth; He is from heaven. They can offer satisfaction but for a time; He, for all eternity.

Declarations of Deity

Jesus did not respond to their false statement that He was the son of Joseph with a direct revelation of the virgin birth. But observe how the virgin birth is plainly implied in the answers of Jesus. And this is the Gospel of John! (Modernists attempt to make a capital argument out of the silence of John on the virgin birth.) While Jesus does not answer their problem as to how the incarnation came to pass, He affirms again in the most powerful way that His coming into the world

was different from that of any other human being. “I am the living bread which came down out of heaven” (John 6:51). He increases the profound nature of His revelation by declaring that He is the bread that man may eat and live forever. This difficult saying caused an explosive outburst of discussion among the Jewish leaders. The Lord’s Supper The difficulty this sermon has for us is greatly decreased by the later instruction of Jesus in giving the Lord’s Supper. It seems clear that Jesus is speaking in this sermon of the sharing of the loaf and the cup as the symbols of His body and blood, which were given for our redemption. The catacombs bear mute testimony to the fact that the early Christians realized that Jesus was speaking of the Lord’s Supper, for they make the loaves and the fishes of the memorable miracle and debate the symbols of the Lord’s Supper. They make the passage completely spiritual; eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ refer to the soul-satisfying Christian experience which each individual in Christ enjoys. In giving the Lord’s Supper Jesus made it evident that He was using figures of speech; to drink a cup is a metonymy, the container for the contained (1 Corinthians 11:26); to say that a cup is a covenant is a metaphor (Luke 22:20). The loaf and the fruit of the vine were representatively to remind them of His body and blood (for further discussion of the figurative nature of the emblems see section “The Lord’s Supper”). With the rest of the New Testament in our hands we naturally think of the Lord’s Supper as we read this sixth chapter of John. The language of Jesus is figurative in this sermon, where He is the bread of life to be eaten, just as in the statements at the giving of the Lord’s supper.

It is a most ineffective argument to say that Jesus could not have had a reference to the Lord’s Supper in mind because His hearers would not have understood Him. This same feeble argument is used to urge that Jesus did not refer to baptism when He warned Nicodemus that He must be born again, of water and the Spirit. As a matter of fact, Nicodemus did not understand and said so. The people in the synagogue at Capernaum did not understand. This was Jesus’ method of teaching on many occasions. He assigned His students homework to do. It might take months or years of concentrated reflection for them to solve the enigma. Even the apostles did not understand His references to His death until at Caesarea Philippi. They never did understand His predictions of His resurrection until they were in the presence of the risen Christ. The fact enabled them finally to understand the predictions. Thus the further teaching of Jesus helps us to understand this difficult sermon. His disciples called it “a hard saying; who can hear it” (John 6:60).

Identity of the Zealots

Although John does not call these leaders in debate Zealots, it is the only group which fits the specifications of the narratives. The Zealots were concentrated in Galilee. The murder of John the Baptist would have infuriated them. John’s account makes apparent the presence of a hard core of leaders who were tremendously impressed by the miracle and who immediately plotted to take command of Jesus’ campaign, to seize Him by violence, make Him King, and bend Him to their will. Neither the Pharisees, the Sadducees, nor the Herodians fit into this picture. On no occasion when they witnessed the miracles of Jesus did they show other than cold indifference. They simply tightened the bandages on their eyes and ears and stiffened their necks in unbelief. Never do we find these three sects proposing to take Jesus and make Him king. Their hostility was constant and unrelenting. The sudden reversal of position by these leaders fits the Zealots. They had not planned to surrender to Jesus on the plain of Butiha; they planned to force Him to surrender to them. When He thwarted them in their plot of violence, they entered the synagogue the next day,

mystified, perplexed, frustrated, angry, and stubbornly unrepentant. Without doubt the Zealots joined in the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. On that day they shouted in wild exultation, “Hail to the King!” They concluded that at last He was about to become their kind of messiah. Five days later they reversed their position of praise and support and cried aloud in rage, “Crucify Him!” The Worldly Crowd When the disciples were filled with perplexity over such difficult teaching, Jesus reminded them that events not far off would afford them further difficulty. He cites the ascension. He explains that His sermon had been figurative: “It is the spirit that giveth life; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life” (John 6:63). The Apostles As the crowd left the synagogue services, the Zealots carried most of the people with them in their rejection of the teaching of Jesus. “Not our kind of messiah” was the verdict of the Zealots and of the people in general. So sudden a downfall of popularity from the thrilling experience with the five thousand the day before must have been a crushing weight for the apostles to bear. John reminds us that Jesus had known the hearts of those who believed and those who did not. He anticipated this end to His popularity in Galilee. But there is an unmistakable touch of sadness in the voice of Jesus as He said to the apostles, “Would ye also go away?” Not only the great multitude, but many of the disciples who had been accustomed to following Jesus from place to place, when this was possible, had now left Him. Jesus issues a challenge to the twelve. Do they also desire to leave Him? Peter answers for the group; if they should go away, where could they go? They do not understand His procedure, nor this difficult teaching He has given, but where could they go for instruction? They desire above all else the words of life which He alone can give. They have already come to solid faith that He is “the Holy One of God.” Others may leave if they will, but Peter speaks for the twelve that they will remain. The things they do not understand now they hope to understand later on through His instruction. Their intimate association with Christ enables Peter to speak both of their faith and their knowledge that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus responded by warning Judas Iscariot for the first time. We do not know what Judas had been doing, saying, or thinking that called forth this drastic warning that one of the twelve was a devil. Nor can we ascertain what the impact of the warning was on Judas. The rest of the twelve would probably have found it hard to understand that this saying was to be taken literally. Amid so much figurative and mysterious language the force of this sharp warning may have been lost upon them.

078. Chapter 19 - Shock Troops from the Capital

Chapter 19 - Shock Troops from the Capital Matthew 15:1-20;Mark 7:1-23;John 7:1 Further Controversy The Passover was near when Jesus fed the five thousand. John makes it clear that Jesus did not attend this Passover. He describes the events following the day of furious debate in the synagogue in Capernaum: “After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for he would not walk in Judaea, because the Jews sought to kill him.”

These plots against His life did not come from the Zealots, but from the national leaders at the capital — the Pharisees and Sadducees. The miracles, the growing power of His movement, His assertions of deity all led to renewed plots against His life. The national leaders were also moved to send out a delegation of trained controversialists to attempt to undermine the success of Jesus. If this discussion with the scribes came shortly after the debate with the Zealots, then these shock troops from the capital may have been sent out before they knew whether Jesus would come to the Passover. If it was some weeks later, they may have been sent to take advantage of the hostility of the Zealots and to hasten their own combat with Him.

Ceremony vs. Sincere Worship

Neither Matthew nor Mark locates this discussion. We think of the synagogue in Capernaum as the most probable place. The scholars from Jerusalem had had some time to observe the activities of Jesus and to come up with a criticism. His disciples were not keeping the traditions of the elders; they did not wash their hands before they ate. This was not sanitation; it was ceremony. They might perchance have touched some sinful person; and, being so holy themselves, they must rid their body of this polluted contact with ordinary persons. The apostles were often so thronged by the crowds around Jesus that they did not even have time to eat, not to mention wash their hands in a religious ceremony before they ate (Mark 6:31). But they are following the example of Jesus in disregarding the traditions of the Pharisees. The learned men from Jerusalem did not criticize Jesus for not washing His hands; they criticized His disciples. Was this because they had not seen Him eating or because they felt they could gain the same advantage by attacking His disciples, who were following His example and instructions? The traditions of the elders were the oral interpretations of the Old Testament which famous teachers had laid down through succeeding generations. These were not committed to writing until a.d. 185 when at Tiberias by the Sea of Galilee the Jewish rabbis began the writing of the Mishna (see “The Talmud”). These traditions built a hedge about the law so the people could not get to the law to break it In other words, the traditions were much more detailed and onerous to keep than the law itself.

Jesus’ Reply

There are four points in Jesus’ rebuttal to this attack. He based His reply on the ringing condemnation voiced by Isaiah and summed up His analysis of their position in the words, “You hypocrites.” The four points which fastened the epithet hypocrites upon them are:

■ They were criticizing His disciples for disobeying the traditions of the elders while they themselves were disobeying the Old Testament through their exalted devotion to these traditions.

■ They were full of pious care about ceremonial defilement of their hands and kitchen utensils, but disregarded their hearts, which were full of sin and corruption.

■ They pretended to have great devotion to God, but used this pretense as a cloak to disobey His commands to care for their parents.

■ Their hearts and their words did not match. They honored God with pious words, but dishonored Him with selfish and disobedient hearts.

Quotation from Isaiah

Isaiah condemned the hypocrites of his day as he preached. Jesus declared that Isaiah was also condemning the hypocrites of the time of the Messiah. The quotation in Matthew 15:8, Matthew 15:9 is almost exactly like the Septuagint translation. Mark's quotation is the same. They do not declare they are using the Septuagint, nor does any New Testament writer. The Hebrew text which was used by the a.v. and the a.s.v. in translating Isaiah offers a difference in the latter part of the passage: "Their fear of me is a commandment of men which hath been taught them." The Septuagint was translated in 285 b.c. from Hebrew manuscripts much older than even the Dead Sea Scrolls. Because the Septuagint was held in such high esteem and was in general use both by the Jews and Christians in the days when the church was first established, New Testament quotations from the Old Testament were frequently made from this Greek translation.

Although the phrasing of the current Hebrew text and the Septuagint is different, the fundamental meaning is the same. Their fear of me is the fear of the Lord, an ordinary Old Testament description of worship, system of religion, doctrine. Hath been taught them implies by men, since it is declared to be "a commandment of men." Instead of following the revelation of God, they had a system of religion which had been invented by men. The forthright denunciation in vain do they worship me is implied in the key statement, "Their heart is far from me.

We must remember that the inspiration of the Scripture assures us that the Bible is a true and faithful account of what actually happened, rather than a mathematical exactness. A narrative may get so involved in precision that it becomes lifeless. The New Testament writers continually make free quotations from the Old Testament. The Hebrew text was available to all who would secure a more precise statement. It seems that in this verse the Septuagint offers a free, effective paraphrase of the Hebrew text. Jesus certainly gives an authoritative presentation of the meaning of Isaiah.

Mechanical Religion The Pharisees had no monopoly upon mechanical religion. The universal, omnipresent issue is heartfelt religion versus ceremonialism. The lack of concentration is at the center of our languid indifference in worship. Having failed to put Christ first in our lives, we find no difficulty in removing Him to a secondary place in our hearts, even in the midst of worship. We know the words and the melody so well, it is possible for our songs of praise, confession, or petition to become merely a phonograph record we have turned on with our vocal chords, while our minds wander amid our desires or our plans for Monday, Tuesday, and the rest of the week. Our heads may be bowed and eyes closed in externals of reverence and our hearts very far from

God, seeking selfish interest or even entertaining wicked thoughts. We may look with rapt attention at the preacher while at the same time our thoughts are miles away. In the schoolroom concentration is the secret of learning accurately and rapidly, and in Christian assembly concentration is the secret of reverent worship and spiritual growth.

Human Creeds The Pharisees are not the only ones who have attempted to build up a human creed and put it in the place of the Word of God. Christians have been known to affirm stubbornly, “I am going to stick by the creed of my church, Bible or no Bible.” They need to study carefully this stern condemnation of the Pharisees by Jesus. Men’s precepts are vain because they are based on the uncertainty of opinion, prejudice, and vanity. Every attempt to write a human creed as an authoritative interpretation of Scripture or to create an authoritative organization to govern man’s religious activities leads in the end to the setting up of the human creed above the Bible and the human organization above the church. Interpretation of the Word of God is necessary and desirable, but we should not attempt to bind our interpretations upon others. “Where the Scriptures speak, we speak (the teaching and commands it gives); where the Scripture is silent, we are silent (we do not create authoritative teaching on matters concerning which the Scripture gives none).” Z. T Sweeney turned this familiar slogan into an interesting and challenging opposite: “Where the Scriptures speak, we are silent (we do not attempt to evade, avoid, deny, or substitute); where the Scriptures are silent, we speak (we offer opinions as opinions and do not attempt to bind them upon others).” A Crushing Reply In His answer to the Pharisees Jesus did not deny that His disciples were not keeping the traditions of the elders. He did not try to excuse His disciples by pointing out their prodigious, unceasing, unselfish labors for others. He accepted the criticism as factual and met the issue head-on. His entire answer was based on the proposition that they did not have to keep the traditions of the Pharisees. But His approach was most skillful as He replied to their question with a question which put them immediately on the defensive. He charged that the Pharisees had put their traditions above the Old Testament and used them as a means to set aside the Word of God. He charged that their whole attitude toward God was superficial and hypocritical. They had sacrificed the spiritual content of the Scriptures and their worship to a human system and ceremonies. Jesus closed the discussion with a powerful sermon to the entire multitude on the issue the Pharisees had raised.

Mark’s Account

Mark’s description of the practices of the Pharisees is quite detailed and contains some interesting points. In Mark 7:3, “Except they wash their hands diligently,” and most of the versions have pukna (diligently); A, B, Sigma, L, many cursives, and Origen have pugme (with the fist). Both words have the same general meaning. An automobile mechanic today can be seen using his fists all lathered with soap to remove by the most vigorous rubbing the greasy grime from his hands and arms.

There are also the interesting manuscript differences seen in Mark 7:4. Some manuscripts have rantidzontai (sprinkle), notably Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, which is the reading accepted by the Westcott and Hort, and the Nestle Greek texts. But Tischendorf and both the a.v. and the a.s.v. follow the overwhelming majority of manuscripts and have baptidzontai (wash themselves, baptize themselves). The wealthy Pharisees had sumptuous homes in Greco-Roman style and would have facilities for taking a bath. To adopt the reading sprinkle makes the passage a ridiculous

anticlimax. Ordinarily they washed their hands most diligently before they ate. But if they had been in the market place where the chance of touching some sinful person had been constant, they did something more than wash their hands diligently; they took a complete bath; they immersed themselves. The probable reason for the scribal error of changing the verb from baptize to sprinkle was that some scribe had added to the list of household objects the Pharisees washed. Baptize became ridiculous when “tables and beds” were added to the list. The best manuscripts do not contain these two words. The a.s.v. omits them.

Corban The word corban means gift or offering. In the law it was used of an offering, whether an animal to be sacrificed or a bloodless offering. It came to mean any money or service dedicated to God. Josephus tells of a riot by the Jews against Pilate when he took the corban money of the temple to build an aqueduct to supply more water to Jerusalem. The enterprise was for the public good, but Pilate had no right to take the money once it had been dedicated to God (Wars, II:IX:4). The Jews were using this dedication as a means of ridding themselves of the responsibility of caring for their parents. Jesus does not discuss the matter as to whether the dedication of the money was actual or pretended. There must have abounded instances of both actual and pretended dedication of funds to God, and then the parents were told they had to get out and shift for themselves since the money which might have supported them in their old age had now been dedicated to God and could not be taken back. The Pharisees had established the tradition that this process could be so used, and thus the Old Testament with its solemn injunction to honor father and mother was cleverly set aside.

Real Defilement

Both Matthew and Mark condense to one verse the sermon Jesus preached on the issue the Pharisees had raised. Jesus issued a special call for all the multitude to come up at close range so that all could hear the important declarations He was about to make. They had witnessed the challenge the Pharisees had made. They needed to hear the discussion of the fundamental issue involved. Jesus’ proposition was that real defilement is not ceremonial but moral; and not that which enters the mouth, but what proceeds forth from the heart defiles. In his report of the sermon Matthew says “out of the mouth”; Mark has “out of the man.” In a lengthy sermon Jesus must have shown that both speech and the entire range of conduct may defile a man. The speech is typical of the entire conduct. The food which a man eats is a matter of taste and need of the physical constitution; every man discovers and determines this for himself. But that which a man says or does determines his moral worth. It would be utterly perverse to attempt to apply this principle to things which are self-destructive, such as intoxicating liquor or any sort of poison. A man is defiled by eating or drinking that which is self-destructive, but the drinking or eating is itself an act which proceeds out of his heart and is a deliberate choice which defiles.

Setting Aside the Old Testament This sweeping declaration of Jesus sets aside the fundamental distinction which the Old Testament law made concerning clean and unclean meats. Peter had kept this commandment concerning unclean meats from his youth. He still did not understand the principle which Jesus had enunciated here. He had to be instructed by a miracle at Joppa before he was sent to the home of Cornelius (Acts 10:9-15). The traditions of the elders were not merely swept aside, but the law itself concerning clean and unclean meat. The revolutionary character of this teaching should be placed alongside Jesus’ declaration to the woman at the well revoking the

fundamental proposition of the Old Testament that there was to be one central place of worship: “The hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father” (John 4:21). In any place in all the world a man may worship God if he does it in spirit and in truth. As Jesus was bringing God’s final revelation to the world, He kept indicating the setting aside of the Old Testament law. These revolutionary changes were not understood at once, but “the hour cometh.” The law was nailed to the cross, but not until the new will was probated at Pentecost was the announcement made to the world of the new dispensation. It took much instruction of the Christians for the church to see that the law had passed away. Mark shows clearly that by the time he wrote his Gospel, the church understood that the principle Jesus enunciated here had set aside the law concerning clean and unclean meats. The a.s.v. makes this very evident by an explanatory insertion in Mark 7:19 : “This he said, making all meats clean.” The Alarmed Disciples The disciples probably did not know whether they should publicly ask for more information so they waited for a private interview in the home after the public service had been dismissed. They were also in great distress over another dreadful blow at the popularity of Jesus. They had just witnessed His decisive break with the Zealots and had seen the crowds turn away from Him. Now He had given mortal affront to the famous scholars from the capital. They were anxious to urge caution upon Jesus. Obviously this was not something they could say in public. “Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, when they heard this saying?” (Matthew 15:12). They must have known that Jesus knew this very well. It was quite apparent. Moreover, they knew Jesus could read the human heart. Perhaps they were striving for a tactful approach. They were offering a criticism of Jesus’ sermon, but they waited until privacy could be had and proceeded then with caution. The Disciples Warned

Jesus’ answer was blunt and brusque. From childhood the apostles had been taught to have great respect for the learned men of the nation. They still show something of this attitude in spite of the manner in which Jesus had revealed the hypocrisy of His critics. But they were more concerned for the future of Jesus with bitter hostility menacing Him from all directions.

“Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up.” The plant may be the false teaching or the false teachers. The wicked subterfuges which the Pharisees had invented would in due time be destroyed by God. The wicked inventors of the false teaching would be brought to judgment. It may well refer to both. The Pharisees had made themselves like noxious weeds in a garden choking out the plants that are lovely and desirable. God had not planted them in the sense that they (and not He) were responsible for their false ideals, teaching, and conduct. God had planted the Old Testament law, but He had not planted the traditions of men. In spite of what the Jerusalem scholars thought or what the results of this encounter would be to Himself, Christ would uproot the traditions of men which choke out the Word of God.

Blind Guides

“Let them alone.” Pay no attention to their rage over my condemnation of their hypocrisy and my denial of the truth and authority of their traditions. Jesus was not “letting them alone” in the sense of not exposing and opposing their false teaching and hypocrisy. The apostles are warned not to truckle to these men or worry about whether they were pleased or displeased with His teaching. Fear them not. Blind guides and blind followers are both responsible for their attempt to lead or to follow. Blind guides are the most bigoted and conceited of all false leaders. Conceit is the ordinary

blindfold. In spite of the miraculous proof Jesus was constantly offering, the Pharisees were so blind that they refused to face the facts or to learn the truth. The disciples still felt that the teaching was so difficult that it must be a parable with mysterious inner meaning they had not discerned: “Declare unto us the parable.” The answer of Jesus began with a cutting rebuke: “Are ye also even yet without understanding?” (Matthew 15:16). It was bad enough for the scholars to be so slow in understanding. The apostles had had many more opportunities to learn of Him. “Even yet,” after all His instruction, they were “without understanding.” Gould remarks that the Greek word parabole loses sometimes its proper sense of similitude, and comes to be used of any sententious saying, or apothegm, in which the meaning is partly veiled by the brevity, but especially by the material and outward form of the saying. Here, “entering from the outside” and “coming out” are used to express the contrasted ideas of the material and the spiritual (I.C.C. on Mark p. 131).

Matthew records Peter’s protest; the saying was so graphic, so revolutionary that it seemed to them like a riddle. Mark as usual omits the leading part played by Peter in this discussion. The Bitter Opposition of Pharisees

While the Pharisees held that Jesus was a revolutionary, upsetting their long-established customs and condemning their hallowed traditions, the real secret of their hatred was His exposure of their hypocrisy and wickedness. They claimed superior piety; and for them to be condemned publicly and to have their traditions shown to be false and contradictory to the Word of God filled them with rage. We cannot tell how far they perceived at this time that Jesus was setting forth a new system of religion which would supersede the law of Moses. They did perceive that He was claiming to be God and to have supreme authority over the Old Testament. At His trial they attempted in vain to prove that He had tried to destroy the law, but they did not present any testimony concerning His teaching on clean and unclean meats. The charge of blasphemy in claiming to be God as well as man was so much greater that it dwarfed all lesser charges.

Defilement

Jesus did not say in His fundamental principle that nothing entering a man from the outside can defile him. Quite the contrary! He limited the principle to things you eat. The eye and ear give ready entrance to the heart. Things may defile that enter thus. Even accidental sight or hearing may introduce foul, vile things into the heart. When poison is taken, an emetic or stomach pump or antibiotic may save the life if applied promptly. In the heart the Christian must brave strong resistance of character and use spiritual antidotes. The lists of sins that can proceed out of a man’s life and bring real defilement are the same in Matthew and in Mark for the first five sins, while the order varies. (1) Evil thoughts are mentioned first in both; (hey cover the entire range of wickedness at its source. The next four in Mark are “grosser, more outward forms of sin” ; “the more subtle, inward manifestations” follow. Matthew has: (2) murders; (3) adulteries; (4) fornications; (5) thefts; (6) false witness (this includes all types of lying); (7) railings (the Greek word is blasphemiai and means evil or injurious speech either against God or man. Toward the former it is blasphemy; toward the latter it is slander). Railings is the eleventh sin in Mark’s list, the seventh and last in Matthew’s.

Mark has covetings, the evil desire to take away for yourself what belongs to others. His term wickedness can be used as a general description of evil, but where it has a specific meaning, it seems to denote malice. If translated maliciousness, it would carry the content of spite, rancor,

venom. Deceit suggests any sort of trickery which might be used to ensnare or entrap a person, as bait is used in a trap to catch animals. Lasciviousness is the absence of self-restraint, as in unbridled passion, or cruelty. License or wantonness may be used to translate it. An evil eye is a figure of speech in the Hebrew writings which means envy. Pride translates a Greek word used only here in the New Testament. It suggests a haughty, arrogant spirit. Mark's last word in the list is foolishness. It sounds like an anticlimax, but it does not mean merely intellectual lack or mistake. It means moral failure of a tragic, dramatic nature — folly.

Gould's Perversion

Gould argues that since the principle enunciated by Jesus upsets not merely the traditions of the elders, but also the Old Testament law on clean and unclean meats, we are obligated to sift out in the Bible the word of man from the word of God. He says, "Plainly, then, the distinction between the word of God and the word of man has to be carried within the scripture, and used in the analysis of its contents" (I.C.C. on Mark, p. 133). This is a characteristic absurdity of modernism. It is an attempt to defend their dictum that the Bible is not the word of God, but that it contains the word of God. It is, of course, always true that we must consider who is speaking in the Scripture, when, where, why, and to whom. The Bible contains the words of the devil as well as the words of men and the words of God. It is indeed important to see who is speaking. But even when the Bible quotes the devil, it is the word of God in the sense that the Holy Spirit has inspired the recording of what the devil said, in order that man may be warned and informed. The Son of God Sets Aside the Law

Gould fails to see that the subject has been completely changed in the latter part of the discourse of Jesus. It is changed from the commandments of men vs. commandments of God to ceremonial defilement vs. moral defilement. The principle Jesus enunciated gave the final answer to the challenge of the Pharisees, but the ground of the discussion is now altered. Jesus rejected the traditions of the Pharisees on the ground that they were merely the commandments of men, and, in addition to this, were being used to disobey the commandments of God. Jesus did not set aside the Old Testament law concerning clean and unclean meats on the ground that it was the commandment of men. Moses had been inspired of God in delivering the commands of the law to Israel. Jesus set aside the law concerning clean and unclean meats on the ground that He was the Son of God sent from heaven to give the final revelation of God to man, the new and better covenant, which was to replace the old covenant. The Old Testament had itself declared that the first covenant was imperfect and would be superseded by the new covenant, which God would give (Jeremiah 31:31.; Hebrews 8:7). The principle which Christ enunciated was final and perfect. The divine authority He revealed should lead 'is to yield implicit obedience to Him as Lord and Master.

079. Chapter 20 - The Syro-Phoenician Woman

Chapter 20 - The Syro-Phoenician Woman Matthew 15:21-28;Mark 7:24-30 Rest and Instruction

Only on two occasions do we have a record of Jesus having been in a foreign country. When an infant, He was taken to Egypt by Joseph and Mary. After the hectic controversies with the Zealots and the Jerusalem Pharisees, Jesus withdrew to Phoenicia. The distance was not great, but the change of community was calculated to allow the heated controversies to die down. Further evangelism now in Galilee was not promising. A rest was needed by Jesus and His disciples. The furious pace of the ministry had not even been allowing ordinary time to eat, immediately preceding the feeding of the five thousand (Mark 6:31). At that time Jesus had proposed to His disciples that they needed to take some time from their strenuous evangelistic campaign and rest. The exciting succession of events that immediately followed did not allow much time to recuperate. A more deliberate effort is now made to give the apostles time to receive more private attention. They had to try to think through the very distressing rejections which Jesus had faced. They needed to place the controversies alongside the prodigious miracles they had just witnessed so that they could reach secure conclusions. In Phoenicia In order to gain time for rest and instruction, Jesus and the apostles found a welcome in some home in Phoenicia. Undoubtedly it was the home of a disciple. As there were Gentiles living in Palestine, so there would be Jews living in Phoenicia. Some commentators hold that Jesus did not actually go into Phoenicia, but only into the borders of that country. Matthew says “into the parts of Tyre and Sidon,” and Mark says “into the borders of Tyre and Sidon.” But Mark makes it very clear that Jesus went up through the length of Phoenicia, passing from Tyre up to Sidon: “And again he went out from the borders of Tyre, and came through Sidon unto the Sea of Galilee, through the midst of the border of Decapolis” (Mark 7:31).

Tyre and Sidon

Tyre and Sidon were the two famous cities of Phoenicia. Phoenicia was a narrow strip of country fronting on the Mediterranean and producing a seafaring people, celebrated mariners of the ancient world. Carthage was the most famous colony of Phoenicia. Syro-Phoenicia means that part of Phoenicia which was located in Syria as distinguished from Libo-Phoenicia, or Carthaginia, in northern Africa. The people were of Canaanitish descent and worshiped Baal.

Christ in a Pagan Land

One of the thrilling tributes to Jesus is recorded by Mark with utter simplicity: “And he entered into a house, and would have no man know it; and he could not be hid” (Mark 7:24). He was the approachable Christ, and even here in a foreign land “he could not be hid.” His fame was too great; His personality was too compelling; His love was unfailing. It was a mother’s love for her daughter which caused His presence to be broadcast and which compelled Him to move on farther north in search of seclusion, even in this foreign country. The Woman The woman is described as Canaanitish (Matthew 15:22), emphasizing her pagan ancestry that reached back to the original

inhabitants of this whole region. She is also called “a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician” (Mark 7:26). The term Greek was currently used to describe all Gentiles, as they would speak of “Jews and Greeks.” Syro-Phoenician gives more definite information as to her race and geographical home. With the mixture of races prevailing Canaanitish may be used merely in the sense of a non-Jewish inhabitant of the section, and Greek may indicate a mixture of Greek blood by intermarriage. Both Matthew and Mark are very careful to make clear she was a Gentile. Her Appeal

“Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon” (Matthew 15:22). Here again is an instance of great faith among those not of Israel. She may have heard Jesus preach on a number of occasions and seen some of His miracles. At least she had heard thrilling and convincing accounts. It would be a journey of only some seventy-five miles to the center of Jesus’ campaign in Galilee. We are definitely told that Jesus’ fame had become so great that it reached throughout all Syria (Matthew 4:24). In some of His tours through Galilee Jesus must have been much closer to the Mediterranean than to the Sea of Galilee. This woman recognized Jesus as “Lord.” We do not know exactly what she understood by this title. The significant verb proskuneo is used: “She came and worshipped him” (Matthew 15:25). It is absolutely certain that she was hailing Him as the Christ, for she used the Old Testament title Son of David. The Apostles The two accounts specify that this scene took place on the highway as Jesus and the apostles were walking along and the woman following. Matthew quotes the disciples as saying, “Send her away; for she crieth after us” (Matthew 15:23). Mark shows that in her desperation, as Jesus went on unheeding and the disciples urged Him to send her away, the woman ran around the apostles until she was in front of Jesus and then threw herself in the roadway before Him pleading for recognition and help. The woman had evidently created such a commotion outside the house that there was now no more seclusion for Jesus and the apostles. They appear to have started northward. The disciples were following Jesus at a respectful distance, and the woman was in the rear continuing her tearful appeals for help.

It is a strange scene with the Lord of all mercy seeming to have no mercy. The perplexed and aggravated apostles intervened to end this distressing situation. We cannot tell whether their appeal meant for Jesus to “send her away” by granting an immediate miracle in order to end a most embarrassing state of affairs. Since they had seen Him perform a miracle for the Roman centurion of Capernaum and had seen Him heal at a distance, it would seem that they were urging Jesus to perform immediately the miracle she requested. But there was more mercy in Jesus’ refusal than in their request to help. They were seeking relief from personal embarrassment and difficulty; He was testing her faith in order to save her soul, as well as heal her daughter. The woman was keen, ingenious, and resourceful. She reminds one of the brilliant woman Jesus met at Jacob’s well — also of non-Jewish stock. In the case of the Samaritan woman, Jesus began the conversation that led her to faith. But the Syro-Phoenician woman had had abundant opportunities to hear; her need was most urgent; her appeals excited and insistent. Jesus placed one obstacle after another in front of her, but she promptly surmounted them all. Her amazing faith increased with each test until finally Jesus cried out with joy, “O woman, great is thy faith” (Matthew 15:28). The Tests of Faith The first test of faith which the woman met was the fact that she did not get an answer to her appeal while Jesus was in the house. She had to follow the group of men down the highway shouting aloud her appeal for help to have her daughter cured of demon possession. How long this continued we do not know, but it was a sufficient length of time that it got on the nerves of

the apostles.

Jesus' answer to the apostles' appeal was calm and unruffled: "I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24). This answer was intended for the woman as well as the apostles. It explained His refusal thus far. He had been limiting His ministry to the Jews, who were God's chosen people and who, by reason of the Old Testament revelation, were better prepared to hear and accept the gospel. He did not have time to enter upon a Gentile ministry. His brief ministry had to be concentrated on a limited section. A ministry among the Gentiles would have so alienated the Jews that any further ministry to them would have been rendered impossible. Most of all, Jesus was proceeding now to develop the faith of the woman by severe tests. The woman was quick to see that Jesus did not send her away as the apostles had urged. Furthermore, He did not show any anger or displeasure at her loud appeals. The apostles were bothered; Jesus was not. His manner and voice could have carried an undercurrent of pity which the woman's quick intuition seized. Boldly she ran around the group until she was in front of Jesus, and then she threw herself down on the highway in humble worship — "came and fell down at his feet" (Mark 7:25); "she came and worshipped Him" (Matthew 15:25). The brevity and simplicity of her appeal is deeply moving: "Lord, help me." Through her tears and out of her desperate need and with all a mother's love for her child urging her on, what a heart-rending scene this must have been. We wonder how many people had now been attracted to the group. The answer of Jesus is still calm and seemingly heartless: "Let the children first be filled; for it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs" (Mark 7:27). This would seem to be the final insult to call her a dog, but there were two things which the woman was quick to see. He had said, "Children first" (then Gentiles, also in due time...and perhaps now, if she is persistent). And the word Jesus used for dog was not the wild scavenger of the camp and village, but the little household pet. It is a diminuitive — puppy. With flashing brilliance of mind and insistent urgency of appeal the woman humbly accepted the contemptuous epithet: "Yea, Lord; for even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." She still hails Him as Lord, He is still the Master of all who can provide for all from His abundance. After all. the miracles she had seen or heard, this healing of her daughter would have been but a crumb given in mercy to one so humble. At this juncture the excitement of Jesus is explosive and triumphant: "O woman, great is thy faith; be it done unto thee even as thou wilt." Both Matthew and Mark record the instant healing of the child and the fact that the mother found it so when she reached her home. We are not told what the effect was upon the community, but it is indicated by the fact that Jesus had to push farther north into this Gentile country to find seclusion. We do not know what the impression was upon the apostles as they listened to the tearful appeals of the mother and then heard at last the great joy of Jesus at her mounting faith. Could they have avoided looking back in their mind's eye at the hard hearts of Galilee and Jerusalem?

080. Chapter 21 - The Feeding of the Four Thousand

Chapter 21 - The Feeding of the Four Thousand Matthew 15:29-38;Mark 7:31-37;Mark 8:1-10

Phoenicia

Going north twenty miles from Tyre to Sidon and then making an easterly sweep that avoided the centers of population, Jesus came at last into the Decapolis east of the Sea of Galilee. The wide journey enabled Jesus to have much time for instructing His disciples. The trip may have taken several weeks. Wellhausen, Allen, and others who undertake to rewrite the Gospel narratives according to their own fancy, hold that such a long journey was purposeless; they therefore suppose that Jesus came immediately back to the Sea of Galilee. But Mark states emphatically the course of Jesus' travel. He moved north to Sidon and then across to the Decapolis through a section which contained no large cities and where little-traveled bypaths would offer seclusion.

There is a manuscript difference in Mark 7:31. The a.v. follows manuscripts which do not record the journey north of Sidon, but the a.s.v. follows the best manuscripts and says "came through Sidon." The records of the collapse of Jesus' popularity at Capernaum and the ensuing hostility give the background for Jesus' course in seeking privacy for the instruction of the twelve. The accounts that follow will show the additional reasons: He had to prepare His disciples for the rising tide of unbelief and rejection and the final test of having to witness His condemnation and crucifixion. The Decapolis

Long-range planning is in evidence in this evangelistic campaign in the Decapolis. Jesus had not carried on any ministry in this region. The last months of His evangelistic campaign are now to be spent in this territory east of the Jordan. John the Baptist had campaigned up and down the Jordan valley. He must have reached many people from the Decapolis. We are to find the fruitage of John's work still manifest here.

Advance Preparation

Jesus had shellshocked this region some months before by healing the Gadarene demoniac and allowing the destruction of the herd of two thousand swine. The people1 infuriated at the loss, had driven Jesus away, but He had left a faithful and uniquely equipped messenger to prepare the way for His return. He had sent the man back to his home and friends to tell how great things the Lord had done for him. In the villages and towns from house to house this brave messenger went with his good news about Jesus. We see by the enthusiastic welcome Jesus now received in this region what great things this humble messenger had done for the Lord. The man could at least tell what Jesus had done for him. And that was enough. If he also reported the conversation the legion of demons had with Jesus before they were cast out, the recognition of His deity was implicit in the narrative. The Campaign

Both Matthew and Mark record a tremendous healing ministry in this region where Jesus was working for the first time. Matthew records that "the lame, dumb, blind, maimed, and many others"

were being healed. Preaching services always accompanied such a healing ministry. Mark records in detail a specific miracle in which a deaf and dumb man was healed. The extraordinary independence of the Gospel narratives is again prominent; and yet their wonderful harmony is evident as Matthew mentions the dumb being enabled to speak, and Mark gives a special case.
The Deaf Stammerer

Jesus took aside from the multitude the man who “was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech” (a stammerer, or one who was unable to speak clearly). Observe that enthusiastic crowds are in evidence in this new region. The man could have been healed without a word or a gesture, but this was not the method of Jesus Before miraculous assistance was granted, faith was required of those seeking a miraculous blessing. With communication so difficult in this case, to have the man away from the crowd would assist in concentration on the pantomime Jesus would use.

Jesus’ Method

“And he took him aside from the multitude privately, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat. and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened” (Mark 7:33-35). McGarvey supposes that Jesus put his fingers into the ears of the man and touched his tongue with either thumb very much as one would bridle a horse, but it seems much more probable that Jesus was simply using sign language to talk to the man in pantomime. Jesus put his fingers to his own ears to say, “You are deaf. You need miraculous aid. I am about to heal you.” When Jesus spat on the ground the gesture may have carried strong revelation of how distressing and disgusting his affliction had been to the man and how wonderful it would be to get rid of it. When Jesus touched His own tongue, it suggested to the man that he needed miraculous help to restore perfect speech. The reverent look toward heaven would communicate to the man that God was the One who had given Him the miraculous power now about to be used for the relief of the man. The sigh would have been manifest to the eye, even though unheard (the word means he groaned), and would make clear the tender sympathy and love of Jesus for the man in his distress. The word Ephphatha is Aramaic and is one of the incidental proofs that Jesus spoke Aramaic in His ministry, at least on ordinary occasions (see “Independence of Matthew’s Gospel” for an analysis of Allen’s absurd attempt to defend the Two-source Theory that Matthew copied from Mark even though they are so different here).

Disobedience

Although Jesus had taken the man from the crowd, some of his relatives and friends were present. To these Jesus gave strict command that they should not publicize the miracle. This was the same procedure Jesus had used in His earlier campaigns about Capernaum, when the excitement over His miracles threatened to prevent sober consideration of His preaching and teaching. The family and friends disobeyed the command of Jesus and announced the miracle far and wide, but Jesus kept pursuing this policy of trying to keep the excitement down, even though many times He was disobeyed.

Impact on the Crowds

Matthew and Mark give very independent reports of the verdicts of the people, but the statements are harmonious. Matthew 15:31 says, “And they glorified the God of Israel”; Mark 7:37 has, “And

they were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well; he maketh even the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak." What a difference between the verdict of the people of this region when they drove Jesus away after the destruction of the two thousand swine and their present testimony, "He hath done all things well." The people who disobeyed Jesus in reporting this miracle probably did not understand the reason for silence. Like most people they would rather praise Jesus than obey Him. The Greek word amazed (Mark 7:37) means literally, "They were struck out of their senses." The adverb beyond measure adds to the impression given by the verb. This shows that this was a new region in which Jesus was now working. There is no mention that Jesus is the Christ. There may have been three elements in the crowd: (1) the Gentiles who did not understand about the Christ; (2) Jews who had been in His presence before, but had come to the conclusion that He was not the Christ, even though they could find nothing but praise for His good works; (3) multitudes who had not seen or heard Him before and yet did not associate His kind of humble ministry with the grand expectations of world dominion current in relation to certain Old Testament Messianic predictions. The Desert Setting This campaign in the Decapolis ended in a desert. Why was this? Did the increasing excitement over His miracles compel Him now to rid the crowd of its curiosity mongers as He so frequently had done in the populous region of Galilee west of the Sea? We traced the variety of causes which led Jesus to cross the lake to the uninhabited plain on the northeastern shore of the lake when He fed the five thousand. John tells us that Jesus had arranged a definite plan for this day (John 6:6). Jesus was following a like plan when He led this multitude into the desert of the Decapolis. The controversies had become so furious that we do not find Jesus teaching in the synagogues after this, except on one occasion (Luke 13:10.). The wide-open spaces of the mountain, the lake shore, or the desert always invited Jesus when the crowds were very great. But on the occasions of the two miraculous feedings one of the particular purposes of Jesus was to make the evidence for the miracles unassailable. In fact, the two miracles would have been unnecessary and quite out of place if performed in the vicinity of their homes or a market place. We are apt to think of a desert as a flat stretch or barren wasteland, but this section of the Decapolis is mountainous. The multitudes appear to have been assembled near the Sea of Galilee at its southeastern shore. At least, they were near enough to the sea that Jesus and the apostles could embark in the boat at the close, and the people could see that it would he useless to attempt to follow Him further. The Three-day Assembly

There must have been the same sort of testing of the faith of the people when Jesus withdrew into the desert. Those who were really determined to see and hear Him could follow. If the women and children equaled the men in number, then there would have been about eight thousand persons present. They seem to have been in an isolated place far removed from any city. There is no evidence of any new arrivals being added to the solid group who had followed Him: "They continue with me now three days." There may have been those who had become exhausted and had left before the third and climactic day, but all those now present had been with Him during the three days.

These people were not city softies, but rugged individuals accustomed to primitive conditions such as sleeping on the ground at night with their cloaks to cover them from the morning dew. Families would naturally have been together and groups of men and women, apart. The main multitude would probably have bivouacked for the night, like an army. After all others were asleep, the wide-open desert would have invited Jesus to go forth for prayer and meditation.

It was midsummer in the dry season. The long days of June and July would have given about sixteen hours a day for services. We naturally think of the thousands of summer camps in America where the word of God is being studied by young people today. In the sixteen hours available each day during these three days Jesus would have preached or taught several sessions of tremendous public assembly. There probably would have been times of freedom when different people could come to Jesus for healing or questions that needed answering or burdens that called for comfort and consolation (Matthew 14:14; Luke 9:11).

Hymns in the Desert

What a fascinating subject for reflection as we consider the close of each of the first two days of this summer camp in the wilderness of the Decapolis. In the most casual manner the Gospel writers inform us of the custom of Jesus and His disciples to sing a hymn together as befitted the occasion. They sang a hymn before they left the upper room after having kept the Passover. This was customary. But it was also the custom to sing the great psalms of the Old Testament on all sorts of occasions of worship. Some of the psalms appear to have been marching songs as the pilgrims went up to the capital for the great feasts. How would it have been to have heard Jesus and the apostles lead eight thousand enthusiastic souls in a vesper service here in the desert with the sun sinking to rest across the Sea of Galilee? “Now the day is over, Night is drawing nigh, Shadows of the evening Steal across the sky.” How would it have been if Jesus led them in singing the twenty-third psalm with its cup running over and its abounding table — this, at the close of a second day with no food to satisfy their growing hunger and no prospect in sight? The test of faith in following Jesus into the wilderness is crowned by the test of remaining in the wilderness without food. They seem to have had a supply of food when they came. At least the Scripture does not state that they had been without food during the three days, but only that on the third day they were without food and in perilous condition. What they could seize in the midst of hurried departure had probably been brought with them as they followed Jesus into the desert. On the occasion of the feeding of the five thousand the sudden news of the murder of John the Baptist together with the excitement of the return of the twelve apostles from their evangelistic campaign had caused the multitude to run madly around the northern end of the lake in pursuit of Jesus. No one had any food except the lad. In this Decapolis crowd only a scant seven loaves and a few small fishes remained amid the entire multitude. The careful investigation throughout the whole throng to find out whether anyone had any food would have produced the same stirring of intense interest and faith as the similar procedure had at the feeding of the five thousand.

Details of the Miracle A mountainside would have enabled all to see and hear. Both Matthew and Mark record that Jesus commanded the multitude to sit down “on the ground.” By midsummer the green grass which Mark mentions at the feeding of the five thousand had been scorched by the heat of the rainless summer. It was not necessary to repeat the details of the arrangement of the crowd, but the Greek verb used means to pass along orders, as a general would to his army. Both Matthew and Mark record Jesus’ prayer of thanksgiving before the miracle-meal. Mark 8:6 has a verb meaning to give thanks; Mark 8:7 has a verb meaning to invoke God’s blessing. The seven baskets used were evidently borrowed from some of the people present, who had been using them for work in the fields. The Greek word spuris means a large hamper, whereas the word used at the feeding of the five thousand was kophinos, a smaller basket, or wallet.

Weiss' Attack

Weiss attacks this miracle on two grounds: (1) There was nothing to bring the multitude together. (2) It is represented as occurring at a time when Jesus had closed his public ministry in Galilee. But Matthew and Mark state clearly that the crowd had been drawn together by the wonderful miracles of Jesus. Weiss himself admits that Jesus' reception was different this time in this section because of the cure of the Gadarene demoniac. And where does any Gospel writer declare that Jesus had closed His public ministry in Galilee? We observe the downfall of Jesus' popularity in Galilee after the debate with the Zealots. We note the change of location in this campaign to more favorable surroundings. This time it is the Decapolis. It evidently represented long-range planning as Jesus carried on this campaign in new territory. Jesus had been seeking quiet for training the twelve, but He had not closed His public ministry in Galilee in the sense that He did not minister to those who came seeking aid. The same definite program of seeking retirement to instruct the apostles was seen just before the feeding of the five thousand, but Jesus yielded to the importunity of the heartbroken, needy crowd.

Gould's Position Gould refutes the attack of Weiss and holds that the miracle occurred, but affirms that if the miracles of Jesus were intended to reveal Jesus' power, the repetition of this miracle would seem improbable, and the similarity of the two accounts would point with some probability to their identity. But if the real object of the miracles was to meet some human need, then the recurrence of like conditions would lead to a recurrence of the miracle (I.C.C. on Mark, p. 140).

Gould forgets that an act may have more than one objective. The miracles of Jesus ministered to the mind and soul by producing faith and to the body by restoring health. Gould himself admits that Jesus demanded faith of those seeking miraculous aid. Is faith demanded before miracles, but not afterward? Is lack of faith in the hearts of men not "a human need" to which miracles may minister? The repetition of miracles to bring faith to the hearts of men is as logical as repetition of teaching to bring understanding. Gould also admits that these people had lacked the opportunity of having had Jesus in the midst working such miracles before this time. The Main Attack A main line of attack of critics is to charge that there was just one such miracle of feeding a multitude and that we have here a confused repetition of a former account, making it appear that there were two such miracles. They advance three arguments: (1) The details (Sea of Galilee, multitudes, loaves and fishes, discussion with disciples, baskets, fragments) show that we have two confused accounts of the same miracle. (2) They maintain that the differences are very slight and could easily have been changed to make it appear that there were two miracles. (3) They urge especially the improbability of the doubt of the apostles in the second account. The Evidence This entire attack rests on the presupposition that the Gospels were written at such a late date that no eyewitnesses were available for questioning. But the early date of the writing of the Synoptics cannot be denied in the light of the evidence now in our possession. The two accounts of the two miracles are both in the same Gospel narratives (Matthew and Mark). The writers could not have confused such startling events if they had any intelligence. Matthew was an eyewitness; Mark was the associate of eyewitnesses and had the close association with Peter when he wrote his Gospel account. Nothing short of deliberate falsification can be charged against the writers. The accounts are perfectly clear and distinctly different as to time, place, and the whole background of each occasion. This striking difference in the kind of baskets used for the collection of the fragments is a strong item of proof. We do not know how these baskets happened to be found here in this crowd,

except that this shows the hurried, excited manner in which many had followed Jesus into the wilderness. The difference in the number present and the causes that brought them together and their attitude afterward are made clear in the narratives. Jesus Himself referred later to both of these miracles in a speech to His disciples (Matthew 16:9, Matthew 16:10). Thus this radical theory destroys the veracity of the Gospel records and makes Jesus Himself ridiculous. The most emphasis in this attack is placed upon the impossibility that the apostles, after having seen the feeding of the five thousand, should have expressed such helpless doubt: “Whence should we have so many loaves in a desert place as to fill so great a multitude” (Matthew 15:33). But the moment the proper emphasis is placed on the pronoun we, the difficulty disappears. The disciples are protesting now that they are unable to cope with the situation. If He chooses to do so, He can feed this multitude as He fed the five thousand, but they cannot undertake it.

Use of the Baskets In the study of the feeding of the five thousand an attempt was made to visualize the process. If the suggestion that the miracle took place in the hands of Jesus, rather than in the hands of the apostles, has merit, then the seven large hampers used at the close of this meal to collect the fragments may have been used by the apostles to serve the food throughout the meal. Such a large basket filled to the brim with food would have been heavy and unwieldy. Two apostles could have worked effectively together in carrying one of these baskets and in passing along the orderly lines of people to furnish food to all. The seventh basket could have remained filled with bread and fish at the feet of Jesus as a constant reminder of the miracle and an assurance that a further abundance would be produced as needed.

Jesus the Center of the Miracle When the people had arranged themselves in groups for the meal at the command of Jesus, they could have watched these seven large baskets being secured and prepared for use in this amazing feast. If the supply of food in the baskets proved inexhaustible so long as there was need for more, then the continuing miracle would have been continuous in the immediate presence of each person. This is the strong feature of McGarvey’s theory. If the miracle was completely in the hands of Jesus, then the supply in each basket would be exhausted in ordinary fashion, and each couple of the apostles would bring their basket back to Jesus to be refilled. Naturally the twelve would not have eaten until they had finished hurrying to and fro to serve the crowd. They could then eat from the seventh basket or the contents remaining in all the baskets. The Fragments as Evidence The owners of the baskets would have accepted responsibility for seeing that the fragments were put to good use. Friends of each would be glad to assist in taking turns at helping to carry the heavy load. As the people returned into the towns and villages, the seven baskets filled to the brim with bread or fish, or both, would bring forth a constant succession of excited inquiries. The baskets of food would broadcast their powerful testimony to the miracle. Many people would ask to be permitted to eat some of this food of miraculous origin. Culture and the abundance of our possessions have made us quite delicate about eating anything someone else has touched. But comradeship on the battlefield in the Civil War brought forth the adage, “We drank out of the same canteen.” The seven baskets of food would have become the means of multiplying secondary testimony to the miracle.

Close of the Assembly

Mark closes his account with the brief statement, “And he sent them away.” It must have been hard for them to leave such a spiritual, thrilling assembly as this had been. Undoubtedly many

would have preferred to remain with Jesus. But the Sea of Galilee continually afforded Jesus the means of changing His locale and congregation when the proper time came. And how does it happen that this boat, always at the command of Jesus, is now awaiting Him on the shore at the farthest point in the lake from headquarters at Capernaum? He had been absent from Galilee for a considerable number of weeks. He approached the lake from the opposite side. Here again we see the second line of support from obscure followers of Jesus always eager to do what they could to serve Him. Some aged relative might now have been helping to care for Peter's home and to keep this boat ever ready for Jesus whenever He should appear and desire to use it. Too old to go with the Messiah, but how happy to be of some humble service such as this! A messenger could have summoned the boat the day before.

Symbolic Meaning

Some commentators attempt to connect the miracle of the increase of the bread to feed the multitudes with the changing of the water to wine at the wedding feast at Cana and make the miracles symbolic of the Lord's Supper — bread and fruit of the vine. But we should beware of inferring symbolic meanings for miracles which arose out of plain, historical settings. If the increase of the bread is symbolic of the loaf in the Lord's Supper, of what is the increase of the fish symbolic? Jesus preached on the Bread of life the day following the feeding of the five thousand, but He did not declare that the miracle had a symbolic meaning. Jesus in no way attempted to connect the turning of the water into wine with the Lord's Supper. The early Christians who drew the pictures in the catacombs connected the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand with the sermon on the Bread of life as combining in their thoughts to suggest the Lord's Supper. The fish became a symbol of Christianity, but its presence in any symbolic representation of the Lord's Supper is bound to be an oddity. Early Christians adopted the fish as a symbol of Christianity when they discovered the following curious little acrostic. There are five Greek letters in the word ichthus (fish). Each of these letters begins an important word: Iesous (Jesus); Christos (Christ); theos (God); huios (son); soter (savior).

081. Chapter 22 - Further Controversy and Retreat

Chapter 22 - Further Controversy and Retreat Matthew 15:39;Matthew 16:1-12;Mark 8:10-26

Locale

There is a manuscript difference in Matthew 15:39 as to the place on the northwestern shore of the lake where Jesus disembarked with the apostles. Following one line of manuscripts, the a.v. has Magdala, the a.s.v. has Magadan, but this appears to be just a different spelling of the same word. Mark 8:10 has Dalmanutha. Magdala was a city in the southern part of the plain of Gennesaret on the northwestern shore of the sea. Mary Magdalene was from this city. Dalmanutha was probably a village in the suburbs of Magdala. Matthew identifies the section by the city; Mark mentions the specific suburb where this encounter with the Pharisees occurred.

Shock Troops

Mark says that “the Pharisees came forth,” but he does not state from where. The suggestion is that they had been patiently waiting for Jesus’ return to the center of population in Galilee so they could renew their attacks. Matthew records that the Pharisees and the Sadducees were joined together in this attack, which seems to indicate that the delegation from Jerusalem is still present, trying to block His progress. They must have been waiting for some weeks. The Sadducees were concentrated in Jerusalem. Their presence here in Galilee is significant. The Zealots had used the maneuver of demanding that Jesus show them a sign to prove His claims (John 6:30). The Pharisees and scribes in an earlier attack in Galilee had made this same demand (Matthew 12:38). They now specify “a sign from heaven,” by which they mean an overpowering miracle which they would find irresistible. If pressed to define it, they probably would have cited the crossing of the Red Sea, or the fire called down on Mt. Carmel as Elijah faced the Baal prophets. The Zealots had chosen the miracle of manna in the wilderness, feeding millions and lasting for forty years. Jesus answered these demands steadily with the sublime miracle of the incarnation — the presence of God in their midst in the Person of His Son.

Signs of the Times A familiar rhyme among pioneer Americans was, “Red in the morning, better take warning; red at night, sailors’ delight.” This elemental method of predicting the weather was very ancient. Jesus introduced this fact into the discussion with the Pharisees He pointed out to them that they claimed to be able to read the signs of the weather and to predict it for the coming day, but they were blind to the Messiah — signs of the times. Not even all His prodigious miracles could make them realize the supreme moment of all history had arrived. By four hundred years of silence God had set the new dispensation apart from the old; even in the presence of the Son of God they still asked for more signs. A sign gives direction to the traveler or seeker. Which direction did the miracles of Jesus point? Up to heaven and to God. But when the Pharisees had tried to argue, they pointed down to some subterranean connection with the devil.

After underscoring their perverse blindness, Jesus gave a curt refusal to their demand. Matthew’s report is the more detailed. The denunciation of the generation as “evil and adulterous” pointed out

these challengers were really in love with the world while pretending supreme devotion to God. His enigmatic reference to the sign of Jonah, which would one day produce final evidence, must have left them in a state of perplexity. Mark merely records the fact that Jesus refused their demand for a sign. Why does this generation seek a sign carried condemnation of the generation and affirmation of the completely adequate character of the miracles He had already performed.

Mark couches Jesus' refusal in a figure of speech called aposiopesis (from the two Greek words apo, meaning from, and siopao, meaning to be silent), to break off in silence. The Greek here consists of the if-clause of a conditional sentence with the conclusion omitted. Translated literally it is, "If a sign shall be given unto this generation…." We are left to supply the conclusion to the effect, "then their demand would have seemed justified and His previous miracles minimized." This figure of speech makes a very emphatic denial, "There shall no sign be given." Mark did not feel compelled to record here more than the refusal to grant their demand. No such sign as they demanded would be given.

Withdrawal The fourth withdrawal from His enemies followed this attack by the Pharisees and Sadducees. The lake and the boat afforded ready means of departure from the hostile situation created at Magdala. The sorrow of Jesus at having to face the depression of so much unbelief is emphasized by Mark when the demand for a sign was made: "And he sighed deeply in his spirit." It must have been with a heavy heart that the apostles saw Jesus retreat again from another encounter with His foes. What made it so hard for them to bear was the realization that Jesus had the divine power to destroy all these wicked leaders with a single word. And yet He kept retreating from them!

Dilemma of the Disciples

Both Matthew and Mark introduce this scene with the information that the disciples had forgotten to buy any bread to stock the boat before they started on this trip. Their departure was obviously abrupt. Mark adds the specific information that they did not have but one loaf in the boat. The thin, hard bread kept well, even in hot weather. Evidently Jesus left such common sense details to the disciples. When He talked with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, the disciples had gone into Sychar to buy bread. When the twelve had been sent forth to evangelize, they had been strictly charged not to take any supplies with them, but to go in faith depending on the hospitality of the homes where they taught and preached. But now the disciples have no idea where they are going. They are leaving Magdala and crossing the lake, but to what destination? Are they going to the desert again? They have just come from the desert. They had just been without supplies or at least with scant supplies and no small privations. What next? Jesus probably indicated now by a word or a gesture tile point on the opposite shore which was their destination.

Heavy Silence

There must have been times when Jesus and the apostles traveled along in complete silence and the silence grew heavy and oppressive. This seems to have been such a time. The fierce rebuke Jesus gave during this crossing was like a sudden bolt of lightning out of a sky heavy with storm electricity. This is not to suggest that Jesus was moody. There were times when silence was appropriate. Such a time of strained silence is observable at Jacob's well when the disciples did not understand, but did not question, the conduct of Jesus (John 4:27).

Now as they sailed quietly across the lake, the apostles had time to think things over again. It is evident from the rebuke of Jesus that their thoughts were not wholesome. They were full of bitter disappointment over broken dreams, frustration, and retreat; John the Baptist had been murdered, Jesus was retreating again; where would it all end? The narratives show that the Pharisees made repeated efforts to break down the loyalty of the apostles and to break them off from their Leader. If some of the Pharisees had been able to deliver a venomous sneer at one or more of the apostles before they left Magdala, it would have rankled in the hearts of all the group: “I suppose you men will be disappearing again? Why does not your Master stand His ground?” In the preceding encounter over the handwashing tradition of the Pharisees, the apostles had shown such concern over the fact that the Pharisees had been displeased with His teaching, that Jesus was compelled to warn them sharply to pay no attention to the Pharisees — blind guides of the blind. The Rebuke The rebuke of Jesus included a reference to both Pharisees and Sadducees (in Matthew’s report), and the Pharisees and Herod (in Mark’s). It is not easy to see how the Sadducees and Herod with their wicked, luxurious way of life could have lodgment in the longings and reflections of the apostles. As the boat sailed across the sea, they could see the magnificent palace of Herod Antipas in Tiberias. Certainly his vile orgies would not attract them, but how would it be to live in such a palace? Had not God enabled David and Solomon to erect magnificent palaces? Did not the Old Testament depict indescribable glory for the Messiah? How would a luxurious life in such a palace contrast to their present bare subsistence? The devil was ever ready to thrust into their hearts the poison arrow, Life with the Messiah on a crust of bread!” and to add, “All these will I give thee, if only thou wilt fall down and….” Their reflections were suddenly broken by the stern rebuke, “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees and Herod.” That word take heed is a startling warning, “Watch your step there, you are in deadly peril!” If Jesus had been seated for some time in absolute silence looking off in abstraction, and the disciples had been unable to bring themselves to break into His reverie, the wrathful condemnation of Jesus would have been most penetrating. It is plain that Jesus lapsed again into silence allowing His disciples to figure out the meaning of another enigmatic saying: “They reasoned one with another” (Mark 8:16). As they went into a huddle trying to decide why the stern manner, the penetrating look, the wrathful condemnation of voice, they must have asked one another, “Now what have we done this time that is wrong?” Hot on the pursuit of a false trail, they came up with the idea that they were being condemned because they had forgotten to secure bread for a journey of unknown nature.

Weiss’ Theory

Weiss suggests that the apostles thought what Jesus actually was doing was warning them against buying carelessly in the market place poison loaves that might have been planted there by the Pharisees. They had repeatedly tried to assassinate Him. They would probably be delighted to wipe out the entire group. Poisoning was a favorite method of assassination among the ancients. The disciples must not buy bread in the market place. They must beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herod. They must only buy bread from faithful disciples where they could be sure it was safe. This suggestion is not only farfetched, it is absurd, and carries the insidious denial of the divine foresight and insight of Jesus. By long experience the disciples knew that Jesus could read even the hidden thoughts of the heart as an open book. He did not endure doubt and uncertainty over such a matter as this. He would have known the nature of any bread

about to be used. He would have known any such plot. The preceding context carries no suggestion whatever of such a situation. Weiss perversely insists on making literal that which is plainly figurative. He contradicts Jesus' explanation that He was not talking about bread. The disciples missed the mark in their discussion of "one loaf," but Weiss misses the entire arena.

Further Rebuke

After sufficient time for them to consider His first rebuke, Jesus added another which was even more severe. He quoted the blazing condemnation of the sixth chapter of Isaiah: "Do ye not yet perceive, neither understand? have ye your heart hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember" (Mark 8:17, Mark 8:18). Jesus seems to he saying, "Must I apply even to you these terrible words" (Matthew 13:13-17). Then Jesus questioned them about how many baskets of fragments they had collected after the feeding of the five thousand, and after the miracle of the four thousand Surely they should have realized He was not warning them about such a matter as a short supply of bread.

Matthew shows that Jesus explained what He had meant by His veiled saying, just as Mark records Jesus' quoting Isaiah's sixth chapter against them. What independence of narration! The explanation which Jesus gave is hidden from the reader, for He repeated the same words, "How is it that ye do not perceive that I spake not to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matthew 16:11). The explanation was evidently given by His peculiar emphasis on the word leaven and by the contempt and disgust which was revealed in His voice, face, and manner. Matthew then informs us that the disciples now understood that He was not talking about bread, "but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

Bethsaida Julias

Mark shows that the journey did not head immediately into desert country, for they entered into the city of Bethsaida Julias. It was situated at the north eastern corner of the Sea of Galilee. It had been built by Philip on the edge of his northern province to assist him in collecting taxes from the commerce passing across into his brother's domain. He had named the city Julias after the notorious daughter of Julius Caesar. The Blind Man A blind man was brought by his friends to Jesus for miraculous healing. The encounter seems to have taken place in a suburb of Bethsaida, for "he took hold of the blind man by the hand, and brought him out of the village." The tender sympathy of Jesus is shown by His gracious manner in taking the blind man by the hand and gently leading Him out into the open country. He might have left this guidance to the relatives and friends, But the blind man was to have this precious recollection the rest of his life, "Oh the touch of His hand on mine."

Jesus was still trying to keep down excessive excitement. He was now again in the region east of the Sea of Galilee about fifteen miles from the place where He had fed the four thousand. This is the second miracle recorded by Mark in this part of His ministry. Both miracles occurred during this period of retirement. Both were worked in territory of mixed Gentile and Jewish population. Both men were taken away from the crowd into a private session for the miracle. In both Jesus used spittle and physical touch. In both miracles He took careful precautions to avoid publicity. Mark is the only writer to record these two miracles. The Miracle This miracle is the only one which was in any sense gradual. The first step in the cure cannot be called failure. Jesus had not in His usual

masterly fashion commanded the eyes of the man to be opened; but, after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on them, He asked whether he could see anything. The man could see, but not distinctly. Then with a second touch and a fixed look by the man, the sight was completely restored. We cannot tell why the miracle was performed in two steps. The question Jesus asked seems to indicate that the method was His deliberate plan. The man had not been born blind, but had lost his sight, for he knew the appearance of trees and men. McGarvey holds that the miracle was not gradual, but consisted of two instantaneous miracles, each of which accomplished exactly what Jesus intended; and that Jesus used this different method to reveal that He could heal in part and by progressive steps. It certainly did dramatically emphasize the immediacy of Jesus' other miracles.

Jesus' Methods

Weiss holds that only this miracle shows the real process followed by Jesus in healing; the use of physical touch and gradual cure must be read into the accounts of all other miracles. This theory denies absolutely the truthfulness of the repeated statements that Jesus healed instantaneously with a word. But even such violence to the records cannot reduce this miracle of healing the blind man to a natural process, for Jesus did not use medicine, and the healing was not gradual in the ordinary sense. Gould replies to Weiss that it is absurd to take these two miracles in Mark's Gospel as the necessary model for all when the peculiarities are a part of this exceptional period in the ministry of Jesus.

Moreover it is very singular that this gradual cure occurs in the Gospel which emphasizes most the immediacy of the cures. Out of the eleven miracles of healing recorded in Mark, five speak directly of the immediateness of the cure, and of the rest three give circumstances implying the same (op. cit) p. 150). And yet Weiss holds that all the others must be conformed to this one miracle!

Weiss and even Meyer hold that the spittle was an actual means of cure, but they admit that power was supernaturally infused into it to produce the cure! McGarvey holds that the man's eyes were sore and the spittle was used to soften and relieve them. But since Jesus was about to heal the man by a miracle, this is not very convincing. It was rather a sign or symbol — a part of the pantomime used by Jesus to stir faith in the heart of this blind man, as in the case of the dumb stammerer. Since the blind man could hear, it is not certain why Jesus did not use ordinary speech to the man to make clear His purpose to heal him. He might have allowed others to lead the man by the hand; He might have healed him instantly with a word; He might have spoken of His purpose rather than spit on his eyes and touch them gently with His hand. While His purpose in these methods remains obscure, the actuality of the miracle and the tender sympathy of Jesus are manifest.

Miracles as Proof

Immediately after having refused to work a miracle on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee upon the insistent demand of His enemies, Jesus performed this impressive miracle on the northeastern shore. But He was careful to send the man home by a private route so that he would not even go into the village and cause the excitement to flare up again. In refusing the demand of the Pharisees and Sadducees, Jesus did not rebuke any desire for evidence of miracles to prove His divine claims. he refused to work a miracle to satisfy the demands of evil men who were

denying the validity of all His miracles. To have yielded to their demand would have been tantamount to admitting that His previous miracles had been inadequate proof. Matthew's report shows that Jesus did predict a final sign would be given in His resurrection. Jesus continually rebuked the generation for not accepting the miraculous evidence He gave.

Some modernists with a perversity equaling that of the Pharisees and Sadducees quote this passage from Mark as proof that Jesus never worked any miracles! This is in the face of all the miracles which Mark records, not to mention the other three accounts. Gould uses this passage in Mark to argue his contention that the miracles of Jesus never had the purpose of proving the divine presence and power of Jesus, but only the purpose of relieving human suffering. But the lack of faith in Christ is the very source of the deepest of human suffering. The Gospel records are filled with explicit references to the fact that the miracles of Jesus had as a primary purpose to cause the world to believe on Him. John definitely affirms this:….that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life in his name" (John 20:31). Test the Synoptics on this issue at any point, and see how Jesus required faith, tested faith, commended faith in the working of miracles. The unutterable sadness of Jesus at the unbelief of the Pharisees and Sadducees as they demanded a sign from heaven is mute testimony to Jesus' primary purpose in working miracles (Mark 8:12). His refusal to work a miracle when taunted by His enemies is itself strong proof of the miracles He did work. A good book or a good life is as desirable for what it omits and avoids as for what it contains. The miracles of Jesus fit the divine character of Jesus, His moral perfection, and His sublime teaching. "No one could have devised the story of a miracle-working person, and have kept the story true to Jesus' principles and character. The wonderful thing about the miracles is that the Divine power shown in them is kept to uses befitting the Divine being" (Gould, I.C.C. on Mark, p. 145). But it would not have been fitting, it would rather have been a sign of weakness for Jesus to have yielded to the taunts of His enemies, as they demanded a sign from heaven. It was always fitting for Jesus to seek to save lost souls. Faith in Him as the Son of God and Savior of men is the grand prerequisite for the giving of God's most precious gift of forgiveness and redemption. It is altogether appropriate that the miracles of Jesus should have been used by Him to lead men to that saving faith.

082. Chapter 23 - The Good Confession

Chapter 23 - The Good Confession Matthew 16:13-20;Mark 8:27-30;Luke 9:18-21 Greater Understanding and Faith

Only when we tarry a sufficient time with the two preceding scenes in Matthew and Mark are we prepared to study the grand climax of Jesus' self-revelation at Caesarea Philippi. To understand that the disciples were facing a time of dreadful temptation such as Jesus had faced during the forty days with the devil in the wilderness, we must experience the full force of their disappointment and chagrin as they saw Jesus retreat again from the attacks of His enemies. We must feel the stinging rebuke Jesus administered to the disciples as they were crossing the lake. Only when we enter into this valley of frustration and perplexity with them are we prepared to emerge on the mountaintop of triumphant faith as Peter declared their steadfast faith in Christ in spite of all the rejections by the famous national leaders and by the people.

John the Baptist had testified to his disciples: "And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God" (John 1:34). These apostles had declared before this time that they believed Jesus to be the Christ the Son of God, but their faith had not as yet been so sorely tried. Nathaniel had cried out with joy at his first meeting with Christ, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel" (John 1:49). Jesus had accepted his declaration of faith with great calmness and with the promise of much greater miraculous evidence to be given in the future. The apostles in the half-submerged boat, as Jesus had just stilled the tempest, had said with awe, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him" (Matthew 8:27). After the tremendous miracles of the feeding of the five thousand and the walking on the water the disciples had fallen down in the boat and worshiped Jesus, declaring, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God" (Matthew 14:33). The confession of Peter at Capernaum had been impressive: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God" (John 6:68, John 6:69). At Caesarea Philippi Peter speaks with larger understanding and more precise statement, and in the face of all the attacks and rejections.

Caesarea Philippi

Caesarea Philippi was the capital of the province of Herod Philip. It was situated at the head of one of the three sources of the Jordan about twenty-six miles north of the Sea of Galilee and two and one-half miles east of Dan. The city was very ancient. In earlier times it was called Panium because it was a center of worship of the Greek god Pan (the worship of nature). Philip rebuilt the city and renamed it in honor of the Roman emperor and himself. Caesarea Philippi became a center of worship of Caesar Augustus. Here where the pagan worship of nature and man had been carried on, Jesus took His disciples to question them concerning the worship of the Son of God. The real purpose in coming here was not related to the history of the city. He was seeking opportunity for private instruction of His apostles. The proximity to Mount Hermon, on whose southern slope Caesarea Philippi is located, may have had something to do with selecting this general territory, as the transfiguration followed one week later. Caesarea Philippi had a powerful

location on the solid rock of the mountain foothills. There were gushing springs that encircled three sides of the city forming a natural moat; a precipice crowned by a citadel was on the fourth side. Some commentators think that this conversation took place in full sight of the city and that Jesus pointed to the powerful location of the city on the solid rock as He spoke of the church built on the solid rock of His deity. The a.v. says “coasts of Caesarea Philippi” (Matthew 16:13), but the a.s.v. changes this archaic term to “parts of.” The a.v. says “towns of Caesarea Philippi” (Mark 8:27); The a.s.v. says “villages.” It probably means the suburbs of the capital. The Occasion

Luke informs us that “as he was praying apart, the disciples were with him.” This statement probably sounded like a contradiction to some scribe, who changed his copy of the text to read, “The disciples met him; fell in with him.” But the best manuscripts read that Jesus was praying in a private place apart from the multitude, and that the disciples were nearer than the multitudes. Later the people were called to hear His discourse following the good confession. Jesus was accustomed to praying thus alone, with His disciples in the area, and the multitudes in the distant background. We can understand Jesus’ need for prayer as He prepared to test the faith of the disciples in the face of national rejection; He was also about to endure the extreme humiliation of revealing to them that He was soon to surrender to torture and death at the hands of His enemies.

Current Rejection

Instead of seeking to evade the fact that the national leaders and the people had in general rejected His Messianic claims, Jesus began the discussion with His disciples in such a way as to bring the unbelief and rejection into the open in the boldest manner. This is the reason He asked two questions. He asked them to state the prevailing unbelief. He was leading them to crystallize their faith in a definite declaration. The answers of the crowd were different and contradictory, but they were a unit in denying that Jesus was the Christ. In the second question the pronoun ye is emphatic in itself, and by its position in the Greek, and by reason of the conjunction but. The answer of Peter was in the most direct contrast with the answers quoted from the opinions of the people.

There were other answers which the apostles might have cited to the question, “Who do men say that the Son of man is?” They might have reported some of the more slanderous and insulting answers as to who people were saying Jesus was: “a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners”; “in league with the devil and operating under his power in casting out demons; a blasphemer in claiming to be the Son of God.” But the apostles did not dignify such insulting epithets with repetition. They only reported favorable estimates of Jesus. The people who offered these opinions were giving what they considered high estimates, but they were so far below the truth that they amount to rejection. To be mistaken for so great a man as John the Baptist or to be identified as one of the great prophets of the Old Testament, such as Elijah and Jeremiah, would be considered by most as an incredible honor. But this constituted shameful rejection of Jesus.

John the Baptist The ridiculous suggestion that Jesus was John the Baptist raised from the dead appears to have arisen in the court of Herod Antipas. Herod’s conscience-stricken belief that Jesus was John risen up to avenge the murder Herod had committed seems to have been suggested first by some of the superstitious courtiers at Tiberias, the capital, and then adopted by Herod (Luke 9:7-9). His ignorance and dissolute manner of life undoubtedly contributed to such an

absurd view. When the apostles cited this current report, their manner of quoting must have reflected their contempt for such ignorance.

Elijah The return of Elijah had been predicted by Malachi in the closing verses of the Old Testament. The manner in which the Jews expected this prediction to be fulfilled probably was varied and confused. Even the apostles had to have explicit instruction as they came down from the Mount of Transfiguration. Jesus had already plainly declared to the multitudes that John the Baptist was the fulfillment of the prediction: “And if ye are willing to receive it, this is Elijah, that is to come” (Matthew 11:14).

Jeremiah

Second Esdras had added the prediction that Jeremiah would return before the Messianic kingdom should be established. This certainly reflected the very high estimate in which the Jews held Jeremiah. This rumor about Jesus, which was floating around, was even more vague than the one that identified Him with Elijah. “One of the prophets” drifted off into further generality; He was like the Old Testament prophets — one of the old line.

All these popular views were like the modern rejections of Jesus as “a good man,” “the greatest of teachers,” or “one of the prophets.” They seem to praise, but they actually defame Jesus as a deceiver. There is no such middle ground which may be occupied. If the claims of Jesus to deity are denied, then He was not a good man, nor the great teacher, nor a prophet. It is all or nothing.

Peter’s Confession The declaration of Peter is not to be taken as a sudden flash of insight. The faith of the group had been developing with the years of association and instruction. When they now used the term Son of God, they had a much deeper understanding of the content than earlier in the ministry of Jesus. But it is the term Christ which would give them the greatest difficulty. Peter spoke with profound conviction, but a few moments later he showed that he did not understand the divine content of the word Christ. He was horrified at the idea of Christ’s allowing His enemies to put Him to death. And yet this is the central proposition of the Gospel: “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.”

Jesus’ Joy The great joy of Jesus at the confession Peter made underscores the importance of the scene and the confession. In spite of all the rejection and opposition by the intellectual, political leadership, and by the nation as a whole, Peter affirmed his faith. He spoke boldly in complete contradiction to all the inferior popular views which were in reality hostile. The precise manner in which Peter couched the confession in such magnificent brevity seems to be the point of emphasis in Jesus’ commendation that God had revealed this truth to Peter. He certainly had not learned it from men (flesh and blood is a common Hebraic expression to differentiate man from God). They had just stated what men were saying. He now states what he had heard from Christ and what he believed with all his heart. God had revealed this great truth of the gospel of redemption through the deeds and the words of Jesus, who is Himself God. MyFather reaffirms the deity of Christ and His unity with God.

Some hold that Jesus meant that God had by a direct miraculous revelation at this moment made known to Peter this sublime truth of the Christian religion, “not by oral communication from himself, but of that inward reception by silent communication from the Father which is the sole source of the true knowledge of spiritual things.” But Jesus had labored by word and deed for nearly three

years to bring them to this conviction, and He had repeatedly declared that His revelation was sufficient for faith. If it required a special revelation from God for Peter to understand, then why should Jesus have condemned the Pharisees for not understanding or believing? There is a sense in which all revelation and comprehension of truth is from God, but to say this was from God apart from the revelation of personal contact with Jesus and personal instruction from Him is to set aside the importance of the incarnation an insufficient of itself to bring faith without special, immediate miraculous aid. Moreover, Peter did not fully understand the content of the confession he had just made. And just how is his misunderstanding corrected immediately afterward? Is it by a sudden flash of divine revelation, or is it by stern rebuke of Jesus and patient, detailed instruction?

Brevity

One of the amazing things about Peter's confession is that it is so brief, so precise, so entirely adequate that even though he did not at the time comprehend the divine content of the word Christ, yet at Pentecost, when he was fully inspired to proclaim the full gospel, the good confession did not have to be revised. It was adequate to carry the entire divine content. It may be that here is the point of emphasis in the declaration of Jesus that God had revealed to Peter the manner of answer he should give.The rest of the New Testament repeats over and over "the good confession."

Inner Meaning

Since Matthew's account makes plain that Peter did not understand the full content of the title Christ, the inevitable question is how much Peter understood and affirmed in the term Son of God. This is like raising the proposition that the finite cannot encompass the infinite. Who is there today who understands fully the incarnation and the atonement? How could Jesus be both man and God, and why did He have to die for our sins? But the entire question is not futile. There are certain historical events which actually occurred. There are certain historical facts which can be ascertained and tested like any other facts of history. The historical facts are made known to us by the testimony of eyewitnesses who saw and heard Jesus and who from years of fellowship with Him have delivered to the world these historic facts — first in oral proclamation and then in the inspired writings. Our faith in Jesus is the most precious inner experience of life, but it cannot be separated from our acceptance of the historic facts about Jesus. These historic facts are the heart of the gospel — the good news of redemption for man which Jesus brought from heaven to earth. They were the basis of Peter's answer as to who Jesus was. This fact is the center of the gospel. This divine truth is the rock on which the church is established. Jesus Himself is declared to be the foundation of the church: "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11). In the conversation at Caesarea Philippi a slightly different turn is given to this grand affirmation. The divine truth that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God is declared to be the solid rock on which the church is established. It is a rock. It is solid. Here are historic facts that have stood against all the attacks of unbelievers. The gates of Hades have not been able to prevail against the church to wrest it from its historical foundation in the sublime fact that Jesus is in truth the Christ the Son of God.

All efforts to dilute the meaning of Peter's confession into something less than a recognition of His deity fail. His understanding was adequate to win the joyous commendation of Christ, who knew the inmost thoughts and the measure of understanding Peter had. Peter did not comprehend the

central element of the title Christ — that according to the Scriptures the Anointed One had to die to redeem man from his sins. Old Testament passages such as Isaiah fifty-three had predicted the death of the Messiah to redeem man from sin. But Peter did not understand these Scriptures as yet. Although Jesus had given many veiled hints of His approaching death, they had been too incredible for the apostles to accept them as literal. Out of the agonizing turmoil of recent weeks the apostles were rising to declare their steadfast faith. They still believed even though Jesus had not used His miraculous power to rescue John, but had permitted him to be murdered. The pressing question now was, “What next?” Here at Caesarea Philippi Jesus immediately proceeded to supply this critical lack in the understanding of Peter as to the meaning of Christ. He did not undertake to correct or change his understanding of the term Son of God. One week later on the Mount of Transfiguration Jesus did give further instruction concerning the content of both these terms. Jesus continued to deepen and widen their understanding as the historical facts of the gospel were unfolded before their eyes. At Pentecost these events had become an assured part of their life experience. Peter proclaimed the facts of the gospel at Pentecost as well as its commands, promises, and warnings.

Attacks on the Accounts The efforts of the modernists to deny the deity of Christ depend on one of two lines of attack: (1) The meaning of the term Son of God is diluted until it is meaningless. (2) Sweeping denial is made that any such conversation as this ever took place. The Bultmann Form Criticism theorists hold that we do not have historical accounts in the Gospel narratives, but only a collection of myths, legends, miracle tales, and sayings which contain only some grains of wheat among the bushels of chaff.

Robinson’s Theory The kerygma attack claims that the “church” in its “preaching” at a later time concocted all sorts of myths. Audacious lying is attributed to anonymous nonentities who dreamed up the central elements of the gospel as to who Jesus was, and what He said and did. They are supposed to have written into the Gospel narratives the brazen assertions that Jesus did say and do these things. The Commentary on Matthew, by T. H. Robinson, in the Moffatt Series affirms that Peter did not say “the Son of the living God,” but that this was “read back into his [Peter’s] mind by the experience and belief of the early church” (p. 140). What polite phrases the modernists use to give the lie to the Gospel writers! Robinson says further in developing the proposition that this confession was a later product of the kerygma, or preaching of the church, “The divine Sonship of the Christ formed no part of contemporary messianic belief, and, until the day of Pentecost, the disciples were not given to the development of new ideas” (Commentary on Matthew, p. 140). The “Kergyma” Attack

Just how does a hostile critic come by such assured information as is thus dogmatically affirmed? How does he know that the church undertook “the development of new ideas” (notice it is not further revelation from God)? What is really affirmed is that the modernist holds in his hands the secreted strings attached to the puppets he has created out of his imagination, and he starts to pull the strings and make his puppets perform at will. Observe how Robinson reduces Christ to an empty zero. Jesus was just a Jew of the first century. He knew no more than “contemporary messianic belief” held. If He knew more, He could not tell it to His disciples so that they could understand it. Observe how God is removed from the scene by this Form Criticism theorizing. Contrast the ringing declaration of Jesus, “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven,” to the denial that Peter could have made such a statement since it was

not “contemporary messianic belief.” To begin with, what do the modernists know about “contemporary messianic belief” except what we read in the New Testament? The Dead Sea scrolls give only vague generalities of messianic expectation or occasional reference to erratic notions of the Essenes. But the New Testament is concentrated on the discussion of God’s revelation of the Messiah and the reaction of men of this revelation. The Revised Standard Version Attack This kerygma attack throws a spotlight on the procedure of the radical translation of the Revised Standard Version, which shrewdly presents by its “thou-you” double-dialect this same view that none of the eyewitnesses of Jesus’ ministry ever believed He was God in the flesh, but that this idea grew up as a later myth. The Revised Standard Version is the classic example of the kerygma attack on the deity of Christ. The translators take the central proposition of the Christian religion that Jesus was both God and man — and attempt to separate it from historic fact established by testimony of eyewitnesses and relegate it to be perverted Imagination of later times. The Elemental Proposition The elemental proposition in Robinson’s kerygma attack on the deity of Christ is this: Is there such a person as God? Did He speak unto the fathers of old time in the prophets? Has He spoken to us at the end of these days in His Son? If the answer to these three questions is affirmative, then the problem of the current messianic expectation in Palestine at the beginning of the first century fades into the background as a matter of secondary importance. The current messianic expectation is of primary importance to persons who reject the Bible as utterly unhistorical, who hold that Jesus was an ignorant man limited to the ideas of his times, who maintain that there is no such person as God or that there could he no such thing as a miraculous revelation from God to man.

God Has Spoken to Us

What if the title The Son of God was not already in general use as a title for the Messiah? What, then? What if the current messianic expectation did not comprehend the meaning of such passages as Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah 9:7 and Daniel 7:13, Daniel 7:14, and did not proclaim that the Messiah would be a supernatural Being? What then? Could not God speak to man in the fulness of time and reveal the truth of the gospel? Could not God send His Son into the world by a virgin birth to live among men, reveal His divine Person to them, and die for their redemption? Is there no such thing as historic fact and truth, or are there only ideas in the minds of men? The ultimate question always is: Is there such a person as God, or is He only an idea in the minds of men?

It is a historic fact that God revealed to man through the Old Testament prophets that the Messiah would enter the world as a child born of a virgin and would be “mighty God, the everlasting Father” (Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah 9:7). It is a historic fact that Christ left heaven, came to earth, was born of a virgin, revealed Himself to men as the incarnate Son of God, and died and was raised from the dead for man’s redemption. It is a historic fact that the leaders of the Jewish nation understood immediately that Jesus was claiming to be God as well as man, charged Him repeatedly with blasphemy, and condemned Him to death on this charge because He claimed to be the Son of God. It is a historic fact that the disciples of Jesus accepted the teaching of Jesus, believed His claims, and repeatedly declared they believed Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God; that Peter at Caesarea Philippi gave decisive, dramatic declaration of the faith of the disciples; that the predictions of the death of Christ became a hard obstacle to the maintenance of their faith, and that the actual death on the cross dealt a deadly blow to their faith, but that the resurrection of Christ brought them to fulness of faith in His deity. It is a historic fact that the disciples repeatedly

worshiped Jesus and He accepted their worship, and that after the resurrection even Thomas worshiped Jesus as “My Lord and my God.” It is a historic fact that the kerygma, or preaching, of the apostles after Pentecost presented the same basic faith which they had declared when they themselves stood in the presence of the risen Christ. The gospel of Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God, is not based on current messianic ideas but upon historic facts established by the testimony of reliable eyewitnesses. The Worship of Jesus

It is not possible to dilute the language of Thomas as he faced the risen Christ and cried out in fulness of faith, “My Lord and my God.” He offered the ultimate in worship to Jesus, and our Lord accepted his worship. The attempts to say that the worship offered to Jesus on the many occasions in the Gospel narratives was not divine worship, but only reverence for a human leader, cannot stand in the presence of what Thomas said to Jesus (John 20:28). Furthermore, unbelievers meet a stone wall when the worship of Jesus is placed alongside the horrified rejection of worship by Peter in the home of Cornelius, and by Paul and Barnabas at Lystra. Hear them cry out, “Do not worship me. I am merely a man. Worship God.” And yet these same men worshiped Jesus and called upon all men to worship Him. The final tribute of Thomas to the deity of Jesus is brushed aside by the modernists with the sneer, “Oh! that is the Gospel of John.” Since the hostile theorists insist on the priority of Mark, let us look at the testimony of Mark. A glance at the first chapter should suffice.

Mark’s Testimony The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1). When Jesus was baptized, God spoke from heaven: “Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11). Since there is every reason to believe that Peter and various others of the twelve were present, here is one time that the deity of Christ had been revealed to them by “my Father who is in heaven.” We are absolutely certain that John the Baptist did discuss carefully with these disciples the tremendous miracle which had occurred at the baptism of Jesus and the fact that God Himself had declared Jesus to he His Son: “And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God” (John 1:34). Mark shows that the first apostles were present and heard the terrified outcries of the demons: “What have we to do with thee, Jesus thou Nazarene? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God” (Mark 1:21), “...the Son of God” (Luke 4:41). Even though Jesus silenced the demons and refused to permit them to testify, their outcries were heard by all. The Constant Charge of Blasphemy

It has been generally overlooked how the negative aspect of the testimony that the apostles heard must have influenced their thinking. They simply could not have slipped over the term Son of God and not dug into its interior to discover its content — not while the scribes and Pharisees stood there continually crying out, “Blasphemy! He is claiming to be God!” The second chapter shows how this mighty struggle developed at the very outset of Jesus’ ministry when He forgave the sins of the paralytic and responded to the unspoken challenge of the Pharisees by reading their hearts, stating their charge of blasphemy, and refuting it by proving that He had the divine power He had claimed. The disciples might have been inclined to accept many of the mysterious assertions of deity by Jesus as veiled statements quite beyond their comprehension. But the Pharisees stood there constantly sticking a sharp pin into the minds of the apostles and stirring them to excited examination as they pointed out that Jesus was claiming to be God. The apostles had to choose between the charges of blasphemy and the claims to deity. There was no middle ground.

Difficulty of Disciples

Up to Caesarea Philippi the great difficulty which the apostles experienced in their growing faith was the comprehension of Son of God. They knew by personal experience that Jesus was a man. They could see and hear Him; they had been in His fellowship for years. How could He also be God? But by the time of the walking on the water and onward to Caesarea Philippi, they were clear and firm in their faith that Jesus was God as well as man. From this point forward their critical problem was Christ. How could He possibly submit to torture and death at the hands of His enemies if He is God? This problem had been troubling them all along in that His humble teaching, preaching, and healing campaigns had been so different from what they had expected of the Messiah. But with the death of John the Baptist, His refusal to be king at the call of the Zealots, the downfall of His popularity in Galilee, this problem of “Christ” was fast becoming critical. It exploded in their faces at Caesarea Philippi when Jesus calmly revealed to them His deliberate plan to surrender to death at the hands of His enemies.

Blasphemy the Charge To say that Jesus did not claim to be God or that He was not understood by those who heard Him to be making this claim is to deny the entire current of the Gospel narratives. If this be myth, then there is no history. T H. Robinson has to face this issue when he comes to comment on the trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin as Jesus was charged with blasphemy because He claimed to be the Son of God (Matthew 26:63; Mark 14:6-62 — observe that Mark also offers this testimony). Having said that “the divine Sonship of Christ formed no part of contemporary messianic belief,” he now says, commenting on the term Son of God, “The last phrase is not unknown to pre-Christian apocalyptic literature, for the Messiah is a divine being in the Similitudes of Enoch — not apparently, in any other writing of the type” (Commentary on Matthew, p. 222). Thus Robinson contradicts himself in his comments on Matthew 16:16 and Matthew 26:63. He does not pause to attempt any proof that the absurd apocryphal document called “The Similitudes of Enoch” is pre-Christian. It is plainly a working over in a most fantastic way of materials out of both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Similitudes of Enoch

Speculating on the probable date when the little apocryphal book called “The Similitudes of Enoch” was written has been one of the favorite guessing games of scholars through the years. The guesses range over more than two hundred years, from the second century b.c. to the second century a.d. Radical scholars who desire to maintain that the Book of Enoch is pre-Christian and charge that the Epistle of Jude quotes from the Book of Enoch do not agree among themselves as to the date of the book. Some hold that it is pre-Christian and yet face distinctly post-Christian elements in the book. Consequently they undertake to solve their dilemma by dissecting the book.

R. H. Charles, who is an extreme radical and also an expert in this type of literature, cuts the book up into four segments and assigns them different dates. He does not place any of his segments as late as post-Christian, but his whole procedure offers vivid demonstration of how subjective the process is. B. C. Caffin also says, “Certain portions of the book, however, are of late date” (Pulpit Com., Epistle of Jude, p. 12). A. Ll. Davies speaks of as “The Books of Enoch” “a work of curious complexity and unevenness...a cycle of works” (Dictionary of the Apostolic Church, article “Enoch”). In light of the miniature fragments which result from his dissection, it is surprising he does not talk of “The Pamphlets of Enoch.”

T. Zahn cites Hofmann and Philippi as scholars who hold the Book of Enoch is post-Christian (Introduction to the New Testament, II, p. 287). Hofmann and Dillman were two German scholars who published in successive generations German editions of the book. Dillman divided the book so that part of it was pre-Christian (S. Davidson, Introduction to the New Testament, pp. 266, 267).C. Bigg declares, “It has been maintained by Hofmann, Weiss, Volkmar, and others that Enoch did not exist, at any rate in its complete form, before the beginning of the second century a.d.” (I.C.C. on Jude, p. 309).

Volkmar’s Theory

Volkmar holds that the Book of Enoch is a Jewish product from anti-Christian circles of the period about a.d. 132-134 in the midst of the final, catastrophic Jewish rebellion against Rome and is associated with the Messiah-claimant Barchocebas and Rabbi Akiba. It is obvious that the military leader when he assumed the Messianic title Bar Cochebas (“Son of the Star”) was working over the historical record of Matthew in regard to the star of Bethlehem. The Book of Enoch fits very well into this date. This theory holds that the military scribe Rabbi Akiba was associated with the writing of the Book of Enoch, and that the historical records of the Gospel narratives concerning “the Son of man,” His mighty miraculous ministry, His promised second coming, and the thrilling predictions of the visions of the Book of Revelation were operated on in the customary apocryphal manner to produce the fantastic pictures of the Book of Enoch, to stir excited expectations of miraculous military intervention On the battlefield against Rome, and to inspire the Jewish soldiers to fight with fanatical fury such as was seen at the battle of Bethur.

Exotic Nature of the Book In the absence of any actual proof that the Book of Enoch was pre-Christian, it should suffice to place the book alongside the Bible and observe the difference between night and day and to study carefully all the other apocryphal productions of the early centuries, both Jewish and Christian, to observe the writers’ regular practice of taking a passage of Scripture and with fantastic imaginations expanding it into absurd elongated convolutions. That the author of the Book of Enoch operates on the Old Testament in this customary fashion is beyond all dispute. The implication is instant that the contents of the book show he operates on the New Testament in the same prevailing manner of apocryphal writers. The author of the Book of Enoch dipped his pen into both the Old and New Testaments and scrawled his weird, grotesque concoctions.

Robinson’s Dilemma When Robinson cites the Book of Enoch as pre-Christian, he gains certain advantages for his propaganda against the Scripture, but he faces the critical burden of holding that such references to a supernatural Messiah as are seen in the Book of Enoch were in common circulation at the beginning of the Christian era and yet denying that the declarations of deity could have been made by Jesus or could have been understood by the Jews of His time.

Robinson admits that Jesus’ reply to the high priest recalls Psalms 110:1 and Daniel 7:13 (Matthew certainly adds in Isaiah 7:14 in making clear the meaning of the term Son of God and setting forth the central issue of the gospel, as well as the charge on which His enemies put Him to death — Matthew 1:18-25; Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah 9:7 is also powerful testimony). Robinson attempts to dodge the evidence of the good confession Jesus made before the high priest by raising the question of where the crime of blasphemy was involved. Does the claim to be the Messiah mean blasphemy? Was the high priest a Sadducee, hostile to any Messianic claim? The fundamental

issue that Jesus was claiming to be God is thus evaded in spite of the explicit declarations of the Gospel narratives. There is no evidence whatsoever to support Robinson's proposition that it was considered blasphemy to claim to be the Messiah. "The Son of God" was the issue. Observe Pilate's reaction to the charge (John 19:7-12). No one is so blind as he who refuses to see. The "Keys"

"Blessed are thou, Simon Bar-Jonah." Jesus addressed Peter by his original name, Simon, to make the contrast stand out with the name Christ had given him at their first meeting (John 1:42). Bar-Jonah, "son of John," or "son of Jonah," shows that Jesus was speaking Aramaic. Bar is the word for son in Aramaic; it would have been beni in Hebrew. The beatitude which Jesus pronounced upon Peter was triumphant. There can be no doubt of the high place which was given to Peter at the establishment of the church. He was to have the keys of the kingdom. Keys are for opening doors. When the church or kingdom was established on the day of Pentecost, it was not James, John, Thomas, or Andrew who preached that first full gospel sermon. It was Peter who proclaimed the facts of the gospel and the terms upon which, according to God's instruction, a person might enter into the church — faith, repentance, confession, baptism. When the church was opened to the Gentiles at the household of Cornelius, Peter, to whom the keys had been given, was the one sent to proclaim the gospel plan of salvation to the first Gentiles that entered the church. The plural keys can hardly refer to these two occasions, for the same message was preached both times. The same "keys," or conditions for forgiveness of sins and entrance into the kingdom, were proclaimed both to the Jews and to the Gentiles. Some hold that keys was used by Jesus to suggest the four steps in the plan of salvation. But it seems that the plural form is a figure of speech as we commonly say when we are honoring a distinguished visitor by giving him the "keys" to the city. Jesus singled Peter out as the spokesman who would proclaim the first full gospel sermon.

Church and Kingdom This passage is the clearest place to see that the terms church and kingdom are parallel and refer to the same organism. An organization is something which man may create; an organism is a living thing which God creates. Jesus continually used the term kingdom in referring to this organism which He would bring into existence. Only twice in the Gospel of Matthew does He use the word church. This is one of the passages; the other is Matthew 18:17, where Jesus is giving instructions as to how to proceed with discipline in the church after it was established. Both the kingdom and the church have the earthly and the heavenly phase; there is the kingdom of heaven on earth and the kingdom in its final consummation at His second coming; there is the church militant and the church triumphant. Jesus uses both terms in the same breath in this passage. When he turns from the word church to the word kingdom, the historic facts which He predicted concerning Peter's role in the setting up of the kingdom were clearly fulfilled in the opening chapters of Acts as the church was established. Once the church came into being, the constant references in Acts and the Epistles are to the "church."

Hades

Jesus compared the church to some great fortress or city which is built upon an impregnable foundation of solid rock. The gates of Hades have been given various interpretations. Hades has two meanings: (1) It may refer to the grave or the abode of the departed spirits whether good or bad, whether in a blessed estate or in punishment. (2) Usually it means the temporary place of

punishment where the wicked are kept until the final judgment day. The term Tartarus (in verb form) is used for this intermediate place of punishment in 2 Peter 2:4. The a.v. fails to distinguish between Hades and Gehenna (hell). It translates both words as hell, but the a.s.v. carefully distinguishes between the two. Because of the two meanings of Hades, the a.s.v. transliterates the Greek letters of the word into the English equivalents, thus making a new English word Hades. They did this to avoid the difficulty of interpreting instead of translating each passage.

Three Interpretations The interpretation given to this passage depends upon the meanings given to Hades. Two interpretations take Hades to mean the grave rather than the temporary place of punishment.

Gates do not fight, but let people in and out. Therefore, the meaning is held to be that Hades, (the grave) will never at any one time swallow up the followers of Jesus. The church will always remain in existence. This is an inferior interpretation because the declaration loses all its importance; the gates of Hades shall not he able to prevail against the world in this same sense because there will always be people alive in the world until the second coming. The gates of Hades shall not be able to prevail against the church in the sense that Hades (the grave) will not be able to hold Jesus after His death. He will come forth triumphant in His resurrection and will establish it, even as He predicted. Hades shall not prevail against it (the establishment of the church). The interpretation which the church has generally held from the beginning is to be preferred. While gates do not fight, they are a symbol of the power of a fortress or city. A city is no stronger than its gates. The great foe of Christianity is not the grave, but the devil. Two great kingdoms are at war with one another in this passage; Satan’s kingdom shall never prevail against Christ’s. In this figure Jesus is the builder of the fortress, and Peter is the gatekeeper. The former is the position of supreme importance; the latter implies a position of authority in admitting and excluding at the will of the Builder. The Book of Acts is the inspired interpreter of the Gospel narratives. If we desire to understand difficult passages and predictions in the Gospel accounts, our first procedure should be to turn to the Book of Acts and see what actually happened.

Peter the Rock? As the Roman Catholic Church developed and finally in the sixth century a pope was elected, the effort was made to justify the office by saying that Peter was the first Pope and was appointed here at Caesarea Philippi. But even as late as Augustine there was no unanimity of interpretation of this passage. In fact Augustine declared that he had interpreted the passage in various ways, with Christ as the rock or with Peter as the rock. The attempt to make out that the church was founded on Peter was a view which grew up with the Catholic Church. They emphasize the similarity of the words for Peter and rock and the prominence of Peter in the early church.

Protestants hold that the truth — Jesus is the Christ the Son of God — is the rock. Some prefer to say that Jesus is the Rock. But since the figure used here makes Jesus the Builder, it seems to make a clearer picture to hold that the divine truth Peter affirmed is the rock. They emphasize the fact that, although the name of Peter and the word used for the foundation are similar, so that there is an evident play on the name of Peter, it is plain that Peter is not being declared the foundation of the church because different words are used. A detailed discussion of the fact that Jesus was speaking Aramaic and that the same difference seen in the two Greeks words can be shown to have existed in the Aramaic words will be found in Appendix 1, “The Aramaic

Background of the Gospel Narratives.” The Aramaic Words

Radical scholars generally agree with the Roman Catholic position that the Aramaic word would have been the same: “You are Kepha and on this kepha I will build” (Interpreter’s Bible, Vol. VII p 251). But John 1:42 gives instant refutation to this claim, for the name given to Simon was not Kepha, but a Hellenized form, Kephas, which Jesus evidently coined. So the same difference in the Greek words petros and petra is seen in the Aramaic kephas and kepha. T H. Robinson admits this vital fact: “there is only one word in Aramaic, and, except when used as a man s name, it is always feminine” (Com. on Matthew, p 241). This yields the case that the word would have been different when used of a man’s name. Robinson speaks as if there were an abundance of Aramaic literature available from which to announce the history of this word. Such is not the case. Robinson is merely making the admission which John 1:42 compels. We know from John 1:42 that the name Jesus gave Peter had a masculine ending and that it was Cephas. This is a most common procedure to form the name of a person by transferring a word from one language to another and coining a variation at will.

Petros and Petra The fact of final importance is that Matthew uses two Greek words; the name of Peter is petros, a masculine noun meaning a piece broken off a great mass of rock; the name for the foundation of the church is petra, a feminine noun meaning a solid mass of virgin rock like the cliffs along the seacoast. Some have said that petros means a pebble. The word is used at times to mean a stone so small it could be used in a slingshot. But it is also used of a stone large enough to set up as a boundary marker. In either case it is a piece broken off a mass of rock. The fact that Matthew uses two words shows that there was this discrimination made in Jesus’ original statement in Aramaic. Any attempt to show that there is no distinction is a direct attack upon the veracity of Matthew. He was present and heard what Jesus said. A change of tone or a gesture by Jesus could have underscored the different words used. But there was the difference. Matthew affirms it.

Peter’s Declaration The best interpreter of what Jesus said and meant should be Peter to whom He spoke. As we turn to the fulfillment of this prediction in the Book of Acts, do we find Peter informing the multitude at Pentecost that Jesus had predicted at Caesarea Philippi that he would be the foundation of the church, and did he offer himself as this foundation? Read his opening sermons again and see that he pointed to the Stone which the builders had rejected and which God had made the Head of the corner. When he wrote his epistles late in life, he returned again to this theme and exalted Christ as the foundation of the church. All Christians are living stones built into the structure, and the apostles have places of honor, but it is Christ who is the living Stone on whom the church is founded (1 Peter 2:3, 1 Peter 2:4).

Principles

Principles which are set forth in this declaration are: (1) The church belongs to Christ — “My church.” No man may claim it and set aside Jesus. No one has the right to change its faith or practice. (2) The church was to be established in the future by Christ. It had not existed in the Old Testament period. It was not established by John the Baptist. There is absolutely no evidence of any organization being brought into existence during the ministry of Jesus. He predicts that He will build this divine structure in the future and that His apostles will be the instruments He will use, with Peter as His spokesman. As we pass from the Gospel narratives to the Book of Acts, this is

exactly what happened. The first two chapters of Acts show how these predictions were fulfilled.

There has been a feeble and farfetched effort to create a rule of Greek grammar in order to sustain the theory that the church was already in existence. This future tense is declared to be “a futuristic present,” by which means “I will build” is rendered “I am building.” It is curious that in manufacturing this rule of Greek grammar it was not called “a presentistic future.” The form is future, and the effort is to change it into a present. Certainly it would have given just as great an impression of learning to the uninformed. Before a rule of grammar can be properly affirmed, there must be found an impressive collection of instances in which the usage can be clearly proved. Such solid evidence is utterly lacking in this so-called “futuristic present.” Moreover, it collides head-on with the actual facts recorded in the Book of Acts.

(3) A third principle is the revelation that Peter was to have a glorious part in the establishment of the church. He was to act as gatekeeper for Christ’s church and proclaim to the world for the first time the conditions of entrance. (4) The church and the kingdom are spoken of as the same institution. This is disputed by many. But when the effort is made to distinguish between the two, the definitions of the kingdom become so vague as to be meaningless.

(5) The final principle is that the church is to survive the mighty warfare with Satan’s teeming forces. This raises the question as to whether the true church always remained in existence, even during the Dark Ages. Jesus does not specify other than that the gates of Hades would not be able to prevail against the church. It may mean that “truth crushed to earth will rise again,” as was seen in the Protestant Reformation, and the succeeding efforts not to reform the Catholic Church, but to restore the New Testament Church.

Binding and Loosing The binding and loosing on earth and in heaven refers to the forgiveness of sins by the proclamation of the divine means of pardon. Since Christ knew that Peter would faithfully deliver at Pentecost the decrees of heaven revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, He could say that God would ratify in heaven what Peter proclaimed on earth. Allen holds that the two statements keys and binding and loosing refer to administrative and legislative authority. Peter was to rule the church and to legislate! According to this, it must have been Peter instead of Jesus who gave the great commission and established the laws of pardon! Peter was to be the gatekeeper and spokesman. All he did was to publish the laws of admission to the kingdom which Jesus had commanded and the Holy Spirit had confirmed. Shall Have Been Loosed? An interesting point has been raised concerning the Greek of Matthew 16:19. The verbs shall be bound and shall be loosed are future perfect passive. Some insist they should be translated strictly, “shall [future] have [perfect] been [passive] bound, or loosed.” This would make the passage refer to the fact that the Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world and that God by His foreknowledge had already confirmed that which now took place, as the gospel was accepted or rejected and the sins of a person were remitted or bound upon him.

There is nothing particularly objectionable about this rendering, but grammarians generally doubt that the future perfect passive carries such a specific meaning in the New Testament. Voluminous literature of Hellenistic Greek gives wide range for studying the use of this tense. The periphrastic forms are very common in the koine. Goodwin’s Greek grammar says, “The future perfect is sometimes merely an emphatic future, denoting that a future act will be immediate or decisive; as phradze kai pepraksetai, speak, and it shall be [no sooner said than done] done” (pp. 247, 248).

The eminent Greek scholars who translated the Authorized Version, the English Revised Version, and the American Standard Version all decided that the evidence from Greek literature is so abundant that the future perfect passive can be used simply as an emphatic future and the plain, simple rendering of the passage so much to be preferred that they rendered it shall be bound and shall be loosed.

Command to Remain Silent The reasons are evident for the disciples being forbidden to go out and proclaim abroad this conversation. The people were still set on the goal of a material, worldly messiah. Any announcement that Jesus had now clearly declared that He was the Messiah would be misinterpreted by them to mean their kind of messiah. The excited crowds would be still more difficult to restrain and instruct. Moreover, the disciples did not as yet understand what kind of Christ Jesus was. They drew back in horror from Jesus' succeeding revelation of His death. They were still saying, "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of life." But they were finding these words increasingly difficult to accept. If in their present, unprepared state they should go forth to make a premature announcement of Jesus' Messiahship, they would find themselves unable to explain or defend. They would be propagating a false conception of the Messiah, which they would afterwards have to correct.

Omission in Mark and Luke

Matthew alone records this all-important conversation with Peter. Mark (dictated by Peter) omits this account which glorifies Peter, as is customary in Mark's Gospel. John does not record this incident or the transfiguration. These had already been adequately presented. John shows that Peter had made a similar confession at Capernaum a good while before this. Two-source Theory advocates strive in vain to explain why Matthew contains, while Mark and Luke omit, this great conversation concerning the church. Allen tries to argue that "the editor of Matthew" may have invented and inserted this at a later time to emphasize the prominence of Peter in the early church. He falls back upon himself a moment later in hopeless contradiction when he argues that Matthew 16:28 proves the early date of the Gospel. Thus he attempts to defend the Two-source Theory by cutting out arbitrarily Matthew 16:17-19(Com. on Matthew, p. 183). This is substantially the procedure of Robinson (Com. on Matthew, p. 140).

After Plummer admits that he cannot explain the omission of all this material in Luke (which cannot be explained if he copied from Mark and Matthew, or from common sources), he merely remarks helplessly here, "Luke and Mark omit the praise bestowed on Peter for this confession and the much discussed promise made to him (Matthew 16:17-19). Can it be of supreme importance" (Commentary on Luke, p. 247)? Such is the futility of a criticism which would belittle or cast doubt upon what it cannot explain. Why not doubt the merit or importance of the parable of the prodigal son because it is recorded by Luke alone? The fact that this great statement is recorded by Matthew alone is powerful evidence for the fact that the Gospel accounts were written independently and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. What they omit is as remarkable as what they contain and can only be explained by divine guidance.

Mark's Account

Much is made by critics of the abbreviated form of the good confession in Mark and Luke. This is especially true of the report of Mark: "Thou art the Christ." But the attempts to show that Mark is

not setting forth the deity of Christ in his Gospel fails completely when it is seen that Mark, as well as Matthew and Luke, follows with the transfiguration scene where the deity of Christ is so clearly affirmed: “This is my beloved Son.”

Prediction of Death

All three accounts show that the confession of Peter and the exciting conversation about the church was followed immediately by the dreadful prediction of Jesus’ death. Luke shows that this announcement was directly connected with the prohibition to announce to the public what had just been revealed to them. Mark says, “He began to teach them” ; He had taught them before this time about His death. But it was so veiled and vague that they had not understood. They must have been shocked and troubled on a number of occasions, such as when He had predicted that they would mourn and fast when “the bridegroom shall be taken away.” But they would have been able to thrust aside these predictions as too obscure and too incredible to be taken literally. Now the prediction was made so clear and precise, they could not misunderstand. Matthew says, “From that time began Jesus….”It was high time to begin; the date of His death was now only about nine months in the future. This was a small amount of time in which to prepare them to resist the dreadful shock. They had made such a bold, clear declaration of their faith that Jesus was the Christ the Son of God, it was time to begin to reveal to them the central and most difficult element of that term Christ.

Necessity of Jesus’ Death Revealed

There is implicit in the preceding record that Peter had spoken for all the apostles (unless Judas was already beginning to veer away, as had been hinted in John 6:70, John 6:71). The discussion which now followed makes clear that the other apostles were in strong agreement with Peter. A further reason for Jesus’ action in now beginning a forthright series of predictions of His death is seen in the bolder plots that were being made against His life. The disciples knew this. The murder of John the Baptist would have underscored the importance and menace of these plots. To keep the apostles in ignorance of the fact that He did not intend to defend Himself would place the apostles at a great disadvantage. It would be harder to control them and to keep them from meeting violence with violence. One of the solid foundations under their faith at the last when they stood in the presence of the risen Christ, would be the knowledge that He had repeatedly predicted His death and had revealed to them that He was sent into the world by God to die for the sins of the world.

Observe this word must in the three accounts. Jesus was seeking to cause His disciples to recognize the divine compulsion and plan behind His perplexing refusal to defend Himself and behind His approaching death. The enemies of Christ could not destroy Him. They would not be able to bring about His death unless it was God’s will that He go into their midst and suffer torture and death at their hands. Mark emphasizes the definite character of this prediction by adding, “He spake the saying openly” (Mark 8:32). All three accounts specify the enemies who are to accomplish His death: “elders” (members of the Sanhedrin); “chief priests” (high priest and those eligible to the office); “scribes” (famous scholars, almost exclusively Pharisees).

Three Days The time of the crucifixion was left indefinite. When was He to die? He did not say. They could not tell. But it would be sometime in the future, presumably the near future. And what

of the kingdom — this glorious church which He had just declared He would build? When and how this? The time element of the resurrection was stated. They were not left without information on this point, but were told it would occur on “the third day” (Matt.); Mark says “after three days”; Luke has “the third day.” This shows that the time in the tomb is not of vital importance. There is no effort in the Gospel accounts to state the exact number of hours, but the time is stated in general: on the third day or after three days are counted as equivalent. Those who insist on interpreting Matthew 12:40 as meaning exactly seventy-two hours overlook the fact that the same Gospel a few chapters later quotes Jesus as describing the resurrection as “on the third day” (cf. chapter 16, Book One, “The Date of the Crucifixion,” for a more complete discussion of this subject).

Disciples’ Reaction The disciples did not understand the statement about the resurrection at this time or in the later predictions. The terrific shock of the prediction of His death stopped the clock of their thinking. “Why hear anything else if He is to allow His enemies to kill Him? Who wants to hear anything else? What could be said? Who wants to live any longer if He dies?” They simply closed their minds to anything further. Thus, the enemies of Jesus shrewdly and fearfully calculated on His predictions of resurrection while the apostles blindly refused to give any heed.

Peter’s Protest

Matthew and Mark report that “Peter took him”; the verb means to take a person aside, although it is clear from the passage that the other apostles were still within hearing and seeing distance. In this action Peter had a double purpose. He was horrified at what Jesus had said. He desired to avoid any further open discussion of such a terrible topic. Moreover, he desired to make a bold protest, and this could be more easily done in semi-private. The Sinaitic-Syriac manuscript has an interesting variation here; it reads, “Peter took him as though he pitied him” (as if to save Him from Himself). Jesus was gentle, loving, and self-sacrificing beyond all belief. He had urged them to love their enemies and do good to them that hated them, but this is too much! This Sinaitic-Syriac manuscript is rather erratic, and the reading does not have further support. The scribe was evidently adding a comment of his own.

Matthew, who has been so careful in giving details of the conversation with Peter concerning the church, now also gives carefully what Peter said in his rebuke. Peter’s love and devotion would naturally have impelled him to accept humbly whatever Jesus said, but this terrible prediction overwhelmed him. He was so full of joy and triumph at Jesus’ commendation of his confession, that now when he heard this tragic prediction it seemed to him an utter contradiction of Jesus’ Messiahship and deity. Peter’s words were exceedingly bold and full of pathos and dramatic power. Peter’s face and whole manner must have been the picture of consternation and anguish.

Jesus’ Rebuke As Peter’s protest was bold, Jesus’ response was even more blunt and mandatory: “Get thee behind me, Satan.” God had revealed to Peter the wonderful confession he had just made, but God was not the source of this present protest. Peter was repeating unwittingly the last temptation the devil offered in the wilderness — the conquest of the world by worldly means rather than by way of the cross. Peter was playing Satan’s role and offering Satan’s proposal. Jesus did not command Peter to leave, as He had ordered Satan to go hence, but He commanded Peter to get behind in the proper position of a follower and not try to act as a guide and dictate to Him His proper course. In front, he was a stumbling block. The Other Disciples

Mark's repetition of the verb rebuke is noteworthy. Peter had boldly rebuked Jesus, but Jesus answered with a rebuke which was devastating. Mark includes another vivid detail: "But he turning about, and seeing his disciples, rebuked Peter." This shows the disciples were still within sight and hearing. Perhaps Jesus had yielded so far and no further to Peter's effort to lead Him aside into a private conversation. Jesus would not have the exchange a private matter. The other disciples needed rebuke and instruction as well as Peter. This also shows that the apostles were in hearty agreement with Peter. They were being swept away by his dramatic protest and showed by their expression and excited posture their sympathy with his position. If the look which Jesus gave the rest of the apostles was a stormy rebuke, then the despairing protest of Peter, the look of rebuke at the other apostles, and the blunt denunciation of Peter followed one another in an almost instant chain explosion. The Things of Men The things of men suggests the popular conception of the Messiah — a political king ruling in earthly splendor. The things of God include the death of Christ for the sins of men. Thou mindest not is quite clear. The Greek verb phroneo means: (1) to have understanding, to be wise; (2) to feel or think; (3) to direct one's mind to a thing, to seek, to strive for. "You consider and seek not God's will and the blessings of heaven, but earthly comfort, satisfaction, and glory." The King James Version is more difficult: "Thou savourest not." Used as a verb savour suggests both give and receive: (1) to impart flavor, scent, tone, or the like; (2) to taste or smell with, to indicate the presence of. "You offer the inviting flavor of the world; you have the aroma of worldly desire to avoid suffering and to get something for nothing!" "You find my predictions bitter to the taste because you seek worldly security." The Sermon

Mark has another vivid detail which is not reported by the other two writers: "And he called unto him the multitude with the disciples, and said unto them." If we had only Matthew and Luke, we would conclude that just the apostles heard his startling and perplexing sermon. Luke's declaration, "He said unto all," would not have been quite clear. But Mark shows that Jesus now summoned the multitude, which was respectful enough to remain at a distance until summoned, but eager enough to come instantly at a call. With what trepidation the apostles must have seen Jesus summon the crowd. Peter had appealed to Jesus never to mention such a horrible subject as this again. Jesus was responding by summoning the entire multitude to hear His pronouncement. How far would He go in revealing to them His approaching death? The sermon of Jesus is condensed to five verses, but they are filled with profound insight, beauty, and power. Several of the most famous words of Jesus are in this sermon. They announced His death and challenged all who would to follow Him to death by crucifixion. They united with this challenge the glorious revelation of the establishment of His kingdom in great power. To deny a statement means one contradicts its truth and discards it as invalid. But what does it mean to deny a person? "Let him deny himself." Let him disown the things that have self as their aim and end; let him deny the false or baser self and affirm the new or nobler self which has now become one with Christ. Paul continually writes of this.

Impact on the Crowd The crowd had not heard the thrilling confession and conversation and the shocking prediction and rebuke. Hence they were at a decided disadvantage in hearing this sermon, but they knew what the fate of the Old Testament prophets had been. They knew the fierce hatred and plots to kill Jesus which prevailed among the national leaders. And they knew what it meant "to take up his cross, and follow me." The Jews of Galilee had learned by bitter experience in previous revolts against Syria and Rome. Hundreds of followers of Judas and Simon

had been crucified in Galilee (Josephus, Antiquities, XVII:X:10). Relatives of some who heard Jesus' sermon might have suffered this cruel death. They would understand that Jesus did not mean mere burden-bearing of sickness, disappointment, or misfortune which could not be avoided, but the voluntary acceptance of whatever suffering might be entailed in committing their lives to Christ. Luke reports, "take up his cross daily,"which expresses the constant willingness to suffer for the Lord. Thus martyrdom was suggested, and al so daily suffering by those who survived. Paul speaks of dying daily with and for Christ. Peter gives a fine contrast between the suffering we bring on ourselves by our misdeeds and the suffering we endure as Christians because of our devotion to Christ (1 Peter 2:19-25; 1 Peter 4:12-19). The words of this sermon at Caesarea Philippi must have taken deep root in Peter's heart, for we hear him crying out at the last supper, "Even if I must die with thee, yet will I not deny thee" (Matthew 26:35).

Death and Life The abrupt demand that they must be ready to die for Him was followed immediately by a wonderful declaration that death to self is the open door to life. The person who seeks to save his life in the selfish and worldly sense shall lose it in the spiritual and heavenly sense. But the disciple who forgets his own selfish desires and loses himself in complete consecration to the service of God shall find his life in the highest and eternal sense. He will scorn the personal consequences he suffers and will not seek personal glory, but will dedicate himself completely to Christ. Observe the strong personal element in His invitation and challenge: "come after me," "follow me," "for my sake and the gospel's," "ashamed of me," "Son of man shall come." This same personal element pervades Jesus' teaching and preaching in all four Gospel narratives. It is not true that in the Synoptics He speaks of the kingdom, but not of Himself. The Two Lives

After having contrasted the two lives — the lower, or earthly, and the nobler, or heavenly — He contrasted the spiritual life, or soul, and the world. The way of the world is to measure a man's value in terms of his earthly possessions, fame, or power; Jesus proposes a different standard — not what a man has, but what he is. And Christ in the final day will judge what he is. To forfeit means to lose by way of penalty. The latter question of Matthew 16:26 means, "If a man has forfeited his soul, by what means can he buy it back?" This is a rhetorical question. It means he cannot buy it back. If he had the whole world of material things, he still could not buy it back.

Soul or Life? The Greek word psuche is used four times in two verses; twice it is rendered life in the a.v., and twice it is translated soul The a.s.v. translates life each time. It is plain that it cannot be translated soul in Matthew 16:25; "Whosoever shall lose his soul for my sake shall find it" would not be a possible translation. On the other band in the a.v. soul in Matthew 16:26 is most effective — "lose his own soul." When the a.s.v. translates psuche as life in Matthew 16:26, it must be understood in the spiritual and eternal sense. Sacrifice of physical life in this world is the very thing Jesus is calling upon His followers to be prepared to do for Him and for the gospel. The Greek word can mean animated life, breath, soul, or spirit. The a.v. seems to have a more effective translation in using soul in Matthew 16:26. T H. Robinson speculates, The same Greek word is rendered life in Matthew 16:25 and soul in Matthew 16:26, but, as a matter of fact, the Greek word itself can only be a translation of an Aramaic phrase which in nine cases out of every ten will be the equivalent of a reflexive pronoun: who ever wants to save himself will lose himself...this, says Jesus, can only be done when a man denies himself, disowns himself, refuses to admit that he has any value or need to be considered in any way, save as a means to an end, an instrument for achieving a given task" (Commentary on Matthew, pp. 144, 145). That word self represents one of

our efforts to identify the soul, the spirit, the ego, the person. The Day of Glory The thrilling prediction with which this sermon closes was calculated to offer surcease to the breaking hearts of the apostles and to summon hope to surmount despair. Jesus declared Himself the Messiah with this term Son of man. He predicted His glorious reign: “in the glory...with his angels.” He affirmed His deity, “of his Father,” and His place of eternal Judge. Luke adds, “in his own glory and the glory of the Father.” All that the apostles could see now was shame, torture, and death. He urged them to look up to the heavenly glory. Both Mark and Luke say holy angels, which pictures the sanctity and blessed character of the angels and surrounds the sinless character of Jesus with the radiance of the heavenly host. Mark and Luke speak of “whosoever shall be ashamed of me.” Matthew has the same idea in each man’s being judged by his deeds. Jesus had just predicted plainly to His apostles and hinted strongly to the multitude that a shameful death awaited Him; but, if they were ashamed of Him now as a crucified Messiah, He would be ashamed of them in the day in which He would judge the world. This statement repeated His challenge to all to be willing to die for Him. According to his deeds does not deny that we are saved by grace and that no one can earn salvation, but it does affirm human responsibility to God for our conduct, and the necessity of every man being judged “according to his deeds.” The Kingdom Come with Power The closing verse of the sermon is difficult. Radical seize this verse, which they insist must refer to the second coming, and use it as evidence that both He and the New Testament writers thought He was coming again immediately. This, in spite of the clear declarations of Jesus that “of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only” (Matthew 24:36); and the strong statements of Paul in 1 Thessalonians and of Peter in his second epistle. Matthew 16:27 plainly refers to the second coming of Christ, but Matthew 16:28 just as plainly does not refer to the coming of the Son of man at the final judgment day, but in the establishment of His kingdom at Pentecost. Matthew says “coming in his kingdom”; Mark clarifies this still further: “till they see the kingdom of God come with power” ; so also Luke. “Come with power” fits precisely the entire account of the first two chapters of Acts. The apostles would have been dazed by the seeming contradiction between His promises of the establishment of the church given to Peter and His prediction of death for Himself. The picture of the final consummation, the day of judgment, and the eternal reign of Christ would have been glorious, but in their beclouded reflections the question would have been “When?” They needed more comfort than remote predictions of the final judgment. Jesus gave this strong support for their sagging faith and hope by His dramatic prediction; “There are some of them that stand here, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see….”

Other Interpretations

Besides the radical interpretation that Jesus is predicting His second coming immediately, there are a number of views advanced by commentators.Early Christian writers generally held (Theophylact is a good example) that Jesus referred to the transfiguration. This view led to the mistaken chapter division in Mark. Other views are: (1) the resurrection and ascension; (2) the spread of Christianity; (3) the internal development of the gospel; (4) the destruction of Jerusalem. Plummer points out with a keen argument that Jesus could not possibly have been referring to the second coming because until implies that the “some” will experience death after seeing the kingdom of God, which is not true of those who live to see the second coming of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:51; cf. Plummer, Commentary on Luke, pp. 249, 250).

083. Chapter 24 - The Transfiguration

Chapter 24 - The Transfiguration Matthew 17:1-13;Mark 9:2-13;Luke 9:28-36

Mount Hermon The good confession of Peter took place at Caesarea Philippi, which is on the southern slope of Mount Hermon. The mountain on which the transfiguration took place is described as a “high mountain.” Since Mount Hermon is by far the highest mountain in the whole region of Palestine, the conclusion is natural, but not inevitable, that the transfiguration took place on Mount Hermon. It is 9,200 feet high and commands attention from all parts of Palestine. The ascent is from the western slope. A leisurely journey around the southern end of the mountain would have given the time for private instruction and reflection, for which there was critical need. The week that elapsed would have sufficed for a journey through the entire length of Palestine, but the combination of background facts naturally leads one to choose Mount Hermon. When the crusaders selected “Little Hermon,” southeast of the Sea of Galilee, as the location, they showed customary ignorance of the Scripture. “Little Hermon” could not possibly qualify as “a high mountain” amid the surrounding terrain. The journey back south to the Sea of Galilee is plainly described as occurring after the transfiguration. A Mountaintop No one who has experienced the thrilling and breath-taking climb of a high mountain will feel the need to ask why the transfiguration took place on a mountaintop. Where else in this world may one find such awesome grandeur of nature? The high mountain offers challenge and vista. Once on the crest of the mountain, heaven itself seems to invite.

Luke informs us that they climbed the mountain one day and came down the next. This was not a mad race to reach the top, but a journey which afforded leisure for conversation, observation, and reflection. Although we are not told specifically that they climbed to the summit and that the transfiguration took place on the peak, this certainly is the implication. Mount Hermon is capped with snow each year until August. This raises the speculation as to whether they ascended through snow the last 1,000 feet. But when we examine the passage of time since the feeding of the five thousand in April and look forward to the Feast of Tabernacles not far ahead, we observe that it was now August, the very time when the peak of Mount Hermon would have been most inviting.

Days of Agony

Matthew and Mark say that the transfiguration took place six days after the good confession, but Luke says “eight days.” Evidently Matthew and Mark were counting the intervening days only; Luke counted also the terminal days. What a week this must have been, of sleepless nights and of “agonized reappraisal”! It is not surprising that the three apostles on the mountaintop were half asleep as Jesus prayed nearby. In the Garden of Gethsemane during the final week, they found themselves unable to keep awake because so many sleepless nights and so much grief had left them utterly exhausted. Likewise here on the mountain the climb, the rarefied atmosphere, and most of all the week of agony left them in a state where sleep was hard to fend off. Only Luke tells of Jesus’ season of prayer which preceded the transfiguration, and of the three disciples’ vain

struggle to keep awake.

Jesus' Prayer

Jesus frequently left His apostles in a camp while He went into a mountain or desert for private devotions, but this was a longer trip — two days instead of a few hours. Moreover, He took three of the apostles with Him.We cannot tell when Jesus was using His miraculous foresight and when He was accepting human limitations. Therefore, we cannot be sure whether He also went up into the mountain to be transfigured. Luke declares, "He went up into the mountain to pray. Further than this we cannot affirm. It was a most humiliating and difficult task to have to tell His disciples that He was about to permit His enemies to kill Him. Jesus must have encountered a profound struggle. There was great need for prayer in this crisis. His prayer on the mountain evidently lasted for a very considerable period. The drowsiness which overcame the three apostles as they waited reverently for Jesus to complete His devotions shows this.

Purpose The entire series of events suggests, but does not prove, that Jesus had definitely planned this entire scene. It could not be announced. The three apostles were even forbidden to report it to the others until a later time. Gould's perverse argument that Jesus never worked miracles to prove His deity (this, in spite of all the assertions of Christ to the contrary) leads him to deny the possibility that Jesus deliberately planned this transfiguration scene:….it is quite out of character for him to deliberately set about such a transaction" (I.C.C. on Mark, p. 160). But is it any more out of character than for Him deliberately to enter Jerusalem in triumph, show Himself after His resurrection, or work any of the prodigious miracles which prove His deity? For what purpose did He come to earth? Was it not to lead men to faith and thus bring redemption? Why should He not plan here to show these three chosen apostles a glimpse of His heavenly glory to help rebuild their shattered morale?

Jesus Transfigured

Matthew and Mark record that Jesus was transfigured before them on this mountain. Luke adds that this change came over Jesus as He was praying.It instantly is apparent that Jesus was not far distant from the three as He engaged in prayer and meditation. He was within sight; for, when the three suddenly became conscious of a strange situation which brought them suddenly out of their drowsiness into acute observation, they could see Jesus. Perhaps in reverence they had faced in the opposite direction as Jesus departed for a season of prayer and as they seated themselves to wait patiently for His return. Undoubtedly they also had tried to pray with perseverance, but had been unable to continue so long. It would seem that the intense brilliance of the light that was emitted from the person of Jesus was what suddenly brought them wide awake in intense amazement. The Greek verb transfigured, used by Matthew and Mark, means changed in form, which probably means He was changed back into a measure of His heavenly glory. If His features remained the same, there must have been a profound change in His face, His garments, and His whole person as an intense light irradiated from His person. All three writers struggle to state the mysterious change in an understandable manner. Luke says, "The fashion of his countenance was altered," but he does not make clear just exactly how His countenance was changed, except that intense light shone forth. Matthew says, "His face did shine as the sun." The change in the appearance of His garments is described: "white as the light" (Matt.); "glistering, exceeding white so as no fuller on earth can whiten them" (Mark); "white and dazzling" (Luke). The heavenly glory

which gleamed through the veil of the flesh exceeds human understanding and description.

Moses and Elijah

Moses and Elijah “appeared in glory” and talked with Jesus. We wonder what this phrase means. Does it refer to the fact that they came from Paradise, ordoes it refer to the glorious form in which they appeared? What is “glory”? How closely the limitations of our earthly lives obscure our vision of the infinite. How did the disciples recognize Moses and Elijah? Had details of their physical appearance been handed down through the generations so that the apostles instantly identified them, or did they have to wait to hear Jesus address the two before they could ascertain their identity? Moses and Elijah “are still ‘men’ with bodies resembling, both in size and form, the old body of earth”; even though they pass through the air from heaven and finally vanish in a moment, this does not prove that celestial bodies will retain the image of the earthly. They may, but Paul says that the nature of our heavenly and immortal bodies has not yet been revealed (1 Corinthians 15:35-50). And he was quite familiar with the facts of this appearance of Moses and Elijah. After all, their appearance is not more or less difficult to explain than any of the appearances of angels. The Conversation The conversation of Jesus with Moses and Elijah was of breathless interest to the disciples.It centered upon the very topic which was breaking their hearts — the death of Christ. Luke gives us this detail: “...spake of the decease which he was about to accomplish in Jerusalem.” Decease is not an effective translation. The Greek word is exodus — the going forth from earth back to heaven. It was more than the decease — the going down in death into the grave. Jesus’ resurrection and ascension were also about to be accomplished in Jerusalem. The grave was not the terminus of Jesus’ glorious ministry. “Earth’s exodus is heaven’s genesis, and what we call the end, celestials call the beginning” (Burton, Com. on Luke, p. 289). The Death of Christ

Jesus did not talk with Moses and Elijah about the ancient days when these two great leaders had trying experiences and glorious victories. They did not bring tidings to Jesus from the celestial world. They discussed the redemption of mankind which Jesus was about to accomplish in Jerusalem and His return to heavenly glory. “The cross of Jesus was the one central thought of heaven as it is the one central hope of earth.” The crucifixion of Jesus was on the heart of all six individuals present on the mountain. The disciples, who needed especially to hear this discussion, must have secured great comfort and strength from it. Note the force of the phrase which he was about to accomplish; its plain expression of Christ’s death fits with His foregoing prediction that He “must.” The word accomplish means fulfill; it suggests the fulfillment of all the types and prophecies of the Old Testament which had foreshadowed or predicted the death of the Messiah. The oft-discussed question as to whether those in Paradise can see and know what is going on in this world, finds its clearest answer here where Moses and Elijah discuss with Jesus the situation He faces and the outcome.

Why Moses and Elijah? The selection of Moses and Elijah out of all the great leaders of the Old Testament period naturally leads one to think of these two as the greatest: Moses the great lawgiver; Elijah the greatest of the prophets. Moses was also a prophet, but he was chiefly known as the lawgiver. Any poll of opinion among Christians or Jews would undoubtedly name Moses first among all the great leaders of the Old Testament. As to the second greatest figure a difference of opinion would immediately develop. But this scene seems to point Elijah out as

second in stature and achievements. This is not stated; it is merely a conclusion. Elijah called the people back to the keeping of the law, but he was first of all a prophet. Some commentators suppose that Moses and Elijah were present here because both disappeared mysteriously from the earth, but it is hard to see any possible connection. The Three Accounts The independence of the three narratives is especially remarkable. Look at the details given only by Luke: (1) Christ came up into the mountain to pray and He was transfigured as He was praying. (2) Moses and Elijah appeared in glory and talked with Christ concerning His approaching exodus. (3) The disciples were heavy with sleep as they waited for Jesus to complete His devotions, but they became wide awake as the scene occurred. (4) It was when Peter saw Moses and Elijah about to leave that he spoke, trying to bring about a continuation of the marvelous scene. (5) It was the next day when they came down.

Mark and Luke state that Peter did not know what he was saying; Mark adds, "...because they were so full of fear." Matthew alone tells that they fell on their faces, and that Jesus touching them was what caused them to look up. Matthew and Mark tell of the conversation concerning Elijah and John the Baptist as they came down from the mountain. Luke says that the disciples obeyed Jesus' command not to tell anyone about the things they had witnessed. The passage is as prickly as a chestnut bur for the "source" theorists to handle.

Peter's Proposal

While Peter's proposal to prolong the wonderful scene was absurd, he probably thought he had some practical ideas. If they were on the summit of Mount Hermon, then the coming of night would probably bring cold winds. Scraggy material could he carried up from the timber line if the building of three rough huts to protect from the wind proved desirable. At least Peter should be given credit for not suggesting four tabernacles — the fourth for the three disciples. Jesus and the disciples probably descended to the timber line to secure some such protection from the cold wind before night came upon them. Its Absurdity

Matthew and Mark say, "Peter answered." He was not responding to any word addressed to him, but to the wonderful scene. Peter was the kind of person who felt called upon to answer whenever he heard anything which interested him. What he heard enthralled him and filled him with fear and awe. Mark and Luke say that he did not know what he was saying (did not realize the absurdity of his proposition). His proposal to build three temporary structures, or huts, was absurd, for what need would Moses and Elijah, from the spirit world, have for such things? They must return whence they came. Were they to be put on a level with the Son of God by such a proposal? What of the nine apostles left in the valley? Were they to be forgotten? should Jesus break faith with them? What of the waiting multitudes and all suffering humanity? should Christ forget and desert? Peter received no answer from Christ; God, rather, answered from heaven. The Cloud

"A bright cloud" drifted over and around them enveloping them in its soft mist (Matthew 17:5). It was the symbol of the divine presence. It suggests the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night which guided Israel through the wilderness. All three narrators speak of the cloud "overshadowing" them. Since the cloud emitted a brilliant light, it probably shut out all vision from the mountaintop, so fascinating in its vista. The world disappeared; they could see only Jesus, who was close at hand. The same heavenly light which had clothed Jesus in heavenly glory was now shining out of this cloud. There is a light above the brightness of the sun.

Luke says, “They feared as they entered into the cloud.” Any mountain climber knows that a cloud may mean loss of the trail and death in a perilous climb. One can well understand the fear of the apostles as the supernatural completely outweighed the natural. As the voice of God spoke out of the cloud, the climax of terror and exaltation arrived; they fell on their faces.

God’s Answer

Peter’s foolish proposal had put Moses and Elijah on a level with the Son of God. God’s answer corrected this and set Jesus above all. They were to hear Him rather than seek to hear a continuation of the words of Moses and Elijah. Jesus had been with them for three years. He would continue to be with them as they descended from the mountain. His words were very hard to hear and accept just now, but they must listen and heed. The law and the prophets were only temporary; the gospel of Christ is final and eternal.

Night or Day?

Since they spent two days on the mountain, the question arises as to whether this scene occurred during the daytime or at night. The following arguments are advanced by commentators who think it occurred at night:

He was accustomed to praying at night in the mountains (but He was also accustomed to praying in the day. Witness the fact that He was praying just before the good confession was made, and that a public service and sermon followed). His disciples were sleepy (but they could become sleepy in the daytime because of their strenuous life; the heartbreaking sorrow of the past week, which could have kept them from sleeping; the climb through the rare atmosphere; and the long wait during Jesus’ devotion).

Luke says they came down the next day, showing that they spent the night on the mountain (but leisurely ascent and descent would have required the two days. They probably camped out in some protected place and awaited daylight for the main descent). The bright cloud would have been more brilliant at night (but the brightness of heaven exceeds that of the sun. The bright light that overwhelmed Saul was at midday, Acts 9:5; Acts 22:6, Acts 22:11; Acts 26:13). One cannot tell whether the transfiguration was during the day or at night, but it seems to have been in the daytime.

Purposes The following purposes of the miraculous scene are suggested: (1) The transfiguration scene served to strengthen the faith of the apostles after the critical pressure of Jesus’ open revelation of His death. The miracle of walking on the water, which came after Jesus’ refusal to be king, helped relieve the disappointment and frustration of the apostles. The transfiguration came in just such a time of great need. The nine apostles would have received no direct help because the three were not permitted to tell what had happened on the mountain. The startling change in the demeanor of the three apostles, however, would have been communicated unconsciously to the others, as their downcast attitude was now suddenly changed to radiance and exalted confidence.

(2) On Mount Hermon God gave the disciples information sorely needed in this crisis. When Jesus had refused the crown offered by the Zealots, and especially when He had openly predicted His death to the apostles, they received hard blows to their hopes. On the Mount of Transfiguration it was made plain that the death of Christ would not mean that the glory of the kingdom would be

lost. They beheld a glory of which they had not dreamed and which caused earthly pomp and circumstances to become insignificant. They were helped to understand that the glory of the kingdom would be of heaven and not of earth. To accept the spiritual aims and program of Christ would not be so difficult. As time went on and became more difficult, the scene on Mount Hermon faded from view. On Golgotha it must have been completely lost to sight as they looked upon three crosses from afar. And yet this mountaintop experience would keep coming back to them with a mighty surge. After the resurrection and the explanations of Jesus made everything plain, the transfiguration became a permanent bulwark of their faith.

Jesus Only

They learned by the transfiguration that, although Jesus had been rejected by His people, He had not been rejected of God. The conversation with Moses and Elijah showed that the projected death of Christ was in harmony with the law and the prophets. The three had talked together of His approaching exodus in the capital. Moses and Elijah were not shocked or horrified at the prospect. While the three apostles had felt it meant the end of all their hopes, they found this marvelous scene sending them back for renewed study of the Old Testament. But the climax of the scene was not the conversation with Moses and Elijah. The climax was the voice of God speaking from heaven and warning them not to put Jesus on the same plane with Moses and Elijah, nor to hesitate to follow Him now even as He went to His death, nor to turn back from accepting His every word, for God the Father was well pleased with the conduct and course of His Son. At the last they could see Jesus only and were warned that. He is the supreme arbiter of human destiny. Moses and Elijah appeared only to disappear. The law and the prophets were in process of passing away as the new revelation was being given. Jesus only!

(3) The transfiguration gave to all the ages this strength and information which the three apostles received on the mountain. Our need may not be so critical as theirs, since the full gospel is in our hands at the start of our consideration of the Christian religion. But the modern enemies of Christ are many and have infiltrated the churches. We need the help of this tremendous event. The Experience of Jesus

(4) The transfiguration brought Jesus comfort and consolation, such as the angels brought to Him in the wilderness and in the Garden of Gethsemane. When the voice of God spoke from heaven to confirm Jesus as He was delivering His final sermon to the nation on that last day of His ministry in the temple, Jesus declared that the voice had been for the sake of the people, rather than for His sake (John 12:30). We conclude the same is true when God spoke from heaven commending His Son at the baptism. Yet in all these cases where heavenly fellowship was restored for a time, we can be sure that they had meaning for Jesus. Their primary purpose was to bring us faith and knowledge, but the experiences of Jesus were actual and exceedingly precious.

(5) The transfiguration must have had meaning for Moses and Elijah also. Perhaps this should be stated as a result, rather than a purpose. And yet they were chosen of God to have a part in this scene. It was a very real experience. We do not know enough about the state of the blessed in Paradise to affirm very much of this phase of the event, but this experience now must be one of the most cherished memories of these two great leaders as they await the final consummation. And so through all eternity.

Subjective Vision?

T. H. Robinson holds that this whole scene is subjective, not objective, since Matthew says, “a vision” (Commentary on Matthew, p. 144). Such reasoning is in harmony with the customary rejection by modernists of all appearances of angels to men. At times the Scripture informs us that an angel does appear to a man in a dream, as the angel who appeared to Joseph to warn and instruct him concerning Mary (Matthew 1:20, Matthew 1:21). Peter on the housetop at Joppa is specifically said to have been in a trance when the sheet was let down from heaven. We are not to suppose that there were actually all kinds of wild animals on the housetop with Peter. When Paul saw in a vision at night the man of Macedonia, the man was not actually present with him at Troas (Acts 16:9). But these revelations given in the mind are separate and distinct from the actual appearance of angels or the appearance of Moses and Elijah and the transfiguration of Jesus. To say that this scene was “subjective” means that nothing actually happened on the mountain except the journey and the season of prayer. All the rest was simply in the minds of the apostles. But three people do not see the same vision at the same time. Jesus condensed the entire event into one word — vision — that which they actually saw. It is very perverse to take this brief word as a contradiction of the entire threefold account of what actually happened. As Jesus talked with the three concerning the sublime event which had just taken place, He did not say what they had thought or what they had seen in their mind’s eye.

Testimony of Peter

There is only one account of the transfiguration by an eyewitness. Mark and Luke were not of the company at this time. Even Matthew was not chosen to be one of the three to ascend the mountain with Jesus. Looking back across the many years from the vantage point of his old age, Peter selected one single event of supreme, thrilling power out of the ministry of Jesus; it was the transfiguration. With slashing blows he storms at the enemies of Christ who will try to deny the historical verity of the prodigious miracles that occurred during Jesus’ ministry. They will attempt to make out that these are merely “cunningly devised fables” (a la Dibellius, Bultmann Form Criticism “myths,” “legends,” “miracle tales,” “fables”). Solemnly Peter delivers his eyewitness testimony: “But we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there was borne such a voice to him by the majestic glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: and this voice we ourselves heard borne out of heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount” (2 Peter 1:16-18). John is silent concerning this event, as he is concerning most of the scenes recorded in the early portion of the Synoptics. His entire Gospel presents the glorification of Jesus. He does not repeat this thrice-told event, but records new scenes and evidence which they have not given.

Historical Proof The historical character of the transfiguration is confirmed by the following: (1) If it is an invention, then those who so hold are obligated to show a source which suggested it to the inventors. There is nothing like this in the Old Testament or the literature of the world.

There is nothing in the previous life of Jesus which could have produced it. The prediction of the return of Elijah was not responsible for it, for Moses appeared also. In the discussion that followed, it is explicitly denied by Jesus that this is a fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy. The manner in which the scene fits into the crisis in Jesus’ ministry is very convincing. His preceding revelation of His death and the fact that Moses and Elijah talk with Him about His approaching death, fit

together. The dating of this event by all three writers as one week after the good confession is remarkable in the independence of their manner of stating it. The frankness with which Luke states that they were sleepy when the scene began is a strong item of evidence. No one inventing such an account would ever think of allowing such a thing to be recorded. The vivid details of Jesus' praying and the disciples seated nearby, the characteristic impulsiveness of Peter, the perplexity of the disciples as they came down the mountain are all convincing details. The prohibition to speak of the scene cannot be explained if the account is an invention. The historical narrative which follows fits as completely as that which precedes, i.e., the failure of the nine apostles and Jesus' miracle of casting the demon out of the lad.

There are four strong, clear, harmonious, but independent accounts of the transfiguration. "Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19).

Aftermath

Luke merely records that the three apostles "held their peace, and told no man in those days any of the things which they had seen" (Luke 9:36). But Matthew and Mark give further details of their instruction as they came down the mountain. Observe that where Matthew says "vision," Mark says "what things they had seen." Jesus strictly forbade them to tell any man what they had seen "save when the Son of man should have risen again from the dead" (Mark 9:9). Mark alone tells that a discussion broke out among the three as to what Jesus meant by "the rising again from the dead." "They kept the saying"; they did not forget it, even though they did not understand it. This discussion must have occurred at some break during the long trip down the mountain. Jesus evidently was not close at hand as they had this discussion.

They did not question Jesus as to what He meant by the rising again from the dead. Perhaps they dreaded to bring up in any way the fearful topic of His death. They believed in the life after death as all faithful Jews did. But they could not tell whether Jesus was now speaking of the final resurrection or some event near at hand which they could not understand. They had seen Jesus raise the dead, and yet the death of Jesus Himself was so appalling that they simply could not go beyond it to picture anything further.

They did question Jesus about the significance of the appearance of Elijah. It is not recorded that they asked about the meaning of the appearance of Moses. The secret of this concentration of their interest is the probability that they had been in some heated discussions with the scribes over this prophecy in the Old Testament. There is evidence that the scribes attempted to influence the apostles. It was inevitable that heated discussions would occur between the apostles and scribes when they were separated from Christ on some mission. Here was a point where they had not been able to answer the argument that Jesus could not possibly be the Christ, for Elijah had not yet come.

John the Baptist

They evidently had not understood the discussion of this prediction by John the Baptist. In fact, his answer of "no" to the perverse questioners from the capital may have helped to confuse them (John 1:21). John had answered that he was not Elijah in the sense that the priests and Levites had asked the question. They deserved no clearer answer. If the apostles were present when

Jesus answered John's question and preached the tremendous sermon on John and the unbelief of the generation, then they had heard Jesus say that John was the fulfillment of this prediction of the return of Elijah: "And if ye are willing to receive it, this is Elijah, that is come" (Matthew 11:14).

Return of Elijah

They were so thrilled now by what had taken place on the mountain that they felt there must be some connection between this event and the prophecy of Malachi 4:5. Jesus informed them that Malachi was not predicting the event that had just taken place. "Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but did unto him whatsoever they would. Even so shall the Son of man also suffer of them. Then understood the disciples that he spake unto them of John the Baptist" (Matthew 17:12, Matthew 17:13). The former instruction they had received helped them to fit together the identification that Jesus made. There was evidently a longer discussion of this between them. The variant accounts of Matthew and Mark indicate this.

Jesus pointed out to them that the scribes were quite correct in saying the Old Testament predicted that Elijah would come and restore all things — fulfill the preparations for the coming of the Messiah (Matthew 17:11; Mark 9:12; Malachi 4:5, Malachi 4:6). But the scribes, who were so insistent in offering this prophecy as a ground for rejecting Jesus as the Christ, needed to study the Old Testament prophecies about the sufferings of the Messiah and see that their whole idea of the Christ was wrong (Mark 9:12). The Old Testament prophecy concerning Elijah had already been fulfilled. Elijah had already come; the scribes had failed to recognize him and had rejected his counsel. John the Baptist, rejected and slain by the nation's leaders, was the fulfillment of the predictions of Elijah's return (Matthew 17:12; Mark 9:13).

Death of the Messiah

Now the fate of John was to be re-enacted in the death of the Messiah at the hands of the disobedient nation. Whatsoever they would is an expressive phrase indicating man's rebellion against God (Mark 9:13). Man had expected that when the Messiah came, God would exert His power so that men could not do to His servants as they pleased, even as it shall be at the second coming. But the Jews did not distinguish between the predictions of the first and second comings in the Old Testament. This was veiled. Jesus made clear to His disciples (the inference is plainly stated in Matthew) that the Jews would treat the Messiah in like fashion as they had treated John.

Even as it is written of him refers to John. Where is there any prediction of John's fate in the Old Testament? Jesus seems to say that the fate of John is parallel to that of the Old Testament prophets. Elijah had experienced rejection and long years of suffering. Many of the prophets had been killed.

They would refers to the unbelieving leadership of the nation, not to the multitude of godly Jews who had heard and obeyed John and who now mourned his death. Herod Antipas was directly responsible for John's death, but the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees were indirectly responsible. They had scornfully rejected John's message and opposed his ministry. They had done nothing to protest his imprisonment. Their voices were soon to be raised to rescue the vicious Barabbas, but they had not lifted up a hand to help John. His death from their point of view was a good riddance. The angel Gabriel in announcing to Zacharias in the temple the birth of John had identified the forerunner as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Malachi. John came "in the spirit

and power" of Elijah (Luke 1:17). There are many impressive parallels between the careers of the two great leaders.

While the understanding and faith of the apostles was helped by the explanation from Jesus, there was again raised this dreaded proposition of His death. Here was another prediction. The transfiguration was granted to them in order to help them recover from the shock of the first clear prediction. But they were not permitted to be so elated over this scene on the mountaintop that they would forget the tragedy just ahead. Mark shows that Jesus called to their minds this fact.

Jesus reminded the three disciples that the Old Testament prophets had predicted His death: "And how it is written of the Son of man, that he should suffer many things and be set at nought" (Mark 9:12). In Peter's presentation of testimony concerning the transfiguration, He seems to make an abrupt change of topic over the divine source, authority, and verity of the prophecies of Scripture. But it is not a real change of topic. As Peter tells of the glorious change in the appearance of Jesus and the voice of God speaking out of the cloud, he welds recollections and reflections about the conversation between the two great prophets and Jesus, and about the Old Testament prediction of death that Jesus had given them as they came down the mountain: "And we have the word of prophecy made more sure….For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:19, 2 Peter 1:21).

084. Chapter 25 - The Miracle in the Valley

Chapter 25 - The Miracle in the Valley Matthew 17:14-20;Mark 9:14-29;Luke 9:37-43 Miracles of the Apostles Is there any other instance in the Scripture where persons endowed by God with miraculous power failed to work a miracle they attempted? Balaam failed to carry out the evil purposes of Balak and curse Israel (Numbers 22:1-41; Numbers 23:1-30; Numbers 24:1-25). Every time he sought to curse, it turned out to be a blessing. But this is hardly parallel. He was seeking for commercial profit to curse Israel, but failed in his wicked plan. He actually did bless Israel each time. The apostles had been given miraculous power at the time they were sent forth two by two on the great missionary endeavor in Galilee. They brought back glowing reports of their success. Mark reports especially their casting out demons (Mark 6:13). But there are no accounts of any further miracles worked by them during the ministry of Jesus.

Seventy disciples were later sent out to preach in Judaea, where they performed many mighty works. Notable among them again was the ability to cast out demons (Luke 10:17). Like the twelve, they were especially commissioned. There is no record of any other miracles performed by them after that time. When the apostles returned from their mission, they, who had been the leaders in their campaigns, became subject to the leadership of Jesus. Anyone who wanted instruction or miraculous help went straight to Jesus. The Apostles and the Scribes The multitude had finally discovered the camp of the nine apostles at the foot of the mountain. We are not told how long the crowd had been with them. Mark shows that the scribes were present carrying on their heckling opposition (Mark 9:14). Both Mark and Luke say that the crowd was large (Mark 9:14; Luke 9:37). The man who was seeking to rescue his son from demon possession had appealed to the nine apostles to cast the demon out. How long they had waited in vain for the return of Jesus from the mountain we cannot tell. The disciples were evidently hard pressed by the situation. Since they had formerly performed such miracles, they attempted it now. Whether in their attempt there was something of frustration at being left behind we do not know. Mark records that the scribes were making the most out of the embarrassing situation in which the apostles were placed by their failure. Undoubtedly there had been many confrontations between the scribes and the apostles. But this was an hour of triumph for the scribes, and they were pressing their victory to the utmost. The Rescue

There is something thrilling beyond words about the arrival of Jesus at exactly the split second to rescue His disciples. The excitement over the appeal of the man, the condition of the son, the effort of the apostles, the fierce attack of the scribes on the apostles, had been so intense that no one had thought to continue their anxious watch on the mountain trail to see whether Jesus was returning. He came suddenly into the midst; the crowd rushed out to salute Him; He came forward and stepped between the apostles and the scribes. As He faced the scribes, eye to eye, his back was to the apostles like a general to his army. What stern wrath must Jesus have shown to the scribes as He demanded, “What question ye with them” (Mark 9:16). Mark says that the crowd was “greatly amazed” when they saw Jesus. The fact which amazed the crowd was that Jesus returned at the very moment of complete defeat and discomfiture of His disciples at the hands of

the scribes. The scribes evidently shrank back from the stormy presence before them, for they did not attempt to answer His challenge to say to Him now what they had just been saying to the apostles. The arrival of Jesus at exactly this crucial moment naturally causes us to retrace our steps through the events of the week and to feel that here is additional ground for concluding Jesus had foreseen and planned His course, including the transfiguration. The Father The father of the demon-possessed child spoke up to answer Jesus' question. Although he was not directly responsible for the ridicule the scribes were hurling at the apostles, he had brought about the whole exciting situation. Mark gives the most detailed description of the pitiful condition of the boy, as it was now related by the father. Jesus did not need to be told, but for the information of the crowd and further basis for our faith, He probed the man with a further question as to how long the boy had been in this condition. But first Jesus gave forth a cry of deep distress. It was as if a sudden surge of homesickness for heaven assailed Him. He had just been on the mountaintop talking with Moses and Elijah come from Paradise to greet Him. This renewal of heavenly association was immediately followed by doubt, unbelief, failure, opposition in the valley: "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I bear with you? bring him unto me (Mark 9:19). His majestic command to bring the child to Him furnished the dramatic contrast to the failure of the apostles and to the tragic outcry of Jesus. The Boy The description the father gave of the child indicates that the demon had caused epilepsy. One wonders whether the demon had also caused feeblemindedness. Matthew 17:15 uses seleniadzomai, which can mean insanity or epilepsy. "Those which were lunatick" (a.v.) are especially mentioned by Matthew as healed by Jesus (Matthew 4:24). The a.s.v. translates this an epileptic. The ancients may have regarded epilepsy as a sort of insanity. The Greek verb seleniadzomai means literally "moon struck." The ancients believed the moon had an influence on those who were demented. Note the Latin word luna for moon in our word lunatic. It is noteworthy that Matthew 4:24 clearly distinguishes those who were possessed by demons from those who were lunatic or who were epileptic. Demons sometimes caused various afflictions in those they possessed, but there is not the slightest suggestion that they always caused physical ailments. Still farther from the Gospel accounts is the effort to say that they represent all disease to be the result of demon possession. Casting out demons is clearly set apart from the healing of various diseases, and the healing of insane people (Matthew 4:24).

Jesus' Rebuke

Gould insists that the rebuke of Jesus (Mark 9:19) was only for the disciples who had failed and not for the man. But the man when questioned expressed doubt and was specifically rebuked and commanded to believe. Jesus seems to have included all in his exclamation "O faithless generation" — the baffled disciples, the relentless scribes, the man, and the multitude. O faithless generation means "O unbelieving generation," rather than faithless or perfidious. The despair of Jesus over the blind stupidity of the people reminds one of Isaiah 6:1-13. The patience of Jesus was meeting a situation which was almost intolerable. The high emotional tension of the scene is evident throughout; the sudden, dramatic confrontation with the scribes, the poignant outcry of Jesus where the man had stated the failure of the apostles; the stern, blunt rebuke of the man as he made his appeal. When they brought the child to Jesus, the demon showed his malicious spirit toward Jesus by tormenting the child violently. When Jesus questioned the father, He did it as an expression of His sympathy and for the purpose of bringing before the witnesses all the details of

the case. Mark reveals how pitiful the condition of the child was when he called the demon “a dumb spirit” (Mark 9:17) and made clear that this meant the demon had caused the boy to be both deaf and dumb (Mark 9:25). Deaf and dumb, violently epileptic, and perhaps insane, the child seemed to offer an insuperable obstacle to the man’s search for help, especially after the failure of the apostles.

Faith The father expressed his doubt and despair in a final appeal: “But if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us” (Mark 9:22). In an explosion of rebuke which must have been dramatic beyond words, Jesus cast these words of doubt right back into the man’s face: “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth” (Mark 9:23). But the Greek is dune, “If thou art able!” The a.s.v. shows a fine insight into the drama of the moment. The exclamation point used by the a.s.v. is particularly effective in bringing this out. The facial expression, the tone, the gesture of Jesus must have been stern as He gave the man this ringing rebuke. The only possible lack now was in the faith of the man. The father realized that the sweeping declaration, “All things are possible to him that believeth,” was directed at him. He accepted the rebuke humbly. The father “cried out” in an agony of contrition, showing the desperate struggle in his heart between faith and doubt. His confession and appeal furnish a model for all prayer: “I believe; help thou mine unbelief” He expressed the universal failure of man to reach perfection. He frankly confessed the common experience of man struggling for righteousness and faith, and yet sinking in a measure into doubt and wickedness. “Lord, I am struggling to believe with all my might, but if I do not believe as much as I should, forgive me, have mercy upon me, and help me to a stronger faith.” He claimed to possess faith, but did not rest his case on his own merit. He pleaded for the mercy of Jesus. He unconsciously revealed a genuine trust in Jesus in this last appeal — a faith both in Jesus’ mercy and His power. The person who does not feel the need of a larger faith does not possess much faith. Notice here the clear proof that faith was necessary on the part of a person asking miraculous aid. The child was so afflicted he could not respond to any sort of challenge for faith. The father was the one who was seeking miraculous aid and from whom faith was required. The Demon The majestic command by which Jesus demanded that the evil spirit leave the boy caused the spirit to obey, but there was one final vicious paroxysm. The people even thought the child was dead, the final spasm had been so dreadful. The gentleness and sympathy of Jesus as well as His power were shown by taking the hand of the boy and assisting him to his feet. The command of Jesus had included a stern prohibition not to enter into the boy again. This brings to mind the parable Jesus spoke concerning the demon’s returning to find his old habitation still empty. Whereupon the evil spirit with seven other evil spirits entered into the man to make the last state worse than before (Matthew 12:43-45). The Son of God

Luke records the enormous impression made upon the crowd. The absence of Jesus, the failure of the apostles, the capital the scribes had made out of the situation, the sudden arrival of Christ, and His majestic handling of the entire crisis combined to assert the deity of Christ: “And they were all astonished at the majesty of God” (Luke 9:43). Jesus stood in most vivid contrast with all men in light of the failure of His own disciples. The glory of the Messiah had been revealed to three apostles on the mountain; “the majesty of God” is shown to all in the valley.

Frustrated Disciples

Matthew and Mark tell of the troubled question which the crestfallen disciples asked in private after they had entered into the house of some disciple. Jesus did not condemn them for having attempted the miracle in His absence without any specific commission. He explained to them that their failure was due to lack of faith (Matthew 17:20); back of their lack of faith was lack of prayer. God was not lacking in power or profound concern for them; they had lost that close contact with God which comes from constant communion. Their week of misery must have caused the Messianic dream to fade into distant outline, and the absence of Jesus for two days must have increased the pressure of doubt and gloom. Jesus had also condemned the man for lack of faith; but, if the disciples had possessed more faith, they would have been able to stir the man to a larger faith. Jesus urged them to a more complete consecration. Prayer is the essence of faith and dependence upon God; it is the highway to spiritual power.

Fasting The a.s.v. omits the and fasting which is found in the a.v. The better manuscripts omit it. The growth of asceticism and monasticism in the churches evidently led to the insertion. Jesus taught that fasting was not an exercise to be commanded by external authority, but an experience to rise out of internal need. This is true of both physical need (in case of high fever) and spiritual need (in case of the death of a loved one, where sorrow overwhelms any desire to eat). In the darkness of the early Middle Ages fasting was glorified along with the isolation and deprivations of monks and hermits.

Further Discussion

Gould maintains that Mark 9:29 means “this kind of thing,” i.e., any kind of miracle lies beyond man’s unaided effort and must have the power of faith from the contact with God. While this general proposition is quite true, it seems that Jesus means here “this kind of demon” — a particularly vicious kind of demon — because the entire narrative emphasizes the desperate character of the demon. What a session of excited discussion the apostles must have had when they had opportunity to live over again the dramatic events of the day. How the chagrin and frustration of the nine apostles must have been increased when they discovered that the three would tell them nothing of what had happened on the mountain.

085. Chapter 26 - Closing Days in Galilee

Chapter 26 - Closing Days in Galilee Matthew 17:22-27;Matthew 18:1-5;Mark 9:30-41;Luke 9:43-50 Prediction of Death As they journeyed south toward the Sea of Galilee, Jesus gave them a third prediction of His death. If the previous predictions had seemed incredible, it was now no longer possible to avoid the inevitable gloom. These were no obscure parables This was stark tragedy. Matthew says simply, “And they were exceeding sorry.” They could no longer hope against hope; they could only despair.

Mark says, “But they understood not the saying, and were afraid to ask him.” This seems to refer to the final phase of His prediction, “After three days he shall rise again.” The predictions of death were now too clear to be misunderstood or brushed aside. Luke shows that Jesus began this prediction with a profoundly impressive command: “Let these words sink into your ears.” They had been loath to receive the predictions of death into their minds. They had tried hard to avoid them and to forget them. The excited praise of the crowd would have been an obstruction to their hearing. Both Mark and Luke record that the disciples were afraid to ask Jesus what he meant by this prediction. The stern rebuke Peter had received when he was called Satan would have made them hesitate to ask for further explanation. The manner of Jesus was probably very severe and did not encourage them to ask questions. Perhaps the appalling conviction that He would actually permit His enemies to torture and kill Him caused them to fear to question Him lest they should learn the worst. They could delay the evil day of knowing about it by refraining from asking questions.

Betrayed

If their failure to understand included His prediction of death as well as the resurrection, then the verb delivered probably gave them the most difficulty. Who could “deliver” Jesus with His miraculous power? Who would want to deliver Him to His enemies? While they understood the words of Jesus, they found it hard to comprehend the realities. Delivered up seems quite definitely to refer to Judas. It might be considered to be a general reference to the will of God being carried out by Jesus’ allowing the plots against him to succeed. But in the light of later plain predictions that one of the apostles would betray Him into the hands of His foes, this is the natural interpretation here. McGarvey remarks that they were not willing to accept the obvious meaning of His words and could not discover any other meaning. If He really was the Christ they believed Him to be, how could He permit anyone to deliver Him up or permit His enemies to kill Him?

Failure to Understand

Luke says, “It was concealed from them, that they should not understand.” Plummer interprets this to mean they were miraculously and by divine purpose kept from understanding so that they would not be anticipating the resurrection. But this is an impossible view in light of the fact that Jesus repeatedly condemned them for being so slow to understand the predictions of His death and resurrection (Luke 24:25). Their material conception of the Messiah must have helped to becloud

their understanding. They had been horrified and indignant at Caesarea Philippi. Now they were brokenhearted. Even though they could not understand how it was possible for Him to die, His repeated predictions filled them with dread and grief. The transfiguration must have given the three a deeper conviction and a new understanding that the death of Jesus was now close at hand, but even they were perplexed and dismayed; and the others were still more in the dark. The Journey South This was a leisurely journey south from Mount Hermon. Matthew says of it, “while they abode in Galilee.” Mark speaks of His passing “through Galilee; and he would not that any should know it” (Mark 9:30). The scribes had pursued Jesus from Capernaum into the territory of Philip. Their altercation with the nine apostles, their ultimate discomfiture as Jesus confronted them and then healed the boy, together with the excitement caused by the miracle and the great admiration of the multitude, would have made further quiet instruction of the apostles impossible here. The praise of the multitudes would have stirred again the false hopes of the apostles. Mark says that He wanted no one to know His whereabouts so that He could instruct and get them to understand more clearly about His death (Mark 9:31). Luke indicates that the empty praise of the crowd caused Him to give a further prediction at this time (Luke 9:43). They probably left secretly in the night while the crowd was still filled with excitement over the miracle. Following paths instead of highways, they could find leisure for instruction as they came south.

Temple Tax

Upon their arrival in Capernaum they returned to “the house” of Peter, which was their headquarters (Matthew 17:25). Had Peter gone to the market place to buy supplies, when the tax collector encountered him? Was this a routine collection of taxes? or was it a deep-laid plot to entangle Jesus in a charge that He did not keep the Old Testament law? The last two times Jesus had returned to Capernaum the Pharisees had immediately begun attacks. The first of these had been the charge that He was not keeping their hand-washing tradition. The next time there had been the demand to show a sign from heaven. It seems significant that the moment they appeared again, a tax collector should have been on hand to raise this issue, “Doth not your teacher pay the half-shekel?”

Haste

Peter, who was always on edge to defend his Master from any imputation of guilt, answered on the spur of the moment, “Yes.” Then he began to wonder whether he had spoken again in too great haste, without waiting to ask Jesus for a ruling in the matter. He did not attempt to translate his words into immediate action by paying the collector for the thirteen men. Perhaps he did not have the money. The treasury was supplied by devoted friends and provided food for the group (Luke 8:2, Luke 8:3). Peter may have felt it would be misappropriation of funds to take this money to pay the tax. He answered without asking Jesus, but he did not act without asking Him. This tax is definitely the temple tax commanded in the Old Testament (Exodus 30:13; Exodus 38:26). The amount of the tax is precisely the same — a half-shekel. Every Jew from the age of twenty was commanded to pay a half-shekel for an offering to the Lord once a year. Not only is the amount identical, but there would be no choice in paying taxes to the Romans; they had their own means of seeing to it that the taxes were paid. Theirs was compulsory; this was voluntary.

Reflections

Obviously Jesus and the apostles had not paid the temple tax during the three preceding years of His ministry. Peter's anxiety and haste to get a ruling from Christ concerning the matter would not have been necessary if a precedent had been set. As he hurried back to the house, his reflections must have been tumultuous and varied. Had he made a mistake in his quick reply? Since Jesus had not been paying the temple tax, why should He pay now? If He did not pay, would this not give ground for more attacks upon Him? But why should Jesus give to support the corrupt politicians who controlled the temple? Instead of paying taxes for support of the infidel Sadducees, had He not driven the entire motley crowd out of the temple? This certainly was a very sticky question.

Peter's Dilemma

Peter's haste in getting back to the house to ask Jesus was not quick enough. The a.v. says, "Jesus prevented him." This is an obsolete use of this word prevent. It comes from two Latin words meaning to come before. Before Peter could possibly speak a word, Jesus spoke first; "he came first" ; "he prevented him." The a.s.v. translates quite understandably, "Jesus spake first to him." Jesus posed a problem for Peter to solve. If he could answer Jesus' question correctly, then he would be able to answer his own question. Jesus spoke first in order to give troubled Peter the help of further miraculous evidence.

Miraculous Foresight

Jesus had seen and heard everything which had transpired between the tax collector and Peter, even though they were far distant. The miraculous foresight of Jesus leaped out in startling fashion as He calmly asked Peter, "What thinkest thou Simon? the kings of the earth, from whom do they receive toll or tribute? from their sons, or from strangers?" This reversion to the original name of Peter seems to carry a barb. Was this hurried answer he had given the tax collector in harmony with his grand confession at Caesarea Philippi? The plural sons seems to be a gracious avenue of relief for the conscience of Peter concerning his own payment of the tax. And the rest of the twelve, what of them? Jesus spoke with the majesty and the certainty of the King's Son. Everything hung upon His divine Person. Peter had left all and followed Jesus to do His will each day. This covered the entire ground of his responsibility. He had no need to worry because he had not been paying his own temple tax. The Solution

Peter had no difficulty answering the question: "From strangers." Jesus gave the inevitable conclusion: "Therefore the sons are free." It would be absurd for the king to collect taxes from his own son. This would be like a transfer of money from one pocket to another. The citizens of the country are the ones who pay taxes to support their king. So it is with the temple. "A greater than the temple is here." He is God's Son. He is not obligated to pay. Thus Christ towers above both the Old Testament law and the temple in His whole attitude. Here is another of His grand affirmations of deity.

Redeeming the Promise

Since Peter had made his rash promise, then the tax collectors and those who stood behind them must not be caused to stumble or be able to say that these followers of Christ did not keep their promises. The tax would not be paid for the rest of the thirteen, for they had not been involved by Peter's promise. There was no obligation upon Jesus to pay; He was merely keeping the rash promise Peter had made. The tax collectors did not understand the deity of Jesus. If they had

been sent to entrap, it was an issue which would be prevented. Although Jesus proceeded to pay the tax humbly, He secured the money in such towering fashion as to give startling proof of His deity. The Coin The shekel is a Jewish coin. The Greek word used for the coin found in the mouth of the fish Peter caught is didrachma; it was a stater. This coin was about equal in value to the Jewish shekel and to the American half dollar. Since each Jew was to pay a half-shekel, the stater would pay for both Jesus and Peter. The a.s.v. obscures the meaning by translating the word shekel. The stater was a rare Greek coin made of silver. The fact that such a coin was found in the fish's mouth makes the miracle all the more remarkable. The gold stater was worth $5.32 (Athens) or $5.33 (Asia Minor), but the stater found in the mouth of the fish was evidently a silver stater since this was exactly the amount needed. The Miracle This seems to have been a miracle of foreknowledge rather than creation. It is not stated that Jesus created the coin, or placed it in the mouth of the fish. But He knew the fish was there with the coin in its mouth, and that Peter would catch it. Jesus did not even direct Peter where to fish. This is always a most important factor if one expects to catch fish. Did Peter use his boat and go out into the deep? or did he find a point on the shore where the land shelved off immediately into deep water so that a large fish might be caught? Did the other apostles follow him in intense excitement to witness what would happen? We cannot answer these questions. The majesty of the King's Son is seen in there being no necessity to instruct Peter where to fish. Jesus knew.

Attacks This miracle has been the center of concentrated fire from unbelievers. It is just too bad that it is not in John's Gospel only, instead of being in Matthew's only. Then they would have been able to concentrate their attack further on John without having to repudiate all four narratives. Here are the arguments they adduce: (1) It seems to violate the principle that miracles are not wrought where ordinary means are available. They could have taken money out of their treasury to pay the taxes. But ordinary means would not have achieved the desired purpose of proving the claim of Jesus that He was not obligated to pay the tax. He did not create the money; He used a coin that was in the mouth of a fish; He secured it by a miracle for the definite purpose of proving His claim to deity.

Some argue that it was such a small sum that it makes the action absurd. It was a small sum, but it was a great miracle. The amount of money was not the significant thing, but the significance lay in the manner by which it was obtained. It was exactly sufficient to pay for both Jesus and Peter. At Cana Jesus had all the jars that happened to be standing at the threshold filled with water and turned it into wine, although it made such a large amount. Likewise here He meets the occasion by securing just the amount necessary, even though it was a small sum. In the one case the critics complain that the amount of wine was too great to be justified; here they say the amount of money was too small. But in either case Jesus met the circumstances that arose.

Some argue that this miracle brought no healing or comfort to sufferers. But it is the modernists and not the New Testament who declare that this is the sole purpose of Jesus' mighty works. Faith was brought to the heart of Peter and the others in the home by this miracle. He needed it as He saw Jesus turning towards Jerusalem to die. Would Jesus heal the bodies of men and neglect their souls? Moreover, who can say how much "comfort" Peter received from the embarrassing situation in which he found himself?

It is urged that Jesus Himself shared the advantage of this miracle, which is contrary to His spirit and entire conduct. The purpose was not for His advantage, but was a lesson of faith for the apostles. Jesus was not obligated to pay. He was not performing this miracle as a favor to Himself. Peter had become entangled with the tax collectors and was troubled. God enabled Jesus to pay the tax without either violating His own freedom or the conscience of others.

Rewriting the Account The customary line of attack of modernists is to rewrite the narrative changing the miraculous over into an ordinary happening, even as they would degrade Jesus to the level of an ordinary man. A typical example was the recent declaration of a teacher in a radical school: “What actually happened was that Peter caught a fish and sold it for a stater.” A bright student in the class spoke up and asked: “Professor, would it not have to be a very large fish to sell for a stater?” This was a good question. One can buy a large basket of fish on the shores of the lake for 35¢. The professor thought over the question and then answered: “Well, perhaps Peter caught a string of fish and sold them for a stater.” If a person is determined to charge Matthew with falsification and to write the account over for himself, it might just as well be made to read a string or a boat-load of fish.

Charles Fiske, in his book The Real Jesus, claims that Jesus was just joking with Peter when He gave this command. A wink of the eye, a comical gesture of the hand, or lilt of the voice would have made Peter understand it was all a joke:

Jesus’ words may have been a mere bantering bit of pleasantry. It is not said that Peter went fishing to find the coin; only perhaps, that he was smilingly bidden to do so. Or it may be that Jesus directed Peter to pay the tax by a catch of fish which would provide the necessary money. Or there may be still other explanations. Each individual story of a miracle constitutes, therefore, a separate problem, whose investigation must be left to professional historians; and even they, time after time, can only conclude with the verdict, “We do not know exactly what happened” (p 105).

“The Professional Historians”

Now who are the “professional historians”? What are their qualifications? What bases of judgment do they use? Fiske talks as if the great commission reads: “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to the professional historians. Whatsoever they may decide to be in harmony with the theory of evolution and the latest skeptical fantasies shall be declared true; and whatsoever they shall deny to be in accord with their theories shall be declared false. No one else is to listen or judge for himself; all are to await the dictum of those who have elected themselves to do the thinking for their fellow men.” Who were the professional historians of Jesus’ time? What was their attitude toward Jesus? What was His judgment of them? A Joke?

Supposing that it was a joke Jesus was having at the expense of Peter and the tax collector leaves the dilemma of the tax collector entirely unsolved. The Scripture certainly presents the matter as solved. The following questions arise: (1) Was Jesus accustomed to joking with His apostles about such matters? If so, what is there that is funny about the suggested conduct? Even in a book of jokes, the author would have to attach an explanation to show some humor connected with such a strange statement. Fiske fails to show any point of humor connected with his imagined joke.

(2) In a book of miracles, a definite promise that a miracle is about to be performed would be a deliberate falsehood if the declaration were only a joke or if the event did not actually come to

pass.(3) Fiske's point that Matthew does not actually state Peter obeyed, caught the fish, and paid the tax, is a charge of deliberate deceit on Matthew's part if it did not happen. Fiske himself admits that this is the natural conclusion to draw from the narrative. (4) Fiske's citation of "other explanations" is a confession of the failure of his original attack.

Jesus and the Old Testament Law This passage gives the clearest of statements from Jesus on His relationship to the Old Testament law. He states categorically that He is not bound by the law of Moses. He rises above the law. There is not a single passage in which Jesus ever said, "I always have kept the law of Moses perfectly." His declarations are numerous, "I do always the will of my Father." He did not have to go through Moses to know the will of God. His immediate contact as the Son of God gave Him this knowledge. In His moral perfection Jesus obeyed the will of God in regard to the moral law. But the Old Testament had established a system of religion which was temporary and even now was passing away. Alexander Campbell called this "the intercalary dispensation," the dispensation in between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Continually we find Jesus disregarding the stipulations of the law or setting them aside in His teaching. The old was in process of passing away, even as the new was being revealed. The New Testament The law was nailed to the cross and went out of force at that time, so far as God was concerned. He reached down from heaven and tore the veil of the temple from top to bottom at the time Jesus died and thus made this evident. But what of them who died between the time of the crucifixion and the day of Pentecost, when the church was established? A man is responsible only for what is possible for him to know. Until the new and final will was probated on the day of Pentecost, man remained under the Old Testament law. The law was nailed to the cross as far as God was concerned, but as far as man was concerned it remained in force until the new will was opened and its nature and conditions made known.

John the Baptist The gospel was in preparation during the ministry of Jesus. He gave continual assertions that the law was in process of being set aside. He declared, "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John" (Matthew 11:13). Even with the coming of John the Baptist, the old was beginning to pass just as the new was beginning to be revealed. John did not keep the law, which required him by birth to assume the obligations of the priest in the temple. He was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb and was in the deserts until the day of his showing unto Israel. He was charged by the Jerusalem hierarchy as being in revolt against the law; the law required animal sacrifice at the temple for the forgiveness of sins, but John had instituted this new ordinance of baptism for the remission of sins (John 1:25). The Feasts The sixth chapter of John makes it plain that Jesus did not keep the law which required every able-bodied Jew to go up to the temple for the Passover feast. The Passover was near (John 6:4); after the feeding of the five thousand, John declares Jesus did not go up to the capital (John 7:1). Furthermore, the law required every Jew to go up to the temple for a week at the Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus deliberately delayed His departure from Galilee so that He did not arrive until in the midst of the feast. He plainly told His protesting half brothers that He was not going up to the feast. He would arrive in the midst of the feast in accordance with God's explicit instructions as to how and when He should reveal Himself. He was not subject to the law of Moses, but was being directed by God in every step of His conduct.

Central Place of Worship When the Samaritan woman questioned Jesus whether Jerusalem or Mount Gerizim was the correct place for worship, Jesus' reply swept aside one of the central

propositions of the Old Testament law: there must be one central place of worship — the tabernacle, later on, the temple. As between Jew and Samaritan, Jesus bluntly declared, “Ye worship that which ye know not: we worship that which we know; for salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22). But Jesus set aside the law of one central place of worship with His grand principle, “neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem [but in any place in all the world if]...in spirit and in truth” (John 4:21-24).

Clean and Unclean Meats In His controversy with the scribes over their traditions of hand washing, Jesus not only set aside their traditions, He revoked the central proposition of the Old Testament on clean and unclean meats: “Not that which entereth into the mouth defileth the man; but that which proceedeth out of the mouth, this defileth the man” (Matthew 15:11). The entire distinction between clean and unclean meats was revoked by this ruling. There had been no moral basis for this distinction; it was a part of the system of religion which made the Jewish people a separate nation. The reason for the chosen nation was that through this nation the Messiah might come to save all people. With the coming of Christ, the Old Covenant began to be set aside as the New was given. Mark shows that by the time his Gospel was written, the revolutionary significance of this declaration of Jesus was understood,….making all meats clean” (Mark 7:19). To Fulfill the Law The idea that Christ kept the Old Testament law perfectly rises from a misunderstanding of His declaration in the Sermon on the Mount: “Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets; I came not to destroy, but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17). It is significant that Jesus should have been charged with destroying the law and the prophets. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus not only deepened the moral content of the law in His sweeping criticism, “Ye have heard it said...but I say unto you,” but He set aside a definite provision of the law in His ruling on divorce.

Jesus fulfilled the law in the same sense that He fulfilled the prophets. They both were predictive and looked forward to the final consummation of the Messianic era. He fulfilled the grand purpose for which both the law and prophets had been given. This fits perfectly with His declaration, “For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John” (Matthew 11:13). In what sense did the law prophesy? It was predictive not merely in rites and symbolism (such as the Passover lamb without blemish, looking back to Egypt, but forward to Calvary), but also in its grand purpose. In what sense did the prophets prophesy until John? The Old Testament line of prophets had ceased four hundred years before the time of John. But the great purpose of the Old Testament prophets was to lead to the Savior of all mankind. When the forerunner actually came, the Messianic era was being ushered in, and the end of both law and prophets was in sight. The Jerusalem scholars sensed this and made violent protest against John’s setting up the new ordinance of baptism for the remission of sins in contrast to the law of animal sacrifice in the temple for the remission of sins.

Sacrifice

Jesus’ statement in regard to the temple tax is decisive. The King’s Son was not obligated, but would pay rather than cause those to stumble who had received Peter’s rash promise. Jesus kept the law except where it would have contravened His deity and the direct guidance He had from God. We never find Jesus offering the annual, animal sacrifice in the temple for any personal sin. If He had done so, He would have denied His own sinlessness. The law was given for sinful man. It did not fit the Son of God. Jesus kept the final Passover, but it was with His disciples. Any

participation in a ritual implying the sinfulness of those sharing it, would be limited in the same way that His baptism was clearly declared to be not “for the forgiveness of sins,” but “to fulfill all righteousness” (to do the righteous will of God, who was directing His Son to submit to baptism — Matthew 3:13-15).

Fulfillment

Jesus criticized the law as inadequate even in the presentation of moral principles. At times He deepened the moral concepts; at other times He set aside provisions of the law. He not only kept the great moral principles in the law perfectly, but He died to make up for our failure to keep them. He towered above the law. He was the fulfillment of the law. He filled full both the law and the prophets. He brought the law to an end as it was nailed to the cross. He brought in God’s final revelation — the gospel, which offered light and immortality to all men. The Quarrel

Immediately after the temple tax incident (Matthew says, “in that hour came the disciples”), the climax occurred in a quarrel among the disciples which had been going on during the trip south from Mount Hermon. Luke tells that the disciples had been having this discussion as to who should be greatest, and Mark informs us that it had been in progress as they were on this journey. There are various things which had recently occurred that explain why this quarrel over pre-eminence arose. The confirmation of their faith that Jesus was the Messiah and the prediction that Peter should act as gatekeeper in the establishment of the kingdom, had stirred anew their dreams of the glorious reign of the Messiah. Their part in this grand kingdom had become the cause of jealousy and the subject of discussion. Similar results had been produced by the sermon in which Jesus demanded their willingness to die for Him and predicted the glories of the kingdom and its near approach.

Causes of the Quarrel The choice of the three to go into the mountain with Jesus and the extreme frustration of the nine in their failure to cast out the demon from the boy would have added to the friction among the twelve. To cap the climax, the three would not tell the others what strange, mysterious experience had evidently been theirs on the mountain. No amount of questioning could bring the secret forth. We wonder why Jesus kept the transfiguration secret even from the other nine. Was it the general principle that the more people who know, the harder it is to keep a secret? Did the presence of Judas in the group cause Him to limit information given to all? In the journey south there had evidently been times when they were able to indulge in their quarrel. Covert hostile looks and gestures may have kept the fires burning even when they were not alone. Jesus bided His time to handle the insurrection. The Principle of Greatness

Now that they were in Peter’s home at Capernaum, the matter could be handled. Matthew shows that the apostles brought the matter to a head by asking from Jesus a statement of fundamental principle, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” This question sounded sufficiently general and intelligent to offer a proper subject for discussion. But Jesus instantly responded with a probing question which brought into the open the private argument. He would not have them imagine they had kept it from Him. “What were ye reasoning on the way?” The disciples “held their peace” when He asked this question. They were ashamed. Jesus sat down solemnly for a period of rebuke and instruction and called the disciples about Him (Mark 9:35). In the midst of the teaching Jesus took a little child “and set him in the midst of them” (Mark and Matthew), “taking him in his arms” (Mark), “set him by his side” (Luke). Not only did the child make a marvelous

illustration, but the gentleness and tender love of Jesus for little children is one of the delightful features of His character and conduct and a most appropriate and effective argument in this discussion.

“If any man would be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all.” The principle is as revolutionary as the entire spiritual character of the kingdom Jesus was revealing. Jesus’ masterful way of showing He knew of their dispute and the motive back of their question fitted with the principle He enunciated. Their conscience-stricken silence arose partly from the fact that on this very journey while Jesus had been predicting His death, they had been quarreling about future greatness. Verily Jesus was last in thinking of Himself and truly the servant of all in giving His life for the world. Instead of denouncing in hot wrath their self-seeking jealousy, Jesus exemplified by His patient instruction the spirit of humility which He urged upon them. Jesus thus turned their world upside down and allowed them to figure out how foolish and wicked they had been. Not only do humility and service “lead to greatness, but they are greatness itself.” The one first in thinking of himself shall be last in God’s estimation; and the last in self-seeking shall be greatest because he makes Christ first. The Ideal Little Child This unfolds the same fundamental truth taught at Caesarea Philippi as Jesus kept trying to replace their secular ideas and aims with spiritual ones. Matthew adds the information that Jesus gently called upon them to repent: “Except ye turn,” from sinful ambitions to the true greatness which God desires and which is typified in the beautiful qualities of the young, unspoiled child. The qualities of humility, trust, teachableness, devotion, and desire to serve are pure and unstained in the ideal little child. Few objects are more trying to the patience and disgusting to witness than a spoiled child, wilful, disobedient, selfish, and heedless. But Jesus evidently selected a child of age and character that set forth the beautiful simplicity of the model child. No greater perversion of Jesus’ principle could be imagined than for a person deliberately to take the last place as a means of climbing to the highest. He must be willing to make himself last for Jesus’ sake and to serve in whatever way possible, regardless of the personal humiliation and outcome. This is made obvious by the phrase in my name. The type of humble service which Jesus commanded was set forth in the task of receiving and carefully protecting and rearing little children. In the name of humanity this is being done today in a remarkable degree. But Jesus gave something higher than humanity as the supreme motive. He offered Himself and His march to the cross.

Unknown Miracle Worker A further expression of selfishness and rivalry entered in to mar this hectic period of their training, when nerves were taut because of the dire predictions of tragedy ahead. Mark and Luke relate that John brought up a problem of leadership at this juncture. Some or all of the apostles had seen a man, unknown to them, who was casting out demons in the name of Christ. They were offended because he was not of their number and seemed to challenge their right to priority. This unknown wonder worker was not unknown to Jesus, but only to the apostles. Jesus expressed no surprise at their report. He rather corrected their attitude of exclusive prerogative. This man had evidently become a disciple of Jesus at some time unknown to them. We know that Jesus had a larger group of seventy disciples whom He later sent forth on an evangelistic campaign. Miraculous power was conferred on the seventy as upon the twelve. This man, however, must have been entirely outside the group of the seventy also, for Luke, who records the mission of the seventy, does not associate him with them.

Jealousy The apostles' growing dreams of the glory of the kingdom were not only causing them to have selfish ambitions, but they were beginning to feel the desire of officialism. Because they had now been ordained as apostles, and their future great work in the kingdom had been predicted, and because they had received the power to perform miracles, they began to feel that they had a monopoly on this power; no one else had the right to work miracles, especially one who did not follow in their company. They had forgotten that Jesus was Lord and that He could commission whom He would.

It is evident that the man was actually casting out demons and not pretending to do so, as the sons of the Pharisees did. He was doing these miracles in the name of Jesus; and, since Jesus was not surprised or angry when He heard it, the man must have received the power from Jesus. The fact that we do not know when or how confirms the fragmentary accounts of the narratives. The writers deliberately avoided endless details.

Jesus' Reply The reply of Jesus sets forth that: (1) They were not to interfere with such a man Jesus, not they, was in charge. One of the interesting unknowns about this incident is the man's reaction to their rebuke and demand that he cease his work for Christ. (2) The actual working of miracles in the name of Christ showed the fitness of the man for the work. It was seemingly against the man that he did not follow in Jesus' immediate company, but there might have been something in the man or in Christ's purpose and program that caused this. The Gadarene demoniac wanted to follow in Jesus' immediate company, but the Master did not permit him. He was sent back to his own home and people to testify for Christ. He did not have the power to work miracles, but he did not need this miraculous confirmation. He himself was a living miraculous demonstration. All he needed to do was to present himself and his testimony. He did a great work for Christ. This unknown wonder-worker was evidently doing a good work also. Our Lord pointed out that this man was doing his miracles in the name of Jesus. He could not use the name of Jesus to work miracles and then revile it quickly. He might, after the passage of sufficient time. It is not once in grace, always in grace. Look at Judas. He worked miracles when the apostles were sent out two by two; and then betrayed Christ. But this change did not take place "quickly." It took much time and deterioration. The two extremes of devotion and treason do not exist together.

False Claims

Jesus had said in the Sermon on the Mount, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:22, Matthew 7:23). It would seem that these men were making a false claim to having worked miracles, for Jesus said He had never known them. If this is only a blunt denunciation of them, then it is at least certain that their apostasy was not simultaneous with their exercise of miraculous power, else God would be granting His miraculous power to confirm falsehood. A person might work miracles and later turn against Christ, but this change would not take place "quickly"; the change would be too great and would require some time. When the declarations of Jesus in Matthew 12:30 and Mark 9:40 are placed alongside each other, they seem completely contradictory. But if the context of each statement is studied, they are seen to be completely harmonious.

“He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth” (Matthew 12:30).

“For he that is not against us is for us” (Mark 9:40). In Matthew 12:30 the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the subject of discussion. When Jesus was being charged by His enemies that He was in league with the devil, He declared that the person who attempted to be “neutral” and refused to take a stand for Him was really against Him. “The New Neutralism” should take notice. When similar blasphemous attacks are made against Christ today, “the New Neutralism” undertakes to stay out of the life and death struggle which envelops Christianity. It palavers with the enemies of Christ. It holds joint evangelistic campaigns with those who make all sorts of vicious attacks upon Christ. Some even welcome as their Christian brethren the new atheists, with their cynical slogan “God is dead.” “The New Neutralism” would conquer the “Ecumenical” world by bowing the knee to Satan in compromise. “He that is not with me is against me. The context of Mark 9:40 is entirely different. It is not a question of attacks upon Jesus, but of methods of serving Him. The two apostles did not charge that the unknown wonder-worker was attacking Christ or was united with His enemies in a joint campaign. They did not accuse him of not preaching the good news about Christ. They complained because he was working miracles in the name of Christ and did not belong to the select circle of the twelve apostles. Christ warned them that He was in charge of the entire campaign, and not they. If He chose to instruct, empower, and send forth a messenger not of the twelve apostles, “what is that to thee?” Since the question was merely one of method and the man was in no way associated with enemies of Christ, “he that is not against us is for us.”

Officialism This passage hits hard at officialism, which has been one of the curses of Christianity. Someone secures a place of power by politics or violence; an organization is formed and worshiped as the center of their entire religious life. Everyone is outlawed who does not bow to the human authority or work through the human organization. But Christ pointed out that no one person has a monopoly on Christian service. We should all seek to serve humbly and rejoice in the success of all who are true to Christ and His Word. The Little Ones

One more scene closed the Galilean ministry. It is strange how so many untoward and disagreeable things came up here at the last as His great effort in Galilee had lost its popularity and the revelations of His coming death had caused a pall of doom to come over the apostles. It is important to see that the discussion of stumbling blocks, mistreatment and forgiveness, and the parable of the unforgiving servant all follow the unseemly squabble which the disciples had carried on during their trip south. With the little child in the midst to demonstrate His grand principle of the greatness of humble service, Jesus used him still further to show the great responsibility which we have toward those whose lives are influenced by ours. Matthew 18:5 shows clearly that Jesus was speaking not merely of little children, but of little ones in the kingdom, Christians who are new in the faith. Jesus pointed out that this is a world full of temptation and sin; it is a testing ground for character. Occasions of stumbling inevitably arise, but the strong responsibility of guilt is not removed.

Stumbling Blocks

Jesus spoke first of the people who cause others to stumble by giving them an evil example. The introduction of “these little ones” in Matthew 18:10 naturally reflects the presence of the little child

in the place of honor by His side and causes us to think in Matthew 18:7 of parents who lead their children to doom by their own wicked conduct or by their neglect of the children in the all-important formative years of life. From the people who cause the stumbling Jesus turns in Matthew 18:8 and Matthew 18:9 to the things in an individual's life which lure him to destruction — the world, the flesh, and the devil. The greed for worldly treasure and the concentrated interest on mundane affairs may shut out God. Thus the inherent wickedness of a deed or its comparative natural or spiritual value may cause a man to turn away from God. The most precious earthly things, such as a hand, a foot, or an eye though they seem indispensible, are nothing when compared to eternal life.

Warnings of Hell

Gehenna with its unquenchable fire yawns for those who despise their heavenly birthright. Worm dieth not is a figure drawn from Gehenna or the Valley of Hinnom — a deep crevice in the mountain just south of Jerusalem where the pagan inhabitants of the country had originally burned their own children alive in sacrifice to Moloch, or Baal. It thus was an abomination to the Jews, who cast here the offal from the city. The fires were continually burning in the Valley of Hinnom to consume the trash and waste material. Worms continually infested the garbage and refuse. The phrase their worm dieth not appears to be a quotation from Isaiah 66:24, where the figure is the same — worms feeding on the dead carcasses of men. Such a fate is so terrible that Jesus said, "It were better for him if a great millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea" than that he should "cause one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble" (Mark 9:42). This is "a great millstone"; the Greek is literally "a millstone turned by an ass." There were small handmills turned by two women, but this is a very large millstone turned by an animal. The lower millstone was immovable. The upper millstone is the one to which Jesus refers. This picture of a person's being thrown into the sea with such a great millstone fastened about his neck is one of the dramatic extremes which Jesus frequently used. Welded into these discussions where Jesus showed such infinite patience and tender concern there are these fearful warnings of hell.

Salted with Fire

"For every one shall be salted with fire" (Mark 9:49). This is the most difficult statement in this section. The interpretations of the statement vary according to whether "fire" is held to be a symbol of punishment or purification. Salt is for preservation and is so used in the following sentences. Fire, however, is repeatedly used in the preceding context to mean punishment. It is hard to tell whether the preceding or the succeeding context furnishes the key. McGarvey holds that it meant that everyone who refuses to repent and cut off the hand or foot and pluck out the eye by surrendering worldly things, shall he punished in hell-fire, where they will be preserved "salted" in the midst of the punishment so that it is unending. The following interpretation is offered:

I. Fire = eternal punishment for the wicked; Mark 9:43, Mark 9:45, Mark 9:48.

A. Salt for everyone; Mark 9:49 B. Fire for everyone; Mark 9:49 II. Salt = preserving qualities for the good; Mark 9:50. The saying is enclosed in a context which uses fire unmistakably of punishment and salt of preservation. Mark 9:49 uses both words with a twofold meaning. "Every one shall be salted with fire" either (A) here or (B) hereafter. (A) Here everyone is preserved from destruction (salted) by the suffering (fire) which sin entails and which leads a man to repent and

cut off his hand, etc, (B) Hereafter, if he refuses to repent and yield to the salting by fire in this world, he will be in eternity salted (preserved) in the midst of hell (fire) that his punishment may be forever.

McGarvey holds that every one must be limited in meaning and applied only to those indicated in the preceding context as refusing to sacrifice worldliness. But the above interpretation accepts every one in the complete sense. Everyone shall be salted with fire; some, here; and some hereafter. Punishment necessarily follows sin in everyone's life. But if a person takes the right attitude toward his suffering, he will come to repentance and preserve his soul; if not, punishment will he eternal. Salt is good to season and preserve. There are certain virtues which make our lives palatable and a preserving force in the world. But if the Christian virtues are distorted and despised by us, then we have no other source than Christ from whom to draw virtue, and we become insipid and worthless. Gould says, "In other words, who can perfume the rose? what can salt salt? Spice spice? or restore grace where it is lost? So, if loss loses its power to chasten, what will chasten loss?" (p. 181).

Fidelity The disciples were admonished to have salt in themselves (Mark 9:50). This can be done: (1) by adopting and maintaining a Christian attitude toward suffering; i.e., keeping a humble, contrite heart, ready to examine one's own self and admit the faults of one's own character; (2) by avoiding the things that cause others to fall and which make one a stumbling block to others; (3) by maintaining a loving, forgiving spirit toward one another ("be at peace with one another"). This harks back to their recent quarrel for the chief places. The warning to have salt in themselves sums up the urgent need for the Christian to keep his heart turned toward God. "Taste in the man himself is necessary to the savor of salt; feeling, to the heat of fire; faith, to the grace of God." These elements are actual and real; but, to appreciate them or be influenced by them, man must have the ability to respond. The command recorded in Matthew 18:10, "See that ye despise not one of these little ones," should be given the wider application which Mark 9:42 affords: "...these little ones that believe on me." Those young in the faith and subject to powerful temptation to drift back into the world are included with little children. The word despise does not mean to regard with hatred, but with contempt, to overlook their importance, scorn their possibilities and our responsibilities, to be unwilling to sacrifice from our lives what might cause them to stumble.

Guardian Angels

"In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 18:10). Hebrews 1:14 declares that the angels are "ministering spirits sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation." Jesus here declares that "these little ones" have angels which are especially commissioned to aid them. These angels have access to the presence of God Himself. If God has such tender care for these little ones, how dare we despise them and consider them of no importance? This passage, together with Acts 12:15, is the basis for the proposition that each Christian has "a guardian angel." The Lost Sheep The parable of the shepherd seeking his lone, lost sheep, while the others are left safe in the fold, is a favorite illustration in the teaching of Jesus. In Luke 15:1-32 and John 10:1-42, we find Jesus returning to this comparison. The case of the little ones betrayed and then saved, suggests this touching illustration here. The shepherd seeks, saves, rejoices over an insignificant sheep that has been lost. How much more an immortal soul? The possibility of failure is suggested, "And if so be that

he find it." The stubborn will of perverse man may thwart God by man's refusal to give heed to God.

Reconciliation A discussion of mistreatment and forgiveness follows naturally upon this warning against being a stumbling block to others; a good shepherd is to go out in search of even one lost sheep. From admonition to watch over the little ones and to avoid giving offense, Jesus now turns to discuss how one should act when a brother mistreats him. In Matthew 5:23, Matthew 5:24 the person who has sinned against his brother is commanded to go, make reparation, and seek reconciliation. Here the person who has been wronged is also commanded to go and seek reconciliation. His purpose is to save his brother from the sin into which he has fallen. He is to go alone and seek the most favorable time, place, and manner to achieve reconciliation. It may take time for such an occasion to be found. It may he that for a time all the person who has been wronged can do is to pray for the one who has mistreated him.

Critical Issues The most important thing to see is that the matters which are handled thus are things of critical importance, where the reputation and life of the church are at stake. For petty things there is not urged the process of turning a molehill into a mountain by making a great discussion out of a little matter. A person should always reflect carefully whether a subject is of sufficient importance to justify unfortunate by-products which always come forth from controversy. Small offenses are better brushed aside, overlooked, forgiven, and forgotten, without forcing a showdown.

Withdrawing Fellowship The disciple is commanded to go in private to his fellow disciple who has wronged him, because it is always best to settle difficulties in private, if possible. There is also a better chance of success where humiliation is reduced by kindness. But if the person denies having done the wrong, and if there are no witnesses, and it is just one person's word against another's, then an impasse is reached which may offer superlative difficulty. The second effort is to try again for reconciliation — this time, with witnesses present. These seem to be witnesses of the wrongdoing who can prove the person is guilty as charged. But some hold that these witnesses are merely present to hear the conversation and to aid in the reconciliation. Perhaps Jesus left the statement general to suit the varied circumstances which would arise. In the last resort the whole church is assembled to hear the charge, the proof, and the history of negotiations. In the case of a defiant and godless sinner, the church is to withdraw fellowship. "As the Gentile and the publican" would mean that no mistreatment would he given, but the fellowship of the church would no longer be granted. The Gentiles and publicans are constant objects of evangelization. Even as this entire procedure has as its objective the winning of the man to repentance and the saving of his soul, so even after he has flaunted the church, they should still pray for him and seek his salvation.

John suggests that there is a limit in this obligation to pray, and in certain extreme cases he does not urge prayer: "There is a sin unto death: not concerning this do I say that he should make request" (1 John 5:16). John does not forbid such prayer, for this would require us to have power of discernment between a sin unto death and one not unto death. He merely does not urge it as a Christian duty toward those set for the destruction of the gospel. In this procedure which Jesus outlines there is the necessary implication that the sin is so flagrant and deadly it threatens the life of the church. The Church

Twice in this discussion Jesus used the word church. Yet it was not established until later. It is important to see that the Greek here has a series of vivid future conditions looking forward to the time when the church would be established. Thus in Matthew 16:18, Matthew 16:19 He had referred to the future establishment of the church. Plummer insists that it refers to the synagogue in these instructions of reconciliation. But the Greek words for church and synagogue are absolutely different. Jesus never tried to lay down any regulations for the synagogue. It was a Jewish institution which had arisen in the period between the Old and New Testament. Jesus established the church. The future conditions in the Greek here show it looks forward to the time when the church would be established. The disciples only understood vaguely what the church would be like, but they would treasure these instructions and would be guided by the Holy Spirit in their application.

Binding and Loosing To all the apostles the promise is now repeated which Jesus had given to Peter at Caesarea Philippi, concerning binding and loosing sins upon those who heard him proclaim God's plan for man's redemption, according as they accepted or rejected God's offer. Binding refers to the sins of the man who defiantly refuses to repent and give up his wicked conduct which threatens the life of the church. He is excluded from the church fellowship with his sins bound on him. But the door is still open for him to repent and seek forgiveness. Loosing refers to the forgiveness of the wrong as the two are reconciled.

Prayer

God in heaven heeds the offender's penitence and plea for forgiveness from his fellow Christians; God seals the reconciliation and forgives the man for his sin. The decision of the church will be upheld in heaven if it is carried out in accordance with the instructions of Christ and the will of God. This same limitation of "being in harmony with the will of God" applies to the prayers offered by two or three gathered together in the name of Christ (Matthew 18:19). The repeated promise that God will grant our prayers always has the limitation of their being in harmony with His will, both by reason of the example of Jesus' prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane and the repeated instruction on the subject of prayer. All that the Scripture says on a subject must be taken together in order to get a complete understanding. We must pray in the right way (Matthew 6:13, Matthew 6:15; James 1:6, James 1:7; James 4:3) and in accordance with the will of God (Matthew 26:30; 1 John 5:14).

Church Discipline

While this teaching on church discipline arose out of discussion of intimate, personal responsibility to set a good example to all about us, to be filled with loving concern, and to show a spirit of forgiveness to others, it contains some deeply set and far-reaching principles concerning the nature and purpose of the church. Because it requires staunch faith and high moral courage, and because it is hard to decide where to begin and where to end in carrying out its provisions, this teaching on church discipline is extremely difficult. Most churches do not even make an attempt to carry out the instructions of Jesus. As in many homes, so in many congregations there is no discipline. Following the course of least resistance to seek ease and comfort proves to be the broad highway of decline of religion and morals.

Unity This teaching on church discipline seems to be negative, since it ends with detailed instructions of procedure in withdrawing fellowship from a member who has departed from the faith and rebelled against the church. Actually the teaching is positive because it ends with unity between Christ and the church steadfastly maintained. This is the issue of supreme import. For Christians to be living in peace and good fellowship with one another is devoutly to be desired and sought. But if the unity between the church and Christ is lost, then all is lost. The church is no longer a church; it is merely a political organization or a social club.

World Evangelization The primary purpose of the church is not the edification of the members. It is not primarily a refuge into which the Christian retreats from the world to maintain his faith and noble moral ideals. Extremely hostile circumstances may at times force the church into such a defensive stance, but such is not the primary purpose of this divine organism. The church is a powerful fortress from which the Christian goes forth to conquer the world for Christ. For the church to allow itself to he forced into a defensive position is to expend all its energies in supplying the fuel and oil to keep the wheels running. This is the sort of idea which breeds institutionalism and erects vast, luxurious church buildings that are empty shells because the flaming zeal of world evangelization has departed. It is true that Acts 2:42 can be cited with its four powerful elements, all of them directed toward building up and sustaining the Christians in their faith and noble living: “Continuing steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.” But over these opening chapters of Acts, and in fact all the rest of the New Testament, there towers the great commission: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15). The unity of Christians with one another is essential to world evangelism, but this unity must not be secured by betraying and abandoning Christ. Unity in Christ is the elemental feature of this teaching on church discipline. The Smallest Church

There is something deeply touching about the close of this teaching concerning church discipline, as Jesus pictures two or three gathered together in His name. It is as if Jesus were repeating His searching question to the apostles, “Would ye also go away?” (John 6:67). Straining for partial conversion of great numbers, the church is brought back to the scene where two or three faithful Christians meeting in the name of Jesus have the assurance of His presence. What a rebuke this is to false emphasis on numbers! Fidelity to Christ is succinctly stated — “in my name.” It is folly for many or few to gather together and expect help from Christ when they are dishonoring and disobeying Him. Unity among men is always second to loyalty to Christ.

Forgiveness

Peter’s question as to how many times he was obligated to forgive his brother shows the close connection of these scenes which appear to follow in quick succession. The quarrel had just been settled, but it left troublesome questions in Peter’s mind. Jesus had spoken in glowing terms at Caesarea Philippi of the part Peter would have as gatekeeper in the setting up of the church or kingdom. Why should Peter have to endure such arguments among the group as to who is greatest in the kingdom? The answer with its powerful emphasis upon humility had not completely erased from Peter’s mind his aggravation at the ambitious attitude of others about him. How many times is this to be repeated and he be required to forgive? Jewish tradition taught the duty of forgiving three times. Peter was being generous when he suggested seven times. The limitless stretch of seventy times seven was breath-taking. Plummer suggests that the seventy times seven

may hark back to Lamech's song in Genesis 4:24; the natural man's craving sevenfold revenge versus the divine command of seventy times seven or unlimited forgiveness.

Sums of money mentioned in the Bible are difficult to render properly because of the change in the purchasing power of money, which was vastly greater then. Those who have seen the dollar shrink beyond recognition in the half century since the beginning of the First World War should have a keen understanding of this.

Moreover, a talent differed as to whether it was gold or silver. Some figure the two sums as $10,000,000 and $17. Others figure the amount as larger, but in the same ratio. McGarvey says $16,000,000 and $16; Allen figures $12,000,000 and $20. The parable presents the sort of dramatic extremes which Jesus used so frequently in His teaching. The parable pictures the customs of the time when the man was ordered sold into slavery, together with all the members of his family, and the confiscation of his property was made to secure as much payment of the debt as possible. Imprisonment for bad debts was a custom until the last century. Henry Clay was the author of the bankrupt law in the United States. The Contrast The elemental contrast of the parable is between the enormous sum which the servant owed his lord and the insignificant amount which was owed to this servant by his fellow servant. Such is the contrast between our debt of sins against God and the debt of sins against us from our fellows. The one debt is beyond calculation and hopeless of payment. Yet God in His mercy through Christ forgives us freely. When we turn in jealous rage against those who sin against us and refuse to forgive them, we close the door of heaven against ourselves. The detail of the fellow servants coming to tell the lord what had been done by the unforgiving servant is simply part of the scenery of the parable. It is not to be taken to represent a spiritual reality. God does not need to be informed thus by man. In Matthew 18:26 the Greek verb proskuneo is used. This is the only time in the Gospel narratives that it can be shown to refer to obeisance offered to man rather than worship to God. But this may be the very point of its use here — either the emphasis that the king represents God in the parable or the suggestion that the hypocritical servant is offering to the king the divine worship he should keep for God.

It is noteworthy that when the king gives the final judgment against the unforgiving servant who had been forgiven an impossible debt, he alone is sentenced. The wife and children are not included. Of course, if the money was obtained from the king fraudulently, the wife and the children might have been the very inciting factors which had urged him on to fraud and luxury. All this part of the scene is stripped from the parable at the close, and the man alone is sentenced. The final admonition of Jesus, "ye forgive every one his brother from your hearts," underscores the fact that forgiveness must include an earnest effort to forget and to seek restoration of former friendly relations. The contrast between the desire for revenge which the world perpetuates and this humble forgiving from the heart is as great as the difference between the ideal of greatness which the world begets and the way of humble service which Jesus taught and lived.

086. Chapter 27 - Journey to Jerusalem

Chapter 27 - Journey to Jerusalem John 7:2-10;Luke 9:51-56 John’s Narrative A very clear demonstration of the fact that the Gospel narratives are presenting selected scenes from the life of Christ is given in the Gospel of John as the sixth chapter tells of the feeding of the five thousand in April just before the Passover, and the seventh chapter opens with the Feast of Tabernacles close at hand in September. The debate with the Zealots in Capernaum had taken place the day after the feeding of the five thousand, and nothing of the exciting closing days of the ministry in Galilee is recorded by John. John simply summarizes the intervening months with the declaration they were spent in a ministry in Galilee because of the violent attempts at the capital to kill Him. John wrote a third of a century after the Synoptics were written. He was familiar with their contents. He deliberately avoided repeating a great amount of the material they contained, and recorded new incidents and sermons which they had not given. The independence of the narratives is most remarkable. The Two-source Theory and Form Criticism theorists close their eyes to these proofs of the independence of the narratives. The Unbelieving Brethren The brethren in John 7:3 are clearly distinguished from the disciples in this passage, as in John 2:12. The “brethren” are the sons of Joseph and Mary and half brothers of Jesus. Their names are given as James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas; the sisters are not named (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3; Matthew 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21). The theories that these were the children of Joseph by a former marriage, or children of a sister of Mary, were invented at a later date to protect the worship of the virgin Mary as a perpetual virgin. The earlier Christian writers set forth the natural conclusion that these were the children of Joseph and Mary.

These brethren are unbelieving and show sarcastic contempt for the claims of Jesus. They remind Him of all His disciples in Jerusalem and Judaea and the need for them to receive further confirmation by beholding His mighty works. The doubt suggested in If thou doest these things, manifest thyself to the world must have cut hard. If He really is the Christ, He should be spending His time and energy in the capital demonstrating His claim. In order that the reader will not misunderstand their jibe, John says simply, “For even his brethren did not believe on him.” That word even underscores the breaking heart of Jesus. But He shows neither anger nor impatience with them. He answers quite calmly; He will permit no dictation from them; He will pursue the course God is directing.

Ground of Their Attack The brethren of Jesus charged Him with acting secretly during His recent ministry for the following reasons: (1) Most of His ministry had been carried on in the provinces, instead of the capital; and in the homes of the poor, instead of the rich and powerful. The Jewish messiah, showing the pomp and circumstance expected of Him, should not proceed in such humble fashion. (2) Since the feeding of the five thousand Jesus had been largely in seclusion in a foreign country or in isolated sections away from the populous center of Galilee.(3) He had failed to go up to the last feast of the Passover. Not merely the disciples He had won in Judaea, but disciples from all quarters would be expecting Him at this Feast of Tabernacles. (4) He had repeatedly retreated after heated controversies with the national leaders who had been sent into

Galilee to attack Him. (5) He had refused to become king of the people who sought a political Christ. The reasons back of the unbelief of His brethren are not plain — whether they attempted to dispute the validity of the miracles they saw (“If thou doest these things”) or whether they did not believe Him to be the Christ in spite of His miracles because of His refusal to be king and because of His mysteriously humble program. Jesus had hinted before this to His apostles of the jealousy which so often prevents a prophet from receiving honor “among his own kin and in his own house” (Matthew 13:57; Mark 6:4; Luke 4:24; John 4:44). After His resurrection Jesus appeared to James (1 Corinthians 15:7), and lie became one of the great leaders of the Jerusalem church.

Jesus’ Reply The answer of Jesus to the sneer of His unbelieving brethren showed infinite patience and a careful determination to prevent them from assuming any sort of control of His campaign. His answer was couched in such obscure language that they could not be sure of His meaning and could not go about announcing His plans. To be able to announce that He was or was not going up to the Feast of Tabernacles and any other information they might glean from their exchange with Him would have been the very sort of thing they would have desired. Jesus was also careful to see that the management of His affairs did not pass out of His hands into those of His immediate followers. Thus He had forbidden the apostles to tell of the private conversation in which Peter had made the good confession, and He had ordered the three apostles not to report the transfiguration scene until after the resurrection. God Himself in giving the Old Testament revelation had so inspired the prophets that their Messianic predictions were veiled, and thus Jesus was left free to reveal Himself.

“My time is not yet come; but your time is always ready.” This answer must have been puzzling to them. Did He mean the time of setting up His kingdom? Was He thus replying to their general criticism of His program of hiding in the provinces instead of launching His campaign in the capital? or was this a specific answer to their urgent demand that He go up to this Feast of Tabernacles? Was His answer general or specific? They would not be able to tell. The second part of the sentence seems to indicate that He was talking about the feast. They could leave at any time they would. He had definite plans which He would not divulge. He explained in the next sentence one of the differences between their situation and His. They did not face any plots of assassination. Since it was not the Father’s will that He should die yet, the time was not yet opportune for Him to go up to the capital. This is not stated clearly, but it is implied: “The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that its works are evil.” Jesus does not condemn them for not carrying on a campaign against the devil. He does not intimate that they are particularly worldly or sinful. He simply states the facts of their silence and that the devil therefore does not find it necessary to concentrate against them. They were not equipped for such work as He had been doing. The Difference in the Text

“Go ye up unto the feast; I go not unto this feast; because my time is not yet fulfilled.” The a.v. has, “I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come.” The reading of the Authorized Version offers no difficulty because of the word yet. The manuscript difference shows strong support for the reading yet: p 66. 75 B L T W X D Q, cursives and versions. This word oupo is omitted by) D K P, cursives and versions. It would seem that the rule of textual critics to select the more difficult of two variants exercised strong influence here. It would have been a great temptation to a copyist to smooth out the passage for the readers by adding the word yet. Moreover, the unbelieving brethren could have seized this as assurance that He was coming up

later to the feast. But they could not be sure. The fact that the word yet is beyond any textual dispute in the latter part of the sentence reduces the importance of the reading in the first part of the sentence.

Jesus did not go up to keep the feast in obedience to the law of Moses which required full attendance through the entire week. He went up to proclaim the new revelation in obedience to the direct guidance of God. He arrived when the feast was at its height, not for the purpose of keeping the feast, but of revealing the gospel. His answer was obscure so they could not tell whether He meant His time for departing for this feast was not yet come or his time for final combat with the national leaders who sought His death. The two propositions are strangely intertwined in the actual circumstances as well as in His obscure declarations. It is plain that Jesus is saying it is the Father's will that He does not go now. The companies of pilgrims were already starting at the usual time and following the usual route across the Jordan just south of the Sea of Galilee and down the eastern side of the Jordan to the Damieh Ferry and thence to Jericho. The reason for this roundabout journey was to avoid going through Samaria. If we knew all the plots that may have surrounded this pilgrimage, we would probably have a much better understanding of the procedure of Jesus. By this answer Jesus kept His unbelieving brethren from dictating or announcing His course. He kept the multitudes in suspense, prevented excess of excitement over His approach to the capital, and destroyed any deliberate plans to force Him to declare Himself the Christ. Further than this He secured quiet and seclusion for continued instruction of the twelve.

Route of Travel

John informs us that Jesus waited until the pilgrims had left for the capital and then "went he also up, not publicly, but as it were in secret." John does not tell us how Jesus managed to make such a late start, take a private route, and yet arrive before the feast was over. To follow byways instead of highways would consume a great amount of time. When Jesus merely wanted seclusion for instruction of His disciples, the time consumed in a circuitous route was not a matter of importance.

Luke gives us the information as to how Jesus managed to start so late, travel secretly, and yet arrive before the feast was over (Luke 9:55, Luke 9:56). It is not possible to be sure of the identification of the journey described by Luke, but it fits so perfectly with the details there is reasonable assurance. Luke seems to indicate three separate journeys to Jerusalem in Luke 9:51; Luke 13:22; and Luke 17:11. By leaving in the night from Galilee, Jesus could have evaded those watching His movements. A swift journey down the backbone of the mountain range through Samaria would have enabled him to make up for the lost time of His long delay in Galilee while all the caravans of pilgrims departed by the usual route.

Crossing the Valley of Jezreel or the Plain of Esdraelon, according to a direct route south or a swing to the west, the party inevitably would have started down the crest of the mountain range from Mount Gerizim. This would have made possible an overnight stay at Sychar with the disciples He had won two years before. How fascinating to reflect on the possibility of further instruction given to the Samaritan woman and the other believers at Sychar! But the fact that His urgent purpose now was not preaching to any Samaritans, but to the vast throngs in the capital for the feast, probably led them on a forced march right through Samaria, avoiding any contacts that would mean delay. In Samaria it would not be necessary for Him to follow any side trails to avoid

publicity. He could keep on the main highway. On His journey through Samaria two years before He seems to have been making a forced march out of the plots that encompassed Him in Jerusalem (John 4:1-4). One more time we shall find Jesus in Samaria or on the borders (Luke 17:11-19).

Farewell to Galilee

Luke says, “And it came to pass, when the days were well-nigh come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51). Received up means the ascension (“stedfastly set his face” plainly shows this). The time for the final tragedy of His death is approaching. Luke does not say that this is the final journey to the capital. In fact, the events narrated afterward show conclusively that Luke is merely stating the general approach of the end of His ministry and the increase in the tension by reason of the plots against His life. It seems to be Luke’s manner of saying that Jesus is now saying farewell to Galilee. His long, prodigious ministry there is now ended. With what sorrow and tender emotions Jesus must have left Capernaum, the Sea of Galilee, the mountains, the deserts, the teeming cities.

Rejection in Samaria

We gain insight into the kind of work the apostles were continually doing for the campaign; two of them had been sent on ahead to arrange for lodging overnight in a Samaritan village. If James and John were the ones sent, this explains their explosive anger at the rejection of Jesus. This arrangement may have been particularly necessary because it was in hostile Samaria. He would not expect to find disciples here, except in Sychar. The village inn would be the natural place to seek shelter. Both spring and fall have a way of varying by some weeks. If an early, cold fall rain had now drenched them, we can understand with more sympathy the fierce anger of James and John against this Samaritan village which would not even give them shelter for the night (cf. “Preaching in the Rainy Season,” pp. 57-58). The apostles seemed to have had no difficulty in purchasing food supplies in a Samaritan village on their former trip through Samaria, as both Jews and Samaritans met continually in the field of commerce, but not in social or religious fellowship. Luke specifies that the reason for the churlish attitude of the Samaritans on this occasion was “because his face was as though he were going to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:53). Had the difference been before that they were coming out of Judaea or that there was no feast in progress at that time? Evidently the Samaritans resented their country being used as a highway to the feasts. The Sons of Thunder

We do not know whether James and John, as they sought to find shelter for the party for the night, made known the identity of Jesus. The rejection was not so much of Christ, but of Jews going up to Jerusalem at the time of a feast. When Jesus had first called James and John to be disciples, He named them Boanerges, “Sons of thunder” (Mark 3:17). Here was an illustration of both thunder and lightning in their angry protest and proposal that Jesus destroy the village. Given the miraculous power and divine consent, they were quite ready to be the direct instruments of such dreadful retribution; “we bid fire.” Does their proposal that the entire village be wiped out show that they had canvassed not merely the village inn, but every house in it seeking some generous soul who would take them in for the night?

“As Elijah Did”

There is an interesting manuscript variation seen in the a.v. ; “Lord wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elijah did?” (Luke 9:54). The reference is to 2 Kings 1:10-16, where Elijah was saved from death by calling down fire from heaven to destroy two detachments of a captain and fifty soldiers sent by King Ahaziah to execute him. The manuscript evidence for inclusion of even as Elijah did is A C D X, and minuscules. The manuscripts that omit these words are) B L C, and others. Some hold that these words were omitted because some Gnostics had used them to disparage the Old Testament. The evidence is stronger for the rebuke of Jesus which is found in the a.v. : “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them” (Luke 9:55).

Facing this manuscript variation, we cannot affirm absolutely that James and John cited Elijah as an example, but it is a secure conclusion that they had Elijah’s bold action in mind. They proposed to do precisely what Elijah had done if they were given the consent and the miraculous help of Jesus. They had just seen Elijah a few weeks before. They had been in his presence and had heard his conversation with Moses and Jesus about His approaching death. True, there undoubtedly must have been a contrast between what they heard Elijah say on the Mount of Transfiguration and what Elijah had done seated on a hilltop in Galilee, as the successive detachments of wicked king Ahaziah’s army ascended to destroy Elijah. The prophet had acted under direct instructions from God in calling down fire to destroy them; God was not willing that His prophet should be killed at this critical juncture.

Protest against Jesus’ Program

It is not possible to comprehend the proposal of James and John without consideration of the background of circumstances. They were not only protesting against the churlish inhospitality of the Samaritan village; they were crying out against the program of Jesus. They were repeating Peter’s agonized protest, “Lord, this shall never be unto thee.” Verily Christ had no place to lay His head, not even amid the exhaustion of a long, hard day’s journey. He had declared His intention of going up to the capital and permitting Himself to be “delivered up” to be tortured and killed. It was all part and parcel of the same incredible program of the Messiah sacrificing Himself for man. Remembering the stern rebuke that Jesus had given Peter when He called him “Satan,” James and John did not dare make a direct protest against Jesus’ course. But they could make a bold proposal in regard to the Samaritan village which would assail Jesus’ program indirectly. Had not David predicted, “The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Till I put thine enemies underneath thy feet”? Why not begin now in Samaria to trample down those who were despising and defying God and go on in triumph to complete the destruction of God’s enemies in the capital?

While James and John may not have gone so far as to discuss this protest as they came striding in wrath back to the group, it seems to have been in the background of their subconscious mind. Even if their proposal represented only the sudden, incoherent explosion of thought, regretted as soon as spoken, yet the chain of circumstances must have lurked in their thinking.

Jesus’ Rebuke

Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of suggests that man is not qualified to be the eternal judge. Only God has the infinite wisdom, righteousness, justice, and mercy. “The Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives” at this first coming. He had come to provide redemption from sin

and approach to God for all who would hear and obey the gospel. But James and John had heard Jesus tell of the Son of man coming with His angels to bring the wicked into judgment, and “shall cast them into the furnace of fire” (Matthew 13:40-42). Their proposition is, “Why not now?” They do not comprehend God’s plan for saving a lost world.

There is no criticism of Elijah’s action. He had acted on the direct instructions of God. Jesus Himself at the triumphal entry, as He wept over the city, revealed its doom at the hands of the Romans — an unparalleled holocaust which would be the result of the rejection of the Lord’s Messiah: “If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace” (Luke 19:42). On the great day of questions Jesus gave His enemies final, solemn warning: “Till I put thine enemies underneath thy feet” (Matthew 22:44). The apostle John, the son of thunder, finally received the revelation from God of the voice of seven thunders predicting fire from heaven on the wicked, but the time was not yet. Man is always impatient at the amazing mercy of God. But judgment will finally come upon the wicked, and God will triumph.

“They went to another village.” Whether it was in Samaria or Judaea we do not know. It is thirty-five miles from Sychar to Jerusalem. The first-century borders of Samaria, as given by Josephus, are uncertain. Luke’s account seems to imply that wild weather or inhospitable terrain prevented them from following an ordinary course, such as sleeping on the ground by the wayside. We are not told how far into the night they had to travel before they found a refuge in some other village.

087. Chapter 28 - At the Feast of Tabernacles

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John 7:11-52 The Excited Capital The failure of Jesus to attend the preceding Passover and His absence at the Feast of Tabernacles during the opening days caused excited discussion among the multitudes, which were on fire with expectation. They did not discuss the situation openly for fear that the leaders seeking to kill Jesus would turn on them. But the undercurrent was so strong it could not be silenced. This was the same sort of situation which prevailed preceding the final Passover (John 11:56, John 11:57). The discussion now seems not to have been whether He was the Christ, but whether He was a good man. Those who sided with the Pharisees and Sadducees argued that He could not be called a good man because He led the people astray (from the teaching of the scribes and their traditions). The King Comes

Suddenly in the midst of the feast Jesus appeared in the temple and taught the multitudes. The majesty and profound character of His teaching caused a wave of discussion to arise as to the source of His learning. To those who believed, it was plain that His miraculous power was from God. His enemies had charged that His mysterious power over demons was from the devil. They would like to have claimed that His learning was from men. But they could not. They knew that He had never studied in the University of Jerusalem. They could readily ascertain whether He had ever attended the synagogue at Nazareth to receive instruction from the scribe there. John uses the term the Jews to mean the hostile Jews. The fact that they found themselves forced to face this issue is significant: “How knoweth this man letters, never having learned” (John 7:15). This indicates clearly that Jesus had never attended school in His youth to secure instruction from men. When someone shows marked ability in intellectual leadership today, the first question asked is, “Where did he go to college?” And he will be found extolling the praises of some learned professors under whom he has studied and to whom he is indebted. How ridiculous it would have been for Jesus to have said, “You should not be surprised at my learning. I had a very able scribe teach me in the synagogue at Nazareth.” Yet this is the concept which is constantly being spread abroad today. See how contradictory it is to the answer Jesus actually gave: “My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me.” Not from men, but from God is His answer. From God The decision as to whether the teaching of Christ was from men or from God is not hard for those who are willing to hear and to see. Only those who close their hearts find it too difficult: “If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself.” “The will to believe,” the earnest desire of the person to obey God, puts the mind in a receptive state to be illumined. Being willing to obey God, the Christian becomes more godlike and hence understands better the teachings of Christ, which are God-given. It is thus that a Christian grows “in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). For the Glory of God

Jesus pointed out that the one who speaks on his own authority things which he claims to have originated is seeking his own glory. The fact that Jesus continually sought the glory of God, who is true, proves that Jesus is true (John 7:18). Sadler applies this to the Bible and the way in which the

writers refuse to glorify themselves: “To understand this teaching we have only to apply it to the Bible in general: in this book man is constantly humbled; therefore this book is from God. It is the argument which of all others most directly reaches the conscience” (Com. on John, p. 191).

Jesus now brought out into the open the covert attack that He was a breaker of the law of Moses. This is a continuation of the controversy that followed His healing of the lame man at the pool of Bethsaida during His former visit to the capital. He pointed out the hypocrisy of their charge of lawbreaking against Him, while they were guilty of breaking the elemental law against murder by their plots to kill Him. The reasons for bringing their plots to kill Him out into the open are: (1) to warn His disciples how near His death was; (2) to warn His enemies and try to save them from their terrible purpose; (3) to let all men know that He knew of their plots so that men would be able to understand the gospel; the Jews did not thwart God by killing Jesus, but “him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay” (Acts 2:23). The Jewish leaders followed their own traditions rather than the law of God and sought their own glory rather than God’s; their plots to kill Jesus furnished ready proof. The Debate

“The multitude answered, Thou hast a demon: who seeketh to kill thee” (John 7:20). John records that this rejoinder was from the multitude rather than the scribes. But the hypocritical leaders may have incited those who led in this rebuttal. Many in the crowd who had come from a distance might have been in the dark as to what the situation was really like. This statement is noteworthy in light of the attack that John’s Gospel contradicts the Synoptics in that John says nothing about demon possession. But here is a charge that Jesus was demon possessed. This is similar to the Pharisees’ charge that Jesus was in league with the devil. In His reply Jesus brought up the evidence of the miracle worked in their midst when He had healed the lame man (John 5:1-47). Eighteen months had elapsed since Jesus had worked this miracle, but it still filled the people with awe. His miracles at the capital had been few compared with the many in Galilee, but the reports of prodigious miracles in Galilee would have kept fresh in their midst the healing of the lame man in Jerusalem. Jesus now advanced a further defense of His having healed the man on the sabbath. He cited the collision between the law of circumcising a male child on the eighth day and the law not to work on the sabbath. He showed that they carried out the law of circumcision on the sabbath and yet objected to His healing on the sabbath. They held that the command for circumcision was more important than the law to keep the sabbath. Jesus responded that the law of mercy by which He had healed the man on the sabbath was more important than the law not to work on the sabbath.

“Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24). “Do not judge me by mere hearsay that I broke the sabbath by healing a man on that day, but judge righteous judgment. Take into consideration that it was not for my selfish advantage, but to relieve human suffering and bring faith to men’s hearts as they hear the gospel that they may be saved.” By the example of the scribes themselves one law supersedes another. The law of mercy is above the law of rest on the sabbath day. The Uncertain Multitude

John distinguishes between “the multitude” in John 7:20 and “them of Jerusalem” in John 7:25. The former refers to Jews from all over the nation and the world, many of whom may not have been informed as to the tense situation at the capital. The latter refers to permanent residents of

the city who understood the situation, but who differed in their estimate of Jesus. Some of these residents were inclined to take a favorable attitude toward Jesus, but were still puzzled over the final question as to whether He was the Christ. It is clear from their remarks that the chief priests and the leading Pharisees of the Sanhedrin had not accepted the challenge of Jesus' sudden appearance in the temple and had not come forth to confront Him. They evidently were following the same method they had used in the provinces of sending out skilled subordinates to carry on the public struggle, the heckling, the whispering, the inciting of the crowds. Men placed at key points in the crowd could have suggested such a hostile comment as "thou hast a demon" and have had some others willing to repeat the charge (John 7:20).

"Is not this he whom they seek to kill? And lo, he speaketh openly, and they say nothing unto him. Can it be that the rulers indeed know that this is the Christ?" The rulers refers to the famous national leaders, but John shows, before this chapter is complete, that the Sanhedrin was not unanimous in its opposition to Jesus. "Some of them of Jerusalem" were amazed that the leaders who had threatened so much, did nothing now. And Jesus had not come with an army or even any considerable group of supporters. A Supernatural Messiah

These people were not themselves convinced that Jesus was the Christ: "Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when the Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is" (John 7:27). This seems to refer to the glorious prediction of Daniel 7:13 (Matthew 26:64) that the Messiah would be a supernatural Messiah coming on the clouds of heaven. This raises again the interesting problem as to how far the Jews of the first century understood the predictions of the Old Testament that the Messiah would be divine. The issue is what conception of a supernatural Messiah would be held among thoughtful Jews after more than two years of self-revelation of His divine Person and repeated charges of blasphemy against Him for claiming to be God.

If they were basing their assertion on such passages as this from Daniel, it is hard to see how they could have reconciled this prediction with the very plain declaration of Micah 5:2 that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem. The Pharisees used Micah 5:2 against Nicodemus in the Sanhedrin debate at the close of this chapter. But their argument was purely on the assumption that Jesus was from Nazareth. Were they also using Micah 5:2 against these whisperings among the multitude that no one would know whence the Messiah had come? Part of the veiling of the Messianic predictions in the Old Testament is the fact that they refer to the first and second comings of Christ and that the predictions do not make clear whether the reference is to the first or the second coming — the first, born in Bethlehem; the second, coming on the clouds of heaven out of the unseen.

Jesus' Reply

"Ye both know me, and know whence I am; and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. I know him; because I am from him, and he sent me" (John 7:28, John 7:29). By His supernatural insight Jesus would have been able to know their perplexed arguments among themselves, although they may have stated their objection openly. Jesus replied to their objection that He could not be the Messiah because they knew whence Jesus was. In His reply He declared that while they knew He had been reared in Nazareth, they did not actually know whence He had come nor did they know who had sent Him. The mystery predicted in the Old Testament concerning the second coming attaches in a certain measure to this first coming, since Jesus had

left heaven to come to earth. Augustine comments, “Ye both know me and know me not.” They knew His form and features and His home in Nazareth, but they did not know of His heavenly home or His deity. “He that sent me is true,” i.e., God is true (but the devil who is inspiring you to oppose me is false); “whom ye know not” (and for this reason you do not know me or whence I am). Thus Jesus affirmed His deity and silenced their objection, but He spoke in such profound statements that they could not comprehend the meaning.

Attempted Arrest

“They sought therefore to take him: and no man laid his hand on him, because his hour was not yet come” (John 7:30). When Jesus thus denounced and defied the wicked leaders in the temple itself, when the crowd became confused by Jesus’ boldness and the hesitation of the hierarchy, when Jesus affirmed His deity in such mysterious, majestic fashion, the chief priests and scribes were compelled to act. They sought refers to the national leaders, but whether they had now come openly into the picture or were remaining in secret and having others act for them is not completely clear. Since John 7:32 tells of their sending officers to arrest Jesus, we naturally conclude that this effort to seize Jesus in John 7:30 was the action of some of the subordinate leaders. They seem to have acted on the spur of the moment without the deliberate action indicated in their second attempt (John 7:32). But it was God’s will that His Son should not die yet, so men’s hearts failed them when they tried to arrest Him, and they dared not carry out their purpose. The Wavering Crowd

“Many believed on him….When the Christ shall come, will he do more signs than those which this man hath done?” (John 7:31). These thrilling declarations of Jesus in the very precincts of the temple, where the hierarchy could hear and learn immediately what He had said, began to sweep many of the crowd back to the view that He must be the Christ in spite of His not fulfilling their expectations in some directions. The miracles He had worked here on earlier visits (John 2:23; John 5:1.) and in Galilee caused the people still to marvel and meditate as to whether He might not be the Christ. This favorable movement of the crowd toward Jesus caused the Pharisees and Sadducees to send soldiers of the temple guard to arrest Him. Sadler remarks, “The same assertion of His intimate relationship to God which had provoked some to lay hands on Him, incited others of the people to believe on Him.” The Soldiers

It would seem no great task to arrest a lone man who was in the temple area. There must have been an impressive contingent of these temple guards. There were several things which held them back. Chief among these was the mysterious divine Person of Jesus which affected them in a manner which they themselves could not understand. Furthermore, they did not know whether He would suddenly turn on them His miraculous power and destroy them. Nor could they be sure just what the multitude might do if they undertook to arrest Jesus in their presence. This last consideration weighed heavily with the hierarchy when they finally did arrest Jesus. They were careful to achieve the arrest and trial secretly so that the people would not learn of it until they were informed Jesus had already been condemned to death and was awaiting execution.

Mysterious Teaching

“Yet a little while am I with you, and I go unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, ye cannot come” (John 7:33, John 7:34). This was addressed both to the

multitude and to the detachment of temple guards seeking to arrest Him. The excitement must have been very intense as the crowd saw the soldiers come into the scene. But Jesus proceeded calmly with His teaching. He answered both the arguments in the people's minds and the intent in the hearts of the soldiers. The people had argued that they knew whence He was, whereas the Christ would come from an unknown source. Jesus had replied that they both knew and did not know. He now added that He was about to leave them and just as they did not really know whence He was so they did not know where He was going, and they would not be able to follow Him there. This last appears to be directed especially at the soldiers, warning them that they would not be able to take Him nor to follow Him where He was going. It is the supreme joy of the Christian that he does know where Jesus has gone and that he can go where Jesus is. The precious assurances of the upper room echo with these promises. But Jesus was now speaking to those who were hostile and sought to destroy Him. The "little while" He is still with them refers to the six months from the Feast of Tabernacles to the final Passover and the ascension. Because they did not understand Jesus' divine nature and purpose, they could not understand Him. Some commentators interpret Jesus' statement as referring to the Jews seeking in vain for the help of the Messiah in the day of doom for the nation, when it was destroyed by the Romans. Others stumble at the thought, Did Jesus consign to utter despair those who were seeking to kill Him? Could they not hear and obey the gospel and be saved when the historic facts of man's redemption had been achieved? But Jesus was speaking here to the crowd immediately in front of Him. The soldiers had been sent to arrest Him so that His enemies could destroy Him. He responded to their purpose by warning them that not only could they not take Him now, they could not even follow Him to destroy Him where He was going.

Whither? Among the Gentiles?

"Whither will this man go that we shall not find him? will he go unto the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks? What is this word that he said, "Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am, ye cannot come?" (John 7:35, John 7:36). The Dispersion refers to the immense Jewish population scattered all over the Roman world. If He went among these Jews, then soldiers of the hierarchy might readily have pursued Him, for the Sanhedrin had authority over the religious affairs of all the Jews. But if He went among the Greeks (the word is used of Gentiles in general), it would have been more difficult to discover His whereabouts and to take Him. They were still far from understanding the mysterious depth of His meaning as He referred to heaven and eternity. The question naturally arises as to why they should speculate about His going afar to teach the Greeks; had Jesus spoken sufficiently of His world-wide mission to the Gentiles, and had He helped Gentiles enough for them to be reflecting that since the Jewish leaders had rejected Him, He might go to foreign nations? It may be that they were simply taking up any conceivable course open to Him. But the charge made later that He was a Samaritan raises the similar question as to whether they had learned of His swift journey just now through Samaria and His former preaching as Sychar. Thus they might have known of the trip through Phoenicia and His miracle performed there for the Syro-Phoenician woman, as well as earlier for the centurion of Capernaum. Passages such as Isaiah 60:3, "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light" might have suggested it. The Climax

"The last day, the great day of the feast…." Just as the final day of a revival meeting is calculated to be the greatest in attendance and enthusiasm so was the climax of these feasts. The law

provided that this last (eighth) day of the feast should be a great day with a solemn convocation of all the people. “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” The universality and majestic assurance of divine power in this invitation were as great here in the temple to the thousands as to the Samaritan woman by Jacob’s well. “He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water.” Three interpretations are suggested: (1) “Let him that believeth on me, come to me and drink as the scripture saith” (various passages in Isaiah would fit, such as Isaiah 55:1). (2) “He that believeth on me as the scripture hath revealed” would be similar to the usage of Paul, “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3). He would be referring His hearers to what the Old Testament actually predicted that Messiah would be and do. (3) “As the scripture hath said, from within him….”Connecting the citation with what follows rather than what precedes, we meet the difficulty of finding any passage in the Old Testament where it is affirmed that the person who believes on the Messiah shall himself become the source of living water for others. Perhaps it refers to all the passages in general which predict the glorious Messianic age; the ground which has been dry and barren shall become fertile (Isaiah 35:6, Isaiah 35:7; Proverbs 18:4) if these be taken in the figurative sense of the spiritual blessings of the Messianic age. The Holy Spirit

“But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believed on him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:39). “And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit,” cried Peter on the day of Pentecost in naming the blessings to be gained by salvation in Christ. The comforting gift of the Holy Spirit, whom all Christians receive at baptism to guide and sustain them, had not yet been given. “Jesus was not yet glorified.” Salvation of a lost world was to be achieved by His death, burial, and resurrection. This had not yet occurred. The bestowal of the comforting gift of the Holy Spirit was dependent upon acceptance of God’s terms for man’s redemption. All this must wait for the proclamation of the full gospel message. The Spirit had been bestowed upon Old Testament prophets, upon John the Baptist, and upon the twelve apostles as they were sent forth two by two, but He had not been given in the sense that all Christians in the church are to receive the comforting gift of His presence and help. The Ascension

It is interesting to observe the reference which John makes to Jesus’ return to heaven in the ascension. He does not describe the ascension at the close of his Gospel, but ends with the appearance to the seven apostles by the Sea of Galilee. In the most intimate and incidental way, however, he introduces into the declarations of Jesus references to His ascension. The word yet is important. Jesus had not yet ascended when He made this statement, but John was familiar with the final day when Jesus did ascend from the Mount of Olives.

Confused Discussion

“Some said...This is of a truth the prophet, Others said, This is the Christ.” The crowd was divided and confused. Some favored Christ, others stood with the hierarchy. Among those who looked with favor upon Christ were some who would go no further than apply the title prophet, although the prophet, suggests the prediction of Moses concerning Christ (Deuteronomy 18:15, Deuteronomy 18:18). An interesting variation in interpretation between the a.v. and the a.s.v. is seen in that the a.v. capitalizes Prophet, showing the translators thought it was a direct reference to the Messianic prediction of Moses. The a.s.v. , on the other hand, leaves it a small letter, prophet, with the evident thought that these are two different groups with different ideas; they are

not both affirming Jesus is the Christ; but this first group is only calling Him a prophet like one of the Old Testament prophets. The definite article, the, is hard to explain under this interpretation. Both groups seem to be affirming that Jesus is the Christ; some, in a vague manner that hesitates to use more than the term prophet; others, boldly declaring He is the Christ. The Christ

“But some said, What, doth the Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said that the Christ cometh of the seed of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?” (John 7:41, John 7:42). The discussion among the crowd has now veered around from the idea that the Old Testament had declared the Messiah would come on the clouds of heaven, so that no man could tell whence He had come, to the very definite prediction of Micah 5:2. Since this is the very passage the scribes used against Nicodemus in the secret meeting of the Sanhedrin immediately after this, some of the scholars are evidently speaking up out of the crowd and offering this objection. That Jesus had been reared in Nazareth was well known. That He had been born in Bethlehem seems to have been unknown to most. If there were in the crowd those who had witnessed the miracles surrounding the birth in Bethlehem, either they were not sure of the identity of Jesus, or they kept silent. Jesus revealed Himself by word and deed, and allowed the facts of His miraculous birth to be made known later. The miracles accompanying His birth must have created a stir which would have been accentuated by the slaughter of the infants by Herod the Great, but this was more than thirty years before. Anyone who remembered these events would have been looking for the Christ to appear from Bethlehem. No one would connect these events with Nazareth. The flight to Egypt and the return to Nazareth were so secret that no connection would have remained in the minds of the people. Thus Jesus was left free to reveal Himself. For this purpose the Old Testament prophecies were not explicit. Jesus did not use His birth in Bethlehem as evidence. He did not need to do so as He furnished miraculous evidence to substantiate His claims. In due time the full gospel would be proclaimed and would assemble all the evidence.

Never Man So Spake The officers, instead of arresting Jesus, returned awe-stricken after they heard Him calmly affirm that He was going where they could not arrest Him, and that He Himself was the source of life. Even though some in the crowd were in favor of the hierarchy and willing to aid in His arrest, the soldiers dared not touch Him. They were awed by His personality and sublime words; they feared the results to themselves either by a miracle or by the violence of the multitude who were arguing in His favor. The answer of the soldiers to the accusing question of the chief priests and Pharisees is immortal: “Never man so spake.” They might logically have replied, “Why do you not go and arrest Him?” The weakness of the national leaders was manifest. They had not even gone with the soldiers to join in the act of arresting Him. They now rest on their claim to scholarship: “Are ye also led astray? Hath any of the rulers believed on him, or of the Pharisees? But this multitude that knoweth not the law are accursed” (John 7:47-49).

It is a curious thing that this very argument is so popular today; the intelligentsia no longer believe that Jesus is the Son of God or the Bible is the Word of God. The hypocritical leaders had been able to make this boast because they had the power to reward and punish and used their power to threaten any who would accept Christ. Nicodemus had lacked the courage to declare his faith, and others doubtless had faltered for fear. Hence the hierarchy was able to make its boast that none of the scholars or the rulers had believed on Christ.

“This shows the evil of believing secretly, and not having the courage to confess our conviction.” Elijah was amazed to hear God say that there were seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal. He had not known of their existence. They had not been helping him in his effort to save Israel. God rebuked Elijah for imagining that he was the only faithful soul left in Israel. But He still used Elijah as the leader in the midst of those who lacked the courage to speak out for God.

Nicodemus in the Lion’s Den The chief priests and scribes must at least have suspected Nicodemus, even though they were taken by surprise at his bold objection. Their sneer that none of the rulers or scholars had believed on Jesus may have been meant to further intimidate Nicodemus, as well as silence the soldiers. If so, it had the opposite effect. It was too much for the conscience of Nicodemus to remain silent under such a challenge. The point of law which he raised was devastating; the rulers had decreed the death of Jesus on the ground that He was a lawbreaker, yet they were breaking the law in condemning Him to death without a trial: “Doth our law judge a man, except it first hear from himself and know what he doeth?” (John 7:51). A legal vote in the Sanhedrin probably had not been attempted against Jesus, but they had a tacit agreement among themselves to put him to death. They had threatened with excommunication anyone who accepted Jesus as the Christ. They had tried to assassinate Jesus many times. They had just attempted to arrest Him, not to examine His claims, hear His teaching, or test His miracles, but to destroy Him. The objection Nicodemus interposed was not an open declaration of his discipleship, but it was a plain intimation. The leaders of the Sanhedrin turned on him with a snarl, “Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and see that out of Galilee ariseth no prophet” (John 7:52). The leaders silenced Nicodemus with the implied charge that he was a follower of Christ. At the same time they introduced the argument their subordinates had been using among the crowds that the Christ must come from Bethlehem and not from Galilee. Their charge that Nicodemus was a disciple immediately contradicted and nullified the argument that they had just used against the soldiers — that no scholar had accepted Christ. In their desperation as they were cornered in this heated argument, they had to abandon the position they had just taken in order to meet this new threat. From Galilee

Critics argue that this claim, “out of Galilee ariseth no prophet,” is not true, and therefore John’s narrative is incorrect. But if this is not true, then it is the scholars of the first century in Israel who are guilty of inaccuracy and not John. He merely records the current of the arguments in the Sanhedrin. Nicodemus evidently reported this scene to the disciples at a later time. Critics claim that four prophets are from Galilee: Elijah, Nahum, Hosea, and Jonah. Others have replied, saying that Elijah came from Gilead; Hosea, from Samaria; Jonah, from Gath-Hepher; and Nahum, from Elkosh. The latter two places cannot be identified, but it is highly improbable that they were located in Galilee. The scholars in the time of Christ confirm this conclusion by declaring that no prophet had arisen from Galilee. The capital mistake which the leaders made was assuming that Jesus had been born in Galilee. They had made no effort to learn the facts, even as they made no effort to weigh and judge fairly the teaching and miracles of Jesus to see whether they substantiated His claims. From the days of their furious controversy with John the Baptist and from the time that Jesus had denounced their corruption and hypocrisy in cleansing the temple, they had nothing but blind fury for Jesus.

Nicodemus might have quoted Isaiah 9:1, Isaiah 9:2, “Galilee of the nations, The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: They that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath light shined.” Matthew quotes this superb passage to show that the Old Testament did predict that the Christ would appear and begin to preach in Galilee (Matthew 4:14-16). The scholars were arguing on the basis of the birthplace of Christ, but their manner of statement left them wide open to attack, “out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.” The fact that other prophets had not been arising in Galilee made it the more impressive that Christ should have begun His ministry there. In the same manner the evidence of Micah 5:2 is made the more impressive by the fact that no famous person had been born in Bethlehem from David until Jesus. The hectic arguments and exciting events of the final day of the feast were now over as “they went every man to his own house.” This is one of relatively few places where a bad chapter division was made. The chapters and verses were worked out in the late Middle Ages. As a rule they are well done. Here, the a.v. divides John 7:53 and puts the first part of the verse as the conclusion of chapter 7 and the latter part as the opening of chapter 8. The a.s.v. places the entire John 7:53 as the opening of chapter 8.

088. Chapter 29 - The Woman Taken in Adultery

Chapter 29 - The Woman Taken in Adultery John 7:53;John 8:1-11

Textual Problem The genuineness and authenticity of this passage have been the subject of great controversy. Genuineness means whether it is the work of John or someone else. Authenticity means whether it is a true statement of what actually happened. Even a conservative writer such as Sadler declares it is not part of the Gospel of John as originally written. A. T. Robertson adopts the wild guess of some critics: This paragraph can no longer be considered a part of the Gospel of John, but it is in all probability a true story of Jesus, very likely drawn by early students from the collection of Papias published about a.d. 140.

There is general agreement that this is an authentic account of a historic event. The scene is so completely in harmony with the character of all who appear in it and is so unique and extraordinary that it bears in itself the evidence of historic verity.

Manuscript Differences The reasons for the wide rejection of the passage as a part of John's Gospel are as follows: (1) Most of our ancient Greek manuscripts omit it. Radical scholars have been working for some years on a new Greek text of the New Testament which they hope will supplant the standard texts of Westcott and Hort, and of Nestle. This new text came from the press late in 1966. The editors are Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Bruce M. Metzger, and Allen Wikgren. This text omits John 7:53; John 8:1-11 and prints it as an appendix at the close of John's Gospel. The textual evidence against the passage is printed in a footnote. The list of manuscripts, translations, and writers which omit the passage are given as follows: omit 7.533-811 p66, 75) Avid B Cvid L N T W X Y D Q■Y■053 0141 22 33 157 209 565 1230 1241 1242 1253 2193 Lect ita, f, 1*, q syrc, s, copsa, bo mss, ach 2 got arm geo Diatessarona,f Clementvid Tertullian Origen Cyprian Chrysostom Nonnus Cyril Cosmos Theophylact comm. include passage following 7.52 D (F) G H K M U G 28 700 892 1009 1010 1071 1079 1195 1216 1344 1365 1546 2148 2174 Byz itaur, c, e, ff2, j, 1mg, r1, vg syrhms, pal copbomss armmss eth Didascalia Ambrosiaster Apostolic Constitutions Ambrose Greek and Latinacc. to Jerome Jerome Augustine Vincent Taylor lists the manuscripts, translations, and early Christian writers which omit the passage as follows: p66)B W Q 22 33 157 565 al a bc f 1* q sy sa bo arm geo goth IrCl Or Tert Cypr Nonn (The Text of the New Testament, 1961, p. 98).

It is not found in about one hundred cursives.

(2) Several manuscripts publish it at the end of the Gospel or after Luke 21:1-38. (3) Some ancient writers, such as Chrysostom and Cyril, do not refer to it in their commentaries. (4) internal evidence is argued against it on the ground of differences in vocabulary, minor textual differences, and especially that it mentions "the scribes and Pharisees" together. They are not mentioned together elsewhere in the Gospel; therefore, John could not have written this passage! (5) If 7:53-8:11 is omitted, the text fits together harmoniously. (6) An unusual number of manuscript differences are found in the text of these verses.

Evidence in Favor of the Passage In favor of the retention of this passage as a true account from the pen of John and as properly located at this point in his narrative are the following proofs: (1) The a.v. and the a.s.v. have retained the passage in the Gospel of John and at this point in his narrative. The a.v. publishes it without question. The scholars who translated the a.s.v. had a much wider base of ancient manuscripts and were more critical. They put brackets around the paragraph to warn the reader that there is considerable manuscript variation. They attach the following footnote:

Most of the ancient authorities omit John 7:53; John 8:1-11. Those which contain it vary much from each other. In assessing this footnote it should be noted that the almost exclusive emphasis which the translators of the a.s.v. placed upon Vaticanus (B) and Sinaiticus ()) has been strongly criticized. The manner in which the manuscripts which contain the passage differ from each other is mainly in the location of the passage. A few manuscripts put it at the close of the Gospel. Four inferior manuscripts put in the Gospel of Luke at the end of chapter 21. The differences in the wording of the text are the natural result of the general confusion over the passage.

(2) This passage is found in D, a very important ancient manuscript, and in F G H K U E M, and 331 cursives. The Latin manuscripts, many of them very ancient, are almost solidly for the passage. Vincent Taylor lists the textual evidence in favor of the passage as follows:

D 28 700 et al. pler b* c e ff2 j lc z vg sypal Ambr Ambst Aug Jer l 1583 fam. 13 (The Text of the New Testament, 1961., p. 981).

(3) The style is exactly that of the rest of John's Gospel, which is best proved by the childish criticism that it mentions the "scribes and Pharisees" together. If no stronger argument than this can be brought against the style, then it certainly is identical! (4) It fits perfectly here into the context of John's narrative as to time, place, persons, atmosphere, and outcome. It furnishes a most fitting and beautiful introduction to the great sermon on "The Light of the World."

(5) The omission of the passage from many manuscripts and its different location in several others has a very simple explanation. A copyist at an early date misunderstood the teaching of the passage and omitted it. Neither do I condemn thee does not mean that Jesus did not condemn the sin of adultery. He did not order execution of the death sentence. It means, "Neither do I condemn thee to death." Later copyists, seeing that one of the manuscripts did not have this passage. became troubled over it and omitted it, or put it doubtfully at the close of the book. Augustine suggested this explanation for its omission in some manuscripts and its dislocation in others. He held that some copyists, thinking it excused adultery, felt it must not be genuine and authentic.

A.S.V. Decision

Although the American Standard Version carries the footnote stating that "most of the ancient authorities omit John 7:53; John 8:1-11," yet the majority of the translators of the a.s.v. finally cast their vote in favor of the passage, and it was retained in the text. This means that the translators attached great importance to the presence of the passage in so many of the early versions which were made from Greek manuscripts far older than any Greek uncials we now possess. This is the very point on which the translators of the a.s.v. have been severely criticized; namely, that they rested exclusively on the evidence of the Greek uncials which now happen to be in our possession (mainly) and B) and did not allow due weight to the translations made in the early centuries when

Greek manuscripts must have been available which were close to the time when the original documents were written. In a matter such as whether a passage recording an entire scene in the life of Christ was in the autograph copy John wrote, the testimony of the versions is of the utmost importance. While the testimony of the copies of the versions in our possession is not unanimous, it is hard to see how the passage can be in so many copies of so many early versions and not have been in the original. Copies of versions that omit the passage have the same explanation as obtains for the Greek manuscripts — misunderstanding of the content by a copyist.

Jerome and Augustine

It is true that the copies of these versions which we possess are not so old as copies of Greek uncials in our possession. This immediately concentrates attention on Codex Beza (D), and finally causes the evidence to converge on the testimony of Jerome and Augustine. Codex Beza offers double testimony in this case; it has the Greek text and the Latin Version in parallel columns. It not only testifies to the presence of this passage in Greek texts of the fourth century, but through the Latin Version it reaches back into the preceding centuries. The fact that Codex Beza has some peculiar traits raises the question as to whether it bears isolated testimony in this case. The testimony of Jerome becomes very important at just this point. He declares that the passage was contained in “many, both Greek and Latin codices.” This trail leads immediately to the famous library at Caesarea, where the first great textual critic, Origen, had collected such a grand collection of manuscripts. When Jerome talked of this passage being in many Greek and Latin manuscripts, he was not speaking of some limited collection of inferior manuscripts; during his years of study in the library at Caesarea he had at his disposal the rich fruits of Origen’s lifetime of study in the field of textual criticism, and the manuscripts Origen had collected. Origen is persistently cited as against this passage. but this is purely the argument from the silence of writings of Origen which we now possess.

One certainly should place into the balance the weight of Jerome’s decision in favor of the passage. It is possible, of course, that Jerome disagreed with Origen in his conclusions, but Scrivener declares that Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome closely agree on matters of textual criticism and use the same manuscripts and the same canons of criticism:

It is not therefore wonderful if, employing as they did and setting a high value on precisely the same manuscripts of the N.T., the readings approved by Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome should closely agree (A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament, Vol.II, p. 270). On a matter of such importance as this entire passage, we would expect Jerome to register any disagreement he had with Origen’s decision before him. Since Jerome is actually discussing the integrity of this text, this argument from silence would be worth more than the same type of argument used to attempt to cite Origen against the passage, when we have no direct discussion of the authenticity of this passage in Origen’s extant writings. Scholars who defend the passage point out that Origen’s homilies and commentaries are lacking or mutilated over John 5:1-47; John 6:1-71; John 7:1-53. The evidence from Codex Beza is usually stated as from the fifth century, but as we have just seen, it reaches back into the earlier centuries. The testimony of Jerome is usually labeled as “fifth century,” but actually it is “fourth century,” since Jerome finished his Vulgate translation of the New Testament in a.d. 384. This is close to the date of the oldest Greek uncials in our possession. Jerome specifically declares the antiquity of the textual evidence on which he

rests in recording the more general acceptance of the passage in the West: “Among the Latins, as being in their old version, the narrative was more generally received for St. John’s.”

John 7:53; John 8:1-11 is found not merely in the Old Latin, and the Vulgate, but the Ethiopic, the Persic, Boharic, Gothic, and Anglo-Saxon. There are thirty-eight codices of the Old Latin and more than eight thousand copies of the Vulgate now in our possession. While their testimony is not unanimous, Jerome’s statement concerning the Old Latin manuscripts he had examined in the fourth century is significant.

Scrivener The most celebrated textual critic who defends both the genuineness and authenticity of the passage is Scrivener. He holds it was written by the apostle John and that it is correctly placed at this location in his narrative. He has a theory with which he attempts to solve the manuscript differences: He holds that John published two editions of his Gospel and that this passage was not in the first edition, but that John inserted it in the second. It is curious that he should have evolved such a theory when the mistake of one very early copyist, who misunderstood the meaning of the passage, is all that was necessary to have brought about the confusion in the manuscripts.

Augustine

Augustine offers another solution of the difficulty. He was a contemporary of Jerome and profited by all the textual and translation labors of Jerome. He was familiar with the lifetime of prodigious work which Origen had given to this field. Augustine says that the passage had been omitted by men of weak faith or by enemies of the true faith who feared that the passage might lead to low morals (De Adulterinus Con jugiis, II:c7:III).

Radical Critics The sharp contrast between the blunt manner in which some critics discard the passage and its defense by others is illustrated in the following. C. H. Dodd twice gives a summary rejection: “The Pericope Adulterae, vii 53-viii.ll in the Textus Receptus, is omitted as being no part of the original text of this Gospel” (The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, p. 346; cf. p. 158). Vincent Taylor speaks in the same manner: The authorities which attest the passage are almost entirely Western or of late and inferior standing. Moreover, as in the case of John 8:3-4, the vocabulary and style are non-Johannine. One must conclude that it is a late Western insertion derived from some traditional source (The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, p. 346, p. 98).

Conservative Scholars

Meyer, who rejects the passage, nevertheless lists twenty-two scholars who defend it (Com. on John, p 257). H. C. Reynolds in the Pulpit Commentary on John names fifteen scholars who accept the passage. Scrivener cites the defense of the passage by the distinguished British scholar Dean Brugon as particularly noteworthy (A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament, Vol. II, p. 365). Codex Alexandrinus (A) and Codex Ephraemi (C), which are continually cited against the passage, are defective at this place with a number of pages lost from the manuscripts. But Tischendorf and others counted the number of probable lines on each missing page and the number of probable letters on each line and by this method came to the conclusion that it was lacking in A and C. Scrivener points out, however, that the counting of the lines and letters is not absolutely accurate: The reckoning, as McClellan remarks (N.T., p. 273), “does not preclude the possibility of small gaps having existed in A and C to mark the place of the Section, as in L and D” (The Text of the New Testament, 1961., p. 365).

It is interesting that some very recent authors discussing this passage omit A and C as against the passage, e.g., Vincent Taylor (Commentary on Mark (1952),, p. 98). And yet Taylor cites Origen against this section, although the homilies and commentary are also defective at this place in the Gospel of John. The great emphasis which is placed upon the internal evidence concerning non-Johannine style is given thorough discussion by Lange in his commentary on John: “The entire diversity from the narrative style of John which Meyer and Alford regard as the most weighty argument against the passage...” (p. 268). Lange then replies at length to each of the eight arguments against the content of the passage and offers four citations in support of it. He shows how the passage fits the entire context at this point in the narrative. He says, “Internal evidence, therefore speaks decidedly for this, as the proper place for the section in hand.” He lays particular emphasis upon John 8:12, John 8:21 as proof: “Again therefore Jesus said to them”; “Therefore he said again to them.” He cites the evidence from Jerome, Augustine, and Ambrose.

Among the more recent writers who defend the passage is William Hendriksen in his New Testament Commentary. He says, Our final conclusion, then, is this: though it cannot now be proved that this story formed an integral part of the Fourth Gospel, neither is it possible to establish the opposite with any degree of finality. We believe, moreover, that what is here recorded really took place, and contains nothing that is in conflict with the apostolic spirit. Hence, instead of removing this section from the Bible it should be retained and used for our benefit (The Gospel According to John, p 25).

Internal Evidence The most significant recent defense of this passage is by Dr. Alan F. Johnson of Moody Bible Institute in an article “A Stylistic Trait of the Fourth Gospel in the Pericope Adulterae,” published in Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society (Vol 9, No. 2, Spring; 1966). The entire article is devoted to the internal evidence. He establishes the importance of this angle of the discussion by citing the statement of Meyer that the passage is “quite alien to the Johannean thought and expression” (Com. on John, p. 244). In his paper Johnson demolishes the entire collection of arguments from internal evidence. He is very careful in his own statement: “However, though the majority to the contrary, a few competent scholars have examined the evidence carefully and have been reluctant to consider the passage as an interpolation” (p. 91).

Johnson challenges the entire statistical method of testing. Those who reject the passage point out fourteen new words not used by John in his undisputed writings. They also argue on the basis that only twenty-six out of seventy-five “preferred words” which John ordinarily uses are found; and that certain Johannine words and particles are totally absent. Johnson rests upon the exposure of the shallow character of this computer system of testing the style of a passage by referring to the University of Cambridge scholar G. U. Yule, who holds that ten thousand words are required for solid statistics. Johnson points out that there are only 174 words in this passage. He shows that John 2:13-17, which has never been questioned, could be excluded from the Gospel of John by the same statistical method.

Johnson carefully analyzes the data assembled by R. Morgenthaler against the passage in his Statistics of New Testament Vocabulary (1958) to the effect that out of eighty-two vocabulary words used in John 7:42-53; John 8:1-11, fourteen do not occur elsewhere, and the argument rests on the absence of preferred words. Johnson shows that the same statistical method can be used to deny the Pauline authorship of his epistles, and that this method of testing style has been

applied to the writings of Cicero and found to be utterly unreliable.

Against the citations of those who reject the passage Johnson places “a stylistic trait of the fourth Gospel.” It is immediately evident that his position is subject to the very attack he has just made against the statistical method, for he also has only 174 words on which to rest. He defends his position from this attack by holding that the evidence he presents in favor of the passage does not consist in a collection of new words or old words counted up out of the passage, but “a stylistic trait” which has been overlooked in the discussion. He cites John’s habit of “interjecting short explanatory phrases which interpret the significance of the words that have just been spoken in the narrative.” This explanatory phrase found in John 8:6, this he said, is used by John in ten other passages in the book: John 6:6, John 6:71; John 7:39; John 11:13, John 11:51; John 12:6, John 12:33; John 13:11, John 13:28; John 21:19.

Johnson concludes that the pericope is not to be excluded from the Gospel of John on the basis of statistical tabulations, that the distinctive literary trait of John 8:6 must be explained by those who reject the passage, and that a re-interpretation of the external evidence of John 7:53; John 8:1-11 is in order. A re-interpretation of the external evidence will not be necessary for those who on the basis of their own independent study have already approved the decision of the translators of the a.v. and the a.s.v. in retaining the passage in the Gospel of John. The Service The scene opens with an early-morning teaching session Jesus was holding in the temple court (undoubtedly the court of Gentiles). After the furious discussions of the preceding day, Jesus had retired to the Mount of Olives. This evidently means Bethany and probably the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. He spent the nights in Bethany throughout the final week. We find that Jesus was following the same procedure now. There were other disciples in Bethany, but we naturally think of this home as welcoming the Master. The beginning of public services early in the morning was characteristic of a time when night services were rare. It was also an indication here of the great excitement which had resulted from the clash with the hierarchy the day before, the attempt to arrest Him, and His magnificent defense of His Messianic claims. The Interruption The scribes and Pharisees waited until the preaching service was in progress with a great multitude about Jesus listening to His teaching before they sprung the trap which they had ready to bring about His destruction. When they came bringing in a woman taken in adultery, they demanded that He either sustain the Old Testament law and pass the death sentence upon her which they immediately would execute, or else that He repudiate the law. They showed their utter hypocrisy by not bringing the guilty man and demanding the death sentence upon him also. The law was very explicit in decreeing the death penalty for both guilty parties (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22). The law demanded death for both, but did not specify stoning. Phinehas used a javelin (Numbers 25:7, Numbers 25:8). Stoning was the customary method of execution. The Trap

If Jesus refused to pass the death sentence, they would accuse Him immediately as a traitor to the Old Testament law because He had refused to sustain its decrees and had condoned sins it condemned. They were careful to present their demand when Jesus was in the midst of a public service so that the multitude would all be witnesses against Him to destroy His influence throughout the nation. If Jesus took the other horn of the dilemma and passed the death sentence upon her, then they would execute the woman and proceed to Pilate the governor with charges that He was in rebellion against Rome and inciting the people to rebel. The Romans had forbidden anyone but Rome to exact the death penalty. The Jews were permitted to try cases and exact any

penalties short of death. The Jewish leaders thought they had this trap so carefully set that there was no escape for Jesus. The Handwriting on the Ground

Jesus turned aside and stooped down and wrote on the ground. Since this was the temple area paved with stones, the writing could have been done with the finger in the sand and dust gathered on the floor from thousands of passing feet. The a.v. has the additional clause as though he heard them not. This last clause is omitted from the a.s.v. because of the manuscript evidence against it. The following suggestions have been made as to why Jesus wrote on the ground: (1) “The habit was the usual one to signify preoccupation of mind or intentional indifference.” But this does not explain why He showed such deliberate indifference.

(2) The most absurd explanation is that He turned aside “to indicate shame — ‘He stooped, wishing to hide His face.” This explanation is not only entirely foreign to the spotless character of Jesus and the absolute calmness with which He called all sinners to repentance, but is proved to be false by the manner in which He proceeded to meet the situation, to put His enemies to flight, and to pass judgment in a manner which has been inimitable. His manner of meeting the situation in the home of Simon the Pharisee of Galilee also refutes this suggestion (Luke 7:36-50).

Motive

(3) Sadler thinks He wrote in the sand to remind the Pharisees of the law in Numbers 5:11-30, where “the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle” was to be used in the miraculous test to be applied. But that was a test in case of suspicion, and this is a case where absolute proof was available.

(4) The best explanation is that His silence and seeming preoccupation did not arise out of His own hesitancy or embarrassment, but was a deliberate act to multiply their embarrassment when He exposed their hypocrisy. The silence of Jesus concentrated the attention of the crowd in a most dramatic manner on the problem, and emboldened the Pharisees to push loudly their demand so that, when Jesus finally turned on them, His words fell with deadly convicting power and drove them from Him. When He turned from them the second time and wrote on the ground, His action created a deathlike silence in which men feared to move or breathe. He had challenged the Jewish leaders to kill the adulteress, but He knew they would flee from the ghosts in their own conscience. We do not know what Jesus wrote. It is the only time we read of Jesus’ writing. The Decision

“He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her” (John 8:7). The law had decreed that in case of apostasy, the witnesses should be the first to cast stones, and then the others present were to join in the execution (Deuteronomy 17:2-7). It would be very perverse to attempt to universalize the declaration of Jesus, for it would prevent the maintenance of law and order. If it required perfect people to pass judgment, then no judgment could ever he rendered against any criminal. But the reply of Jesus was amazingly appropriate in this case. We naturally wonder whether these scholars had heard and discussed the teaching of Jesus that the person who harbors the desire for adultery is as guilty as the person who commits the deed. Their action in leaving speaks for itself as to their conscience. The pressure upon them was increased a thousandfold by Jesus’ action in turning aside and writing again in the sand. He certainly did not turn aside “to give them the opportunity to return without the embarrassment of being watched.” The crowd who had been hearing the teaching of Jesus were watching every move with intense

concentration. Jesus was attempting to increase rather than decrease their embarrassment. The longer Jesus waited and they hesitated, the more relentless the pressure became.

Fugitives from Justice As the scribes and Pharisees left, one by one, the eldest went first. Some have surmised that the eldest went first because their “experience of life’s sinfulness was necessarily the fullest.” But this is not true. Some young persons have experienced more of “life’s sinfulness” in their short stay in this world than many older people have experienced in many years. It seems rather that the oldest left first because they were leading in this confrontation and hence were closest to the extreme heat when Jesus had turned on them His face filled with divine wrath. They had been transfixed and withered by the look of Jesus as well as His words. They became terrified at the thought of having to face His wrath again. As they left the front row, those in back found themselves without any protection in front; they likewise slipped away to escape. There was the furious pressure of their conscience within and fear of further exposure from without. Men will cry out in the judgment for the rocks and the mountains to fall on them and hide them from the face of the Lamb turned on them in wrath (Revelation 6:16, Revelation 6:17). We cannot tell whether the oldest had the hardest hearts or whether they were the chief sinners. But they were the leaders in this scene to trap Jesus. The immediate pressure would have been greatest upon them. If they had stoned the woman, they might have been passing the death sentence upon themselves. The Sinner and the Savior

“And Jesus was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the midst” (John 8:9). The woman had been placed in the most prominent place as the charge had been made and the sentence demanded. In the midst implies that the crowd is still present, as also the apostles. The ones who left were the crowd of scribes and Pharisees who had brought the case before Jesus. The entire circle around Jesus which had been occupied by the national leaders was now vacant.

“Woman, where are they? did no man condemn thee?” (John 8:10). This shows clearly that the ones who had left were the ones who had accused her. The question clearly means “condemn thee to death.” This is what the scholars had demanded and what Jesus had challenged them to do. They had already testified against her and condemned her as guilty. But they had not dared to put their condemnation into action.

“No man, Lord.” No hint is given in the account as to the attitude of the woman when she was brought before Jesus and the multitude, whether she was defiant or terror-stricken. But now when she has heard the words of Jesus and looked into His divine face, she is humbled and repentant. We cannot tell how much she knew of the claims of Jesus to deity, so we cannot be sure of the content of the word kurios as she addressed Him. It can mean either Lord or sir. It is significant that both the a.v. and the a.s.v. translate “Lord.” While we cannot absolutely close the case as to what conception she had in addressing Him as Lord, it certainly is significant that she did not call Him Teacher, or Master, or a prophet. She did not address Him by His personal name Jesus. She called Him Lord. No other translation of the word in this passage fits the historic facts and the spirit of the entire scene. Her Repentance Her reply was humble, arid the answer of Jesus, leaving open the door of hope, makes plain her repentance. Jesus did not say to this adulteress, however, what He said to the repentant harlot in Simon’s home in Galilee: “Thy sins are forgiven thee.” That woman’s repentance was not just beginning, but was now complete. She had given proof of this in her new life, her self-humiliation, and her devotion to Jesus. This woman was commanded now to

go and give proof of her repentance in her changed life.

It is impossible to maintain that the woman had not changed her attitude and was not repentant. “He needed not that any should bear witness concerning man; for he himself knew what was in man” (John 2:25). The thoughts and intents of the heart of each person were laid open before Him. If this woman had been defiant, unrepentant, and determined to continue in her wickedness, Jesus would have given her such a stinging rebuke as He had just delivered to the Pharisees. His kind and merciful words to her tell unmistakably of her determination to enter into a new life.

Christ as Judge

“Neither do I condemn thee: go thy way; from henceforth sin no more” (John 8:11). He did not palliate her crime. No one could be more severe than Jesus in condemning adultery. The Sermon on the Mount presents to mankind the extreme difficulty of conquest of all impure thoughts. But Jesus refused to pass the death sentence, and showed her that forgiveness was possible if she would repent and live nobly. Jesus had pursued such a stern course with her accusers because of their attitude, character, and purpose. When asked to judge between brothers quarreling over their inheritance, Jesus had simply refused to act as judge, but in this case it was a direct attack upon Him. Moreover, because the Pharisees were utterly base and hypocritical, Jesus used a method which revealed their wickedness to the crowd. He also showed the difference between the law and the gospel; the one offered only justice; the other extends mercy to all who will accept salvation at God’s hands and upon His terms. The seven-branched candlestick flickering in the holy place of the temple offered no hope to this woman. Jesus presents Himself as the Light of the world, offering redemption to all.

Revelation of Deity

They were standing in the temple in the presence of a multitude. The furious debate with the national leaders had rocked the capital for days. It is highly improbable that any intelligent person could have been in Jerusalem during this exciting part of the ministry of Jesus even for a few minutes and not heard of the thrilling drama being enacted in the temple day after day; they would learn how Jesus was claiming to be the Son of God and performing the most prodigious miracles to sustain His claim to deity, how the Pharisees had charged Him with blasphemy of His claim, how they had repeatedly undertaken to stone Him to death, but had always become fainthearted and shrunk away at the last moment. To all this background must be added the inevitable impact of His divine Person and His amazing words and actions during this critical scene. When He turned aside and wrote on the ground twice, He was not only meeting the trap of the Pharisees with a very deadly move to uncover their hypocrisy, but He gave time for the crowd, and also the woman, to reflect. In the presence of death, the woman suddenly came to her hour of decision. Whether or not she was making her full confession of faith as she saluted Jesus as Lord, her answer and the reply of Jesus show her determination to live a new life. While lowering the scepter of wrath and revoking the death sentence, Jesus gently commanded her to go forth and demonstrate the new life to which she was now pledged.

089. Chapter 30 - The Sermon on the Light of the World

Chapter 30 - The Sermon on the Light of the World

John 8:12-59 Light and Darkness With the exciting interruption of Jesus' teaching now ending, He preached a sermon which crowns the incident. "I am the light of the world." The universality of Jesus' preaching is continually impressed upon the reader. He did not say, "I am the Light of Israel." He holds the whole world in His hands and offers redemption to all mankind. God has created both the day and the night. Lest man destroy himself by unceasing work, God provided the night for rest, and added the holiness of the seventh day for the same purpose. Light reveals the beauties and glories and the ugliness and perils which the darkness conceals. Light brightens and purifies. Light makes possible life on earth in the physical sense. Jesus as the Light of the world enables us to walk in the path that leads to eternal life, instead of our stumbling in darkness and perishing. In the darkness those who travel cannot see the way and cannot tell what threatens their lives. The responsibility for man's fate rests upon himself. Jesus as the Bread of life must be eaten and the Water of life must be taken, just as the Light of life must be followed. If a man shuts his eyes and refuses to see the light, it is his own fault. When we read the grand passages in the Old Testament where God is declared to be the Light (Psalms 27:1; Isaiah 10:17; Isaiah 60:19), it becomes clearer that Jesus is here making a tremendous affirmation of His deity.

Attack of Pharisees

"Thou bearest witness of thyself; thy witness is not true" (John 8:13). These Pharisees who take up the battle evidently had not been among the group of leaders who had brought the adulteress before Christ. It is not necessarily true that a person who bears witness of himself is speaking falsely. But these scholars were citing the assertion of Jesus on a former occasion that He did not bear witness of Himself alone (John 5:30-47). They sought now to turn this argument against Him. But Jesus pointed out again that He did not bear witness of Himself alone; the Father had testified to the truth of His testimony by the miracle which Jesus had performed.

"Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. Yea and if I judge, my judgment is true" (John 8:15, John 8:16). They were judging after the flesh in that: (1) They judged by the fact that they saw Jesus in the flesh before them; they did not perceive that He was the Son of God; or it may mean (2) they judged after the flesh in the sense of their own evil ambitions and desires, which beclouded their understanding and prevented their accepting Him as the Christ, the Son of God. The word hrino can mean either condemn or judge. Jesus seems to use it in the sense of condemn when He says, "I judge no man." His first coming into the world was as Savior; His second coming will be as Judge. Even though they were seeking to kill Him, He was leaving the door of mercy open to them. When He does come as judge, His judgment will be true, for He is truth itself. The Divine Witness

"The witness of two men is true." This was the demand of the law that a plurality of witnesses be secured before conviction. This does not affirm that two or more witnesses could not frustrate justice by agreeing together to offer false testimony. Jesus was merely citing the requirement of

the law and then stating that He was able to present the confirmation of God: “I am not alone; but I and the Father that sent me.” Jesus declared that He bore witness of Himself, but the Father also testified. If the testimony of two men was accepted under the Old Testament law, how much more His unity with God and His individual personality; neither Unitarianism nor Sabellianism is in harmony with the teaching of Jesus.

“Where is thy Father?” They demanded the actual appearance of the witness to testify. Jesus responded that it was not surprising they, in spite of all His miracles and His teaching, still professed ignorance of the identity of His Father, for they had not even perceived the identity of Jesus. This discussion took place in the section of the temple where the offerings were presented. Even though Jesus was condemning the Pharisees and the Sadducees in the very citadel of their power, they did not dare arrest Him. God’s providence was operating through fear of the multitude which held back the hierarchy from making an open arrest at this time. The very manner and Person of Jesus must also have been so majestic that it filled them with fear.

Doom of the Wicked

“I go away, and ye shall seek me; and shall die in your sin: Whither I go, ye cannot come.” They did not understand that Jesus was predicting His ascension and return to heaven. But the declaration that they would be unable to come where He was because they were to die in their sins must have been clear enough for them to understand that He was talking of heaven and hell. Because they were rejecting God’s mercy, they would go into eternal punishment. They would not be able to enter into heaven and disturb its peace and blessedness because they were opposing God’s Son now. This is not an announcement that there was no longer any offer of pardon to them, for in John 8:24 He explained this statement: “Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.” Jesus had made a similar statement in a previous sermon at the feast (John 7:33, John 7:34). This had brought forth the rejoinder that He must be planning to go among the Dispersion and teach the Greeks. Now they make a more vicious reply.

Whither?

“Will he kill himself, that he saith, whither I go, ye cannot come?” Certainly they understood He was talking of heaven and hell. To Jesus’ prediction of an eternal separation from them because they would die in their sins, they responded with bitter malice that Jesus would be the one to go to eternal perdition. The Jews held that those who committed self-murder went into the depths of Hades lower than any ordinary Jew could go. Thus they sought to reverse the meaning of Jesus; if they were to go to different places in eternity, then Jesus must be about to send Himself by suicide into the deepest place of eternal punishment. This vicious and hypocritical answer was also an attempt to answer Jesus’ revelation that they were plotting His death. They suggested that if there was any question about Jesus’ death at this time, He must have been planning to kill Himself.

Jesus’ Answer

Jesus answers calmly that they were from beneath (doing the will of the devil), while He was from above (from heaven where they could not come unless they believed on Him). They then asked, “Who art thou?” evidently not for information, but in order to lead Him to state His deity in such clear fashion as to give them grounds for stoning Him to death for blasphemy. He responded that He had already told them many times; since they did not desire to believe, they did not deserve to

hear a restatement.

It was not God's will that Jesus should die yet so He continued to make veiled statements. He had many things to speak to the world, and He must fulfill His ministry. His words were true, even as the One who had sent Him was true. This reply was so veiled that John adds, "They perceived not that he spake to them of the Father." Jesus was so fearless and invincible, so calm and self-possessed, so majestic and mysteriously powerful in word and deed they were unable to explain away His claims to deity. But since they had thrown away the key of knowledge in their deliberate rejection of Him, they found it extremely difficult to comprehend His profound teaching.

Final Evidence to Be Given

"When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he" (John 8:28). The crucifixion itself would bring forth the final proof of His claims in the sublime miracle of the resurrection. If they had already gone so far in their plots as to include Pilate's condemnation to death by crucifixion, then they probably caught a glimpse of His meaning. His promise was not that they would understand this prediction as He uttered it, but that after the event they would recall the prediction and understand. I am he means the Messiah, the Son of God, just as He had repeatedly claimed. His divine personality and God's spiritual program for the Messiah would become plain to them in His death. This was fulfilled in the understanding of the closest disciples and in all others who were willing to believe. Even now there were those among "the Jews" who believed, as John records at this point (John 8:30).

Those who were malicious in their determination to destroy Jesus rather than believe were still given this kind and sympathetic response. Jesus understood how hard it was for them to comprehend a Messianic kingdom which was spiritual rather than the earthly type they had desired, and especially a Messianic kingdom which was to be brought into existence by the death of the Messiah. Jesus patiently explained that they would be able to understand after they looked back on the event; the things beyond their comprehension now would become clear then.

Sinlessness

Jesus closed what seems to have been a period in His sermon by affirming, "He that sent me is with me; he hath not left me alone." Jesus seemed to be helpless and alone, ringed about with fiendish enemies seeking at every instant to kill Him, but He calmly assured them that He was not alone, for God was with Him. In the portion of the sermon that follows we have one of the grand assertions of Jesus' sinlessness in a negative form of a challenge to them to state and prove any sin He had ever committed. It is often overlooked that He made this claim at this point in His sermon in the positive form: "I do always the things that are pleasing to him." No mere human being can affirm such a thing. Criticisms of His life by those who knew Him intimately would immediately overwhelm any mere man. Only the God-man could achieve perfection. This positive affirmation needs to be taken with the negative form that follows in order to make the claim of Jesus complete.

Disciples Confirmed

"Many believed on him" because of the majesty of His Person and the profound nature of His teaching, as well as His miracles. The following claims are made in this sermon: (1) His

declaration of His Messiahship with absolute assurance: “I am he”; (2) His deity (John 8:23, John 8:29); (3) His sinlessness (John 8:29); (4) His foreknowledge of His death (John 8:28); (5) His assurance of the power of the gospel to bring faith after He had been crucified (John 8:28).

Jesus now addressed exhortation to the ones who had believed on Him: “If ye abide in my word, then are ye my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31). Perhaps these disciples were standing apart from the unbelieving Jews, who were attacking Christ. To abide in the words of Jesus means not to make a visit to them or a temporary residence in them, but to live permanently in the sacred precincts of His teaching and life — to have the words of Christ so enshrined in the memory that they are the constant compass and unfailing guide that enables a person to walk in the company of Christ. There are disciples true and false. The ones who abide in Christ’s words, so that Christ abides in their hearts and lives, prove the reality of their discipleship.

Retort of Jewish Leaders

It is plain that those who now believed in Christ were not the ones who were insulted by His offer to teach them the truth that they might be free from sin and from the penalty of sin, which is death. They who were of the malicious leadership of the Sanhedrin said: “We are Abraham’s seed, and have never yet been in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free” (John 8:33). The fact that many in the crowd made plain that they believed in Jesus caused these Jewish leaders to take up the battle again and try to turn the tide against Him.

These leaders took Jesus’ words as insinuating that their teaching was not true and that they had left the nation in bondage; they themselves were also slaves. This is the very force of what Jesus said. It is not clear whether they had political slavery in mind and defiantly denied their bondage under Roman occupation, whose right to rule Israel they did not recognize; or whether they comprehended the deeper spiritual meaning of what Jesus was saying but denied their bondage to sin. They naturally referred to Abraham since he was father of the race on whose ancestry they relied as God’s chosen people. In His discussion with them at the second Passover of His ministry, their relationship to Moses and dependence upon Moses had been discussed (John 5:45-47). This was also true of the debate with the Zealots at Capernaum (John 6:30-40). Descent from Abraham as the chosen people of God was now the basis for their claim to freedom.

Actual Slavery

“Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin” (John 8:34). Jesus made perfectly clear that He had used the word bondage in the sense of the slavery which sin brings. Again there is the implicit claim to sinlessness by Jesus. He is the Savior of sinners. He alone can set them free. “And the bondservant abideth not in the house for ever: the son abideth for ever” (John 8:35) They claimed they were not slaves, but Jesus responded that all men are shaves to sin until they have accepted the redemption from sin which the Son of God came from heaven to offer. The “house” represents the presence of God. Christ’s words have just been represented as a building in which a disciple may live. The Son is sinless, hence He is free and abides in the house forever, even as He is the Son of God. They were sinful and, being in bondage, could not abide in the presence of God unless they allowed Jesus to set them free from sin. “If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36). Just as the world could not give or receive or even

comprehend the real peace of God, so they could not understand or receive the heavenly freedom without Christ.

“I know that ye are Abraham’s seed; yet ye seek to kill me, because my word hath not free course in you” (John 8:37). Jesus readily admitted their claim to be of blood relationship with Abraham, but the higher spiritual relationship they did not possess. They repudiated any relationship with Abraham by their murderous plots against Jesus. It was most important for the preaching of the gospel that all the world should recognize that Jesus knew the plots against His life. He was not overpowered by evil men, but gave Himself voluntarily for the sins of the world. For this reason and for the purpose of solemnly warning these wicked men against the murderous intents in their hearts, Jesus kept calmly revealing to the multitude the plots these leaders were seeking to carry Out. Jesus now laid down the charge that their real father was the devil since they were doing his bidding: “I speak the things which I have seen with my Father: and ye also do the things which ye heard from your father” (John 8:38). Jesus affirmed His former presence in heaven with God His Father — “I have seen”; He revealed their efforts to do what the devil had suggested to them.

Actual Descent The Jewish leaders comprehended, but did not like to admit the content of His last words. They repeated their claim that Abraham was their father, thus denying any imputation that they had a father who was suggesting evil conduct to them. Jesus responded that actions speak louder than words. “If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I heard from God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the works of your father” (John 8:39-41). They were Abraham’s children, but their evil deeds did not harmonize with their ancestor. Their actions pointed rather to another father of malignant character. The Jews caught up Jesus’ admission that they were physically descended from Abraham and tried to answer this charge that they were descended from another (spiritual) father. They declared they were truly Abraham’s children in the spiritual sense as well as the physical: “Abraham’s blood in our veins and Abraham’s faith in our hearts.” No idolatrous desertion of God had blotted their spiritual descent. They claimed to be “the offspring of the man of God with his chosen people.” They wrestled with the charge of Jesus that they had another father who was evil. They turned now to the spiritual idea of fatherhood and affirmed that God was their father: “We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God” (John 8:41).

Declarations of Deity

Jesus responded to this by showing that their evil deeds proved that their spiritual relationship was to the devil. The ready proof was also seen in their refusal to understand and believe Jesus. His assertion of His deity is made very clear: “If God were your Father, ye would love me.” The Jews are receiving a plain, clear answer to their question as to where His Father is (John 8:19) and, “Who art thou?” (John 8:25). Come forth answers Where?” — heaven; from God answers “Who?” He sent me answers concerning His divine authority. He will furnish further decisive answers as to His deity before the discussion is over. The Father of Lies

“Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do” (John 8:43, John 8:44). The Jews did not understand what Jesus was saying because they refused to hear His words. They had so filled their minds and hearts with the determination to seek the worldly things, which the devil offers, that there was no room left for the truth of God to find lodgment in their hearts. Jesus now

spoke plainly of the identity of their father. They could not misunderstand this. They could only reject it if they were determined to do the will of their father the devil.

“He was a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44). The devil had murdered Adam and Eve in the sense of utterly destroying their blessed estate in the Garden of Eden and bringing death upon them. He was the father of lies in the sense of telling the first lie to Eve and causing her to doubt and disobey God. His leading Cain to murder Abel followed. This reference is one of the clearest statements of Jesus which affirms the reality of the devil’s existence and the historic verity of the early chapters of Genesis. A denial of the reality of Satan’s existence and the truth of the Genesis accounts instantly implies a denial of the deity of Christ. This passage in John’s Gospel seals the testimony of Christ on this issue. “But because I say the truth, ye believe me not” (John 8:45). The truth which Jesus revealed to them was so unwelcome to them that they closed their minds against it. He had condemned their sins, uncovered their hypocrisy, and proved the falsity of their whole system. His revelation of His deity in this sermon, as in preceding declarations, confirmed the absolute truth of His indictment of their whole system. Therefore the more clearly He revealed the truth to them the more they determined in their wicked hearts not to believe on Him.

Sinlessness of Jesus

“Which of you convicteth me of sin?” He had affirmed in this sermon His absolute perfection: “I do always the things that are pleasing to him” (John 8:29). He now demanded that they specify against Him since they refused to believe His declarations. His challenge for anyone to point out any sin He had ever committed means He flatly affirmed His sinlessness. This must include His childhood and youth as well as His manhood. The Jews were not able to take up this challenge. They had been seeking evidence all along in their eagle watch on His ministry and His teaching. They had pointed out that He had broken their traditions, but the truth and authority of their traditions had to be proved. Jesus had shown that they were false where they contradicted the Word of God. They had charged Jesus with doing and teaching contrary to the Old Testament law. They had not been able to specify on this exactly, but they sensed this and at the last charged that He had “perverted the nation” (Luke 23:2). But if Jesus’ claim to be the Son of God was true, and all that He taught as directly revealed from God was the divine program of setting aside the Old that the New Will might be revealed, this charge fell to the ground. They had accused Jesus of blasphemy in one of the earliest exchanges between Him and the scholars, but Jesus had immediately proved that He did have authority on earth to forgive sins by working a miracle of healing upon the paralytic (Matthew 9:3-8). They had spread abroad whisperings that Jesus was a gluttonous man and a winebibber, but this was so obviously malicious slander that it did not deserve refutation by Jesus. He merely stated publicly their charge and left all to judge for themselves (Matthew 11:19).

Through the ages no one has been able to point out any flaw in His character. This is not only true on the negative side of disobedience to God, but His positive devotion in ceaseless service to the Father towers so far above anything any mere man has been able to achieve, it invites us constantly to attempt to reach up and touch the sky. The fact that Jesus had no consciousness of sin is clearly set forth in this challenge. Godet says: Had he been merely a super-eminently holy man with a conscience as tender as such a degree of sanctity implies, He would not have suffered the smallest sin, whether in His life or heart, to pass unperceived; and what hypocrisy, it would, in

this case, have been to put to others a question whose favorable solution would have rested only on their ignorance of facts which He himself knew to be real! A succinct summation of the entire sinless life of Jesus was made by the hardened Roman governor at the final trial when He was condemned to death: “I find no fault in this man” (Luke 23:4); “Why, what evil hath this man done? I have found no cause of death in him” (Luke 23:22). The charge on which Pilate had condemned Him to death was stated over the cross: “This is the King of the Jews.” The final charge the Jews had urged against Him was that He was guilty of blasphemy in that He had claimed to be the Son of God. But if Jesus’ claim was true, and the evidence was overwhelming in sustaining it, then the charge fell of its own weight. A closing question deserves to be asked: “Who else has ever made such a claim to sinlessness and caused the world to listen to his words?” How else can His sinlessness be explained except by His being the Son of God? The absolute uniqueness of Jesus is established by this claim. A Samaritan and Demon-possessed

Jesus closed His assertion of sinlessness with the demand that they believe upon him since they could not contradict His claim. In John 8:47 He explains why they did not believe on Him. It was because they were doing the devil’s bidding and were bent on wickedness. They resorted to violent abuse to save face in the midst of their inability to prove any wrongdoing: “Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a demon?” (John 8:48). They indicated that they had been making this charge and were just then bringing it out into the open. Investigating how it had been possible for Him to wait in Galilee until all the pilgrims had gone and then arrive in the midst of the feast, they undoubtedly had been able to discover that He had come by the short route down the backbone of the mountain range through Samaria. Whether they also knew of His earlier brief ministry at Sychar we do not know. They merely made this charge in process of flinging all the noisome epithets they could summon against Him. To call a Jew a Samaritan was close to the bottom of the heap of all the personal abuse which could be imagined. This was a fling at His obscure origin and His lack of standing with the scholars and wealthy leaders of the nation. Sadler interprets, “Thou art born of spiritual fornication, Thou art of an outcast race, Thou art an alien from the Church and the worship of God.” These were the “bitterest and most malicious words they could apply to him” (Commentary on John, p. 232).

Jesus’ Reply

One of the indications that Jesus did not allow Himself to be moved by this slander is seen in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, where He makes the religious outcast the hero of the account. The additional charge now made that He had a demon was a repetition of a similar charge made shortly after His arrival at this feast (John 7:20). The devastating arguments Jesus had advanced against their earlier charge that He was in league with the devil appears to have driven them from this line of attack to the insinuation that at least He was in the control of one of the devil’s angels. Jesus’ answer to this charge is calm and measured. He ignores the charge that He is a Samaritan and denied in the briefest manner that He had a demon. He affirmed again His divine authority: “I honor my Father, and ye dishonor me. But I seek not mine own glory; there is one that seeketh and judgeth” (John 8:49, John 8:50). There is to be a day of judgment when they must answer for their malicious slander and their bitter rejection and opposition. God would one day judge all the world. He would do this through His Son. Jesus already had set forth at the second Passover that He would be the Judge of the world (John 5:27). The Judgment Day The ultimate consideration for man in a state of defiance against God is death and the judgment. Jesus continually turned to this

final phase of man's existence on earth and his supreme hour of need. Jesus denied the truth of their charges and then delivered a gentle answer and promise: "If a man keep my word, he shall never see death" (John 8:51). He had just told them that they would die in their sins if they rejected Him; they would never enjoy the blessings of heaven. He now affirms the opposite. He takes up the discourse they had interrupted at John 8:32. To keep His word means to hear it, study it, comprehend it, accept it, cherish it, live by it. It is not merely in the Gospel of John that we find such exclusive emphasis upon the word of Christ as the basis of the final judgment. This is the climactic close of the Sermon on the Mount with the parable of the house built on the rock and the one built on the sand.

Greater Than Abraham? The Jews took Jesus' enigmatical statement concerning death as referring to physical death, where as Jesus had referred to the second death in hell. They charged that this statement was further proof that He was deranged, since even the father of the Jewish race and all the prophets had died. They now made this promise of Jesus the basis for their demand that He give a further and clearer affirmation of His deity. Does He claim to be greater than Abraham and the prophets? "Whom makest thou thyself?" (John 8:53). Jesus now gave a second clear declaration of His deity: "It is my Father that glorifieth me; of whom ye say that he is your God" (John 8:54). They had insisted that He tell of whom He was speaking when He talked of His Father. Jesus answered with a brief, plain affirmation. He then reiterated the reason they did not understand His claims nor believe on Him; it was because they did not know God. His reference to Abraham met their demand that He state whether He claimed to be greater than Abraham. His final assertion of deity dwarfed any weak affirmation of superiority to Abraham. He represented Abraham as looking forward in faith and hope to the coming of Christ as the time of fulfillment of God's day of glory for man's redemption. ""Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56). The a.s.v. offers as an alternate translation in the footnote "that he should see." God had promised Abraham that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through Him, and in the light of this revelation which had been granted to him, Abraham had seen the day of the fulfillment in one of his descendants. As he looked forward to the fulfillment of this glorious promise, he saw, as far as possible the time of Christ's coming into the world. Then from Paradise Abraham doubtless saw Jesus' earthly ministry. At the transfiguration Moses and Elijah had conversed with Christ concerning His approaching death. This was the answer to their question; His superiority to Abraham followed immediately upon Abraham's attitude: "Jesus was the object of Abraham's faith, hope, and religious joy."

Eternality of Christ

"Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" (John 8:57). Jesus had spoken of Abraham's looking forward in intense expectation to the day when Christ would come. They turned this around to His seeing Abraham. Their high estimate of fifty, which He certainly could not exceed, leads one to wonder whether the ceaseless toil and suffering had made Jesus look older than one would expect. With characteristic perversity B. W. Bacon of Yale held that this scripture proves Jesus was fifty years and Luke's declaration that Jesus was about thirty years old when He came to be baptized is false. But the Jews were merely making a guess which was admittedly high in order to clear the ground for their argument. Even if He was fifty, and He evidently was not, yet He could not have seen Abraham. If He had not seen Abraham, then presumably Abraham could not have seen Him. They were attempting to dodge the grand fact of the Messianic promises in the

Old Testament. They were perverse in insisting on a literal meaning of His words.

“Before Abraham was born, I am” (John 8:58). This is the third clear assertion of deity in this sermon, and it is one of the most unassailable. Modernists have attempted to set aside His claims, such as, “My Father worketh until now, and I work” (John 5:17), which caused the Jews to charge, “also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God”; “1 and the Father are one” (John 10:30); “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). They attempt to apply these tremendous assertions to themselves, since man was made in the image of God. But no amount of such violent handling of the text can enable them to evade the force of this statement, “Before Abraham was, I am.” Jesus gave the most profound emphasis by His solemn introduction, “Verily, verily, I say unto you.” The fact that Jesus used the sacred name of God, I am, is most impressive (Exodus 3:14). Twice before in this discourse He had said, “I am he,” but here He applies to Himself the sacred name of God. If Jesus had said, “Before Abraham was born, I was,” it would have been understood that He meant He had been in existence before Abraham, but the words I am make clear that Jesus affirmed eternality. The unbelieving Jews could no longer doubt this and took up stones to kill Him. This was the opportunity they had sought through this entire discourse. In the very midst of a great throng in such a public place and in a location where He could be easily seen and heard, escape from death seems to have been exactly as it was at Nazareth when the mob attempted to throw Him from the rim of the precipice. He revealed His divine Person to them in such heavenly majesty that they shrank back from Him in terror, and He walked through their midst without a single person daring to lay hands upon Him or to cast a stone at Him (Luke 4:29, Luke 4:30).

090. Chapter 31 - The Man Born Blind

Chapter 31 - The Man Born Blind

John 9:1-41 The Blind Man

John’s introduction of the healing of the man born blind leaves uncertain whether it followed immediately upon the preceding debate with the Jewish leaders. “And as he passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth.” Nor is the location made clear; since “he sat and begged,” the blind man probably was seated at one of the main entrances to the temple. This possibility immediately introduces the question as to how much he knew about Jesus and the apostles, how often he had heard Jesus preach, and how much he had heard about the miracles of Jesus. He answered his questioners promptly as to who had cured him: “the man that is called Jesus.” This increases the probability that he recognized the voice of Jesus when the conversation began concerning his affliction. The question His disciples asked about the man seems to have been inspired by the manner in which Jesus stopped and looked upon the blind man. The query would have excited the most intense interest in the heart of the man: “Rabbi, who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?” The man, even if he could not recognize the person who spoke, would realize that a learned rabbi was being asked a profound question. This would assist him in immediately identifying Jesus as the one who answered. Such a case was held to be hopeless as far as human aid was concerned (John 9:32). The Popular Theory The apostles suggested the current theory that all affliction is the immediate result of specific sin. The manner of their question seems to shut up the proposition to the sin of the parents. But they might have had some idea that a direct act of God had brought the affliction upon the man on the basis of His foreknowledge of what the man would do In His reply Jesus did not endorse the idea that all affliction is the result of the sin of the person or persons involved. He affirmed exactly the opposite: “Neither did this man sin, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be manifest in him” (John 9:3). Thus Jesus disposed of the popular theory and announced His intention to heal the man. All this must have had a tremendous impact upon the man. Jesus heaves unsolved that most difficult of philosophical problems — the reason for human suffering, but Jesus came to save man’s soul rather than to satisfy his curiosity.

Sin and Suffering The immediate relationship between sin and suffering is ordinarily obvious in the life of a human being. But there are times when such a connection is not manifest. The noblest of persons in the midst of the most sacrificial living may suddenly contract a contagious disease and die. “Why does God suffer?” is the ultimate question. Jesus continually reminds us that the hope of heaven holds the key to the mystery of human suffering. That Jesus worked miracles to give tangible proof of the validity of His claims to deity and the truth of the gospel in no way denies that He was moved by sympathy for human suffering. As the soul Is more important than the body so spiritual suffering is more dreadful than physical suffering. The salvation of the souls of lost men is chief among “the works of him that sent me.”

Textual Difference The textual problem in John 9:4 offers the familiar pattern of the a.s.v. , following the text of Sinaiticus and Vaticanus against the vast majority of manuscripts. The a.v. has, “I must work the work of him that sent me.” The a.s.v. says, “We must work.” The incongruity of joining we with me is self-evident. The night cometh suggests His death and the close of Jesus’ ministry and fits with the a.v. text “I must work.” If the a.s.v. reading is correct, then “the day” is the earthly life of each individual, and “the night” is death, when earthly toil is over. This reading fits with “when no man can work.” His Faith Tested The extraordinary character of this blind man begins to emerge. His keen intellect had followed closely the discussion of his misfortune by Jesus and the apostles. The anointing of his eyes with clay gave him time for reflection. It stirred his faith that Jesus was about to heal him by a miracle, even as He had said that the works of God were about to be manifest in him. It tested his faith as Jesus gave the decisive command to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam. The man’s obedience was instant and unquestioned. The Pool of Siloam lies south of the temple area where the low slope of Ophel sinks into the juncture of the Tyropean Valley and the Valley of Hinnom. it receives its supply of water by an underground aqueduct from the intermittent spring called “The Virgin’s Pool.” The Greek verb nipto (wash) is used, which indicates he did not immerse himself, but only washed the clay from his eyes as Jesus had commanded. If he had been seated at one of the gates of the temple, he would not have had to travel more than a half mile. With what trembling excitement he must have searched out the familiar landmarks and made his way to the pool.

First Testimony The man seems to have returned immediately to the temple area. To see all the glories of the temple buildings would have filled the dreams of a lifetime. But to see Jesus would have been his immediate longing. His old friends and neighbors could scarcely recognize him. His appearance had changed as the shrunk, sightless eye sockets were replaced with shining eyes that transformed his face with radiant joy. The excited discussion among his friends as to his identity was promptly ended by the man: “I am he.” The question as to how he had gained eyesight was answered with simple, direct recital of the facts. The desire of these friends was to see Jesus, but the man could give no information.

Further Witnesses

“They bring to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind” (John 9:13). The motive is not evident. If they were favorable to Jesus, then they would be seeking to force the unbelieving hierarchy to face this new sensational evidence. If they were subservient to the Pharisees, they were trying to help them suppress the extraordinary testimony which the man was openly presenting in the temple area. That the combat which followed was deliberately planned by Jesus is evident from the fact that He had selected the sabbath as the day on which to work this miracle. The miracle was about to undergo the most severe investigation possible. This was for those present and for all the ages. Moreover, the nation could not be saved until the strangle hold of these false leaders had been broken. And if they themselves were to be saved, they must be forced to face the facts. That the man should have been left alone to face the furious controversy with the famous scholars of the nation resulted from Jesus’ sudden disappearance. It offered further testing of his faith. It brought out the verity of the miracle as nothing else could. What further tests of the actuality of the miracle could modern science have made? His ailment was not a temporary loss of sight; the man had been blind from birth. The Sanhedrin was unable to confuse the witnesses on this point. The account of how the miracle took place and the reality of his eyesight could not be denied.

Pharisees Face a Crisis The Pharisees called the scholars together to meet this new crisis. The rigorous questioning of the man brought forth a simple, factual answer. He was not overawed by the famous assembly. He knew his facts and stated them clearly. He refused to be browbeaten. The testimony and the evidence were so overwhelming that even the assembly of scholars became shaken and divided. The more hostile resorted to their previous charge against Jesus that He was not keeping the sabbath according to their interpretation of the law. Some who were more fair-minded offered deadly rebuttal: “How can a man that is a sinner do such signs” (John 9:16). The cumulative effect of all the preceding miracles was added to the present one. This raises the question as to how many more of the Pharisees besides Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea would have spoken out thus in favor of Christ and whether any such division was in existence at the time of the trials and condemnation of Jesus. The minority must have been small; they lapsed into silence as the controversy became more hectic.

Cross Examination The next step was to question the man: “What sayest thou of him, in that he opened thine eyes” (John 9:17). Their bitter scorn of the man’s opinion later on shows that now they were fighting for time in the midst of a desperately embarrassing situation, and that they were hoping to show that the man was prejudiced in favor of Jesus or at least to tangle him in a discussion which would reveal his ignorance. The man spoke again with utter simplicity, but he also showed amazing shrewdness. Instead of plunging into their arguments — a sinner vs. not a sinner, he gave a different answer: “He is a prophet.” He knew his Old Testament well enough to give this wise answer. The prophets were not sinless. The Old Testament very frankly relates the derelictions of various prophets. But they had faithfully delivered God’s message while fighting the battle against temptation in their own lives. In their debate among themselves the Pharisees had meant that Jesus was “a sinner” in the sense of being in open rebellion against God’s revelation in the Old Testament. They were confusing their opinions as to interpretation of the sabbath with the actual truth God had revealed. They found themselves unable to refute or upset the man’s blunt response.

Cowardly Parents The investigation now turned upon the question as to whether the man had actually been born blind. The parents proved as cowardly as their son was fearless. This was the sort of reaction to their pressure which they had sought in the man born blind. The testimony of the parents was clear that he was their son and that he had been born blind, but they refused to enter the discussion of the miracle. They had not been present when the miracle occurred. john comments on the fear of the parents and its cause: “for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man should confess him to be Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue (John 9:22). This excommunication would prevent a Jew from enjoying any of the privileges of worship in the temple or a synagogue. Presumably the temple guard would forcibly eject such a person from the temple courts, and the local rabbi would be instructed to forbid entrance to the synagogue. Thus the very choice privilege which the man born blind had now within his reach for the first time were in danger of being snatched from him. This pressure was exerted on his parents, and its miserable results furnished calculated threats against the man born blind.

“Third Degree” Pressure The second interview with the man became a “third degree” examination with all the threats and intimidation they could supply. “Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner” (John 9:24). This was a new approach. Instead of attempting to deny the miracle, they offered the positive suggestion to the man that he should give the glory to God. They united very

cleverly with this their own accusation that Jesus was a sinner. The ground on which they said “we know” was that He did not keep their regulations about the sabbath. The man refused to engage in technical discussion of their regulations or the validity of their charge. He insisted on standing on the solid ground of his own experience: “Whether he is a sinner, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see” (John 9:25). This reply is most powerful testimony. Here is a historic fact of colossal proportions. Their theory could not stand once the fact was established.

They were so stunned by the calm assurance of the man and his unshakable testimony, they could only fight for time by asking that he relate again the entire account of his healing. They evidently hoped he would contradict himself in some manner or offer them some opening to attack his testimony. The man was shrewd enough to see through their hypocrisy, so he boldly challenged their motives in demanding a second recital of the facts. “I told you even now, and ye did not hear; wherefore would ye hear it again? would we also become his disciples?” (John 9:27). The boldness of this taunt from a man unlearned who had suffered the handicap of blindness from birth is most impressive. He spoke with the simplicity of a little child in thus going to the heart of the matter. But there was deep sarcasm in his words. Great scholars were they, but they could not understand or recall even the most vivid narration of an event enacted in their midst. He saw through their wicked pretense and added sarcastically that they must have been planning to become His disciples. He boldly added also, making his first clear declaration of faith. As the discussion goes on, his faith increases at every step, and his boldness keeps pace. His parents have just been bullied into submission, but he serves notice that he has no fear of them. They reviled him probably indicates a chorus of jeers and insults. “Thou art his disciple.” This much they felt they had proved, but what they could gain from it remained to be seen. “But we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken unto Moses: but as for this man, we know not whence he is” (John 9:28, John 9:29). The ground of their faith that Moses was a prophet speaking for God was the same sort of evidence they now rejected from Jesus — the miracles that were wrought.

Resort to Violence The man born blind argued this very point with powerful force. He again used sarcasm, saying this was truly a remarkable thing that the great scholars of the nation could not determine whence Jesus was, while they had before them indubitable evidence of this astounding miracle Jesus had just worked. Then he plunged into their debate — a sinner vs. not a sinner: “We know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and do his will, him he heareth” (John 9:31). See how ancient and accurate was his description of a faithful messenger of God. “If this man were not from God, he could do nothing” (John 9:33). Now the man advances His position as his faith grows. He is defining what he hid meant by “a prophet.” Unable to reply to such scorching, logical denunciation from this unlettered man, they cast him out: “Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us” (John 9:34). They cited his misfortune of having been born blind as disqualifying him for further testimony. They have arrived too late at this conclusion, for his bold witness had already been given for the ages. Unable to disprove either his testimony as to the miracle or the logic of his argumentation based upon the miracle, they sought welcome escape from their embarrassment by driving him out. The Lord and His Disciple At this very moment Jesus returned to the scene of action. The man had fought a brave battle for the truth. He was being tempted to think that his struggle for the right had been in vain. His faith had developed under the pressure of fierce persecution to the point where he deserved the full revelation which Christ could give. We are not told where this meeting took place. From John 9:22,

John 9:27-32 we conclude that the man, having declared openly that he was a disciple of Christ, had not only been thrust out of the Sanhedrin council chamber, but that he was now excommunicated from the temple area. Jesus chose the time and place for this meeting, and He probably came to the man near the temple area and in a place where a quiet interview was possible. The Good Confession The approach of Jesus was blunt and brusque. He demanded an answer to the question, “Dost thou believe on the Son of God?” The man had made a very courageous defense of Jesus before the assembly of scholars. He had been very careful and cautious as to what he affirmed. But under the pressure of persecution his faith had constantly grown with bolder assertions. Jesus now asked him to go the full length of affirming His deity. Nothing short of this would suffice. The man still showed a hardheaded clinging to known facts. This is the first time he had even seen Jesus. How his eyes must have fastened upon Christ as he stood before Him. He had been able to recognize Jesus’ voice and profound teaching when he was still blind. But his cautious nature was shown in his demand for absolute certainty. He was convinced that he was in the presence of Jesus, the Son of God, for he called him “Lord,” but he desired absolute assurance.

Saul’s Similar Dilemma

“And who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him?” His response reminds one of the question Saul asked Jesus on the road to Damascus: “Who art thou, Lord?” (Acts 9:5). The salutation Lord indicates that Saul did recognize both the identity and deity of Christ, and yet the question asked definite explicit identification. His question condensed in one gasp all the desperate battle of faith and doubt which had raged for months in his heart while he was “kicking against the pricks” (of Stephen’s dying testimony?). He recognized who Jesus was, but like the man born blind he wanted. absolute assurance. In his presentation of this evidence of the risen Christ, Paul testified not merely to a blinding light and a divine voice, but he affirmed he had actually seen Christ in the same unquestionable manner as the other apostles and eyewitnesses: “Am I not free? am I not an apostle? have I not seen Jesus our Lord” (1 Corinthians 9:1). Although he looked at the prints of the nails in His hands and feet and saw the face of Jesus, Saul yet demanded the absolute certainty of assertion of identity by Christ. The reaction of the man born blind the first time he had seen Jesus was precisely the same. The majestic answers of Jesus to Saul and to this man are thrilling. To the man born blind He said, “Thou hast both seen him, and he it is that speaketh with thee” (John 9:37). The man at the first meeting could only depend upon his hearing; now he had the testimony of both sight and hearing with the absolute assurance Jesus gave of His identity. The words seen him cite the evidence of the miracle. The man’s confession of faith was both in word and in deed. He said humbly, “Lord, I believe”; and, prostrating himself before Jesus in divine worship, he made his self-surrender and dedication complete.

Manuscript Difference

Three problems arise in the interpretation of this scene. The first is the manuscript difference in John 9:5 : “Son of God” vs. “Son of man.” Again the translators of the a.s.v. faced the choice between following Sinaiticus and Vaticanus Son of man or the majority of the Greek manuscripts, which have Son of God. They have been criticized for allowing too much weight to these two manuscripts, but in this passage they rejected the reading of Sinaiticus and Vaticanus and accepted as genuine the reading Son of God. The important manuscripts that have Son of man

are) B D W, and the Sinaitic-Syriac. Son of God is the reading in A L K X Q■Y, and most other manuscripts together with the important testimony of the Syriac and Old Latin versions and Tertullian, Origen, Chrysostom, Nonnus, and Cyril. The context plainly requires Son of God. Sadler points out that Jesus would not have required from the man less than a full declaration of faith. Looking at the other confessions of faith in the Gospel accounts, we see immediately that Jesus is always acknowledged as Son of God (Matthew 14:33; Matthew 16:16; John 1:49; John 11:27; c[. John 20:28). The title Son of man is equivalent to Christ; Son of God makes a full declaration of deity. Godet declares that the fact the man born blind worshiped Jesus as God at the close shows that Jesus used the term Son of God. To this must be added the fact that he addressed Jesus as Lord in both of his replies. The Man's Background The entire background of the man must be taken into account. He had a daily location where with but slight effort he could have heard Jesus preach many times and could have witnessed His thrilling claims to deity. He simply could not have failed to hear the backwash from the controversies which resulted from these claims and the many attempts to kill Jesus as a blasphemer for having claimed to be the Son of God. The preceding chapter of John records just such a fierce discussion and such an attempt at assassination. The astounding declaration "Before Abraham was born, I am" would have swept through the city like a tornado. It requires incredible credulity to suppose the man born blind was seated on top of the volcano and knew nothing of it.

Lord The second difficulty is that the Greek word kurios can mean either sir or Lord. It can be respectful address to a human being or reverent address to God. Here is a place where the translators have to read the heart of the person and render the verdict in their translation. Both the a.v. and the a.s.v. translate Lord, which has the man asserting his belief in the deity of Christ in both of his replies. He is demanding that Jesus give him the absolute assurance of identifying Himself, but in his heart the man believes.

Proskuneo The third difficulty arises from the Greek verb proskuneo — to worship. Godet did not take this into consideration in his citation of the clinching evidence that the man worshiped Jesus. Thayer gives the following definition of proskuneo:

(to prostrate one's self); prop. to kiss the hand to (towards) one, in token of reverence:….among the Orientals, esp. the Persians, to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence...hence in the N.T. by kneeling or prostration to do homage (to one) to make obeisance.

He then declares that it is used in the New Testament both of homage shown to man and worship "rendered to God and the ascended Christ, to heavenly beings, and to demons." Professor Thayer was head of the New Testament department in Unitarian Harvard Divinity School. As secretary of the New Testament Committee that translated the a.s.v. he exerted a strong influence on the translation. He was able to have footnotes accepted which recorded his radical influence in regard to the meaning of this word. These radical footnotes in the American Standard Version come forth in full bloom in the text of the Revised Standard Version. Thayer was trying to deny that any eyewitness ever worshiped Jesus as God during His ministry. This is the very heart of the attack the Revised Standard Version makes on the deity of Christ in its double-dialect "thou-you" translation. As Robinson argues that the disciples did not begin to develop new ideas (myths!) until Pentecost, so the meaning of this verb proskuneo is rendered in the Revised Standard Version to

fit this radical theory. In fact the Revised Standard Version will not permit the apostles to address Jesus as God even in the resurrection appearance at the ascension (Acts 1:6). Of course, the Revised Standard Version adopts the reading Son of man in John 9:35. It is again the kerygma attack on the deity of Christ. A footnote in the a.s.v. on John 9:38 sends the reader back to Matthew 2:2, where the Wise men "come to worship him." That first footnote reads, "The Greek word denotes an act of reverence whether paid to a creature (see Matthew 4:9; Matthew 18:20), or to the Creator (see Matthew 4:10)." It is impossible for us to know how much understanding there was in the hearts of the Wise men as they prostrated themselves before Christ the King. But why should any translators jog the elbow of readers at this point to tell them they need not conclude that the Wise men had had a revelation of the deity of Christ? Why should not the reader be left free to his own conclusions? The Worship of the Wise Men

Matthew definitely informs us that the Wise men received a miraculous revelation from God as to how they should return home (Matthew 2:12). The natural inference is that God gave them a miraculous revelation to start them on their journey. Since they did not even know Micah 5:2 (Matthew 2:1-6), they would not have understood an obscure passage such as Numbers 24:17, if they had had secondhand, or even firsthand, contact with the Old Testament. They certainly would have been more likely to understand Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah 9:7 than Numbers 24:17.

God did not give them a complete revelation of the star, informing them that the child would be born in Bethlehem. They could have made the journey in secrecy if He had. Instead, God caused a miraculous moving star to shine, guiding them on their journey. They were permitted to blunder around in Jerusalem with their explosive question, "Where is the new-born King?" Thus the entire nation was given this preliminary announcement. The slaughter of the infants silenced the excitement, but in God's own time the evidence would be assembled. Has anyone suggested a logical reason why God would not have given the Wise men a miraculous revelation of the supernatural character of the Messiah at the start of their journey? Luke definitely informs us that God revealed this profound fact to the shepherds through His angels, "Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). Why should the Wise men have been kept in ignorance of the deity of the Christ? If they merely regarded Jesus as an earthly king, a petty, local king of a tiny province in the Roman Empire, why should they have bothered to make such a long journey and bring such precious gifts?

Worship of the Devil The citation which Thayer feels makes assured his assertion that proskuneo is used in the New Testament of homage to created beings absolutely destroys his whole contention. It is the temptation of the devil in Matthew 4:9, "If thou wilt fall down and worship me The argument runs like this: "The devil is a created being, is he not? He actually proposed that Jesus worship him, did he not?" Such reasoning is shallow beyond description. What did Jesus say that the devil meant by proskuneo? He meant divine worship; he was demanding that the worship given to God be given to him. Hear Jesus' stinging reply: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." A Sycophant's Worship The same proposition appears in the second passage cited (Matthew 18:26), where the king in the parable both represents God and is addressed by the wicked servant as Lord. We cannot tell whether this is mere scenery of the parable where the king represents God or whether it is the contemptible course of a sycophant offering to man what should have been reserved for God. In the Book of Revelation when John, mistaking an angel for Christ, starts to worship the angel, he is instantly rebuked: "See thou do it

not: I am thy fellow servant...worship God" (Revelation 19:10). Thayer says the verb is used of heavenly beings, but observe here that it is rejected by an angel, who declares it is only to be given to God. Divine worship is repeatedly given to Christ in the Book of Revelation.

Worship of Peter, Paul, and Barnabas In horrified protest Peter refused to allow Cornelius to worship him: "Stand up; I myself also am a man (Acts 10:25, Acts 10:26). Thus also Paul and Barnabas rejected the proffered worship at Lystra: "They rent their garments, and sprang forth among the multitude, crying out and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you" (Acts 14:14, Acts 14:15). What could make it any plainer that proskuneo in the New Testament means divine worship; and that, when Jesus accepted this worship, He was making solemn claim to deity?

Summary on Worship of Jesus A study of the passages in the New Testament where proskuneo is used will show that it is uniformly used of the worship offered to God. The exceptions use this verb of the divine worship which is falsely sought by or offered to created beings. It is utterly perverse to argue that because the devil tempted Jesus to offer to him divine worship, therefore the word proskuneo is used in the New Testament of worship offered to created beings and that no one ever offered divine worship to Jesus during His earthly ministry. The depth of understanding involved in the divine worship given to Jesus undoubtedly varied according to the person and the circumstances. Is this not true today in our worship of God? Must we not confess with shame that sometimes we approach the throne of grace in prayer and offer worship that is ill-conceived, mechanical, disconnected, and without depth of thought and devotion? The Gospel narrators do not specify that the rich, young ruler worshiped Jesus. They do not use the word proskuneo. Mark records, There ran one to him, and kneeled to him" (Mark 10:17). The attitude of the young man was obviously just as shallow as his words. This is the very reason that Jesus replied with such a stern rebuke (Mark 10:18). The divine worship which the man born blind gave to Jesus was the fruitage of profound thought, miraculous evidence, and the majestic simplicity of Jesus' self-revelation (John 9:35-38). What a whirlwind of deep conviction and solemn dedication is evident in the man's humble confession: "Lord, I believe." As he prostrated himself on the ground before Christ in divine worship we are reminded of the occasions where the Old Testament prophets worshiped God as He appeared and spoke to them.

Final Discussion with Pharisees

"For judgment came I into this world, that they that see not may see; and they that see may become blind" (John 9:39). The conference with the blind man was evidently in private, but the Pharisees have now put in an appearance. It is not certain whether they had kept the man under surveillance and now entered the scene, or whether this confrontation occurred after an indefinite period while Jesus was preaching on the miracle. Jesus contrasts the physical blindness of the man who had opened his heart in faith and had been given his sight, with the Pharisees, whose spiritual blindness became the more hopeless by their having heard and rejected Jesus, the Light of the world. The Jews who thought they saw and understood everything are the type of all those who in their pride of knowledge and self-sufficiency reject the illumination of God's Son and become totally blind (Sadler). Jesus repeatedly declared that He did not enter the world at this first coming to judge the world, but to offer redemption. For judgment therefore came I into this world means therefore that Jesus was laying the ground of judgment by offering to all the saving

knowledge of God’s final revelation.

“Are we also blind?” (John 9:40). The declaration of Jesus had been too pointed for the Pharisees to ignore. Their protest is the acme of self-assurance as they affirmed their mastery of sight and truth. “If ye were blind, ye would have no sin.” Augustine’s explanation of this statement is best. If they had realized their blindness, then they would have sought the Light and repented, and He would have taken away their sin; but now, as they boast of their vision and reject the Light, their sin remains.

Dramatic Nature of This Account

Beyond all doubt the apostle John considered this account of the man born blind to be one of the highlights of his Gospel narrative. The grand climax of John’s Gospel comes in the twentieth chapter when Thomas is overwhelmed by the final evidence of the deity of Christ as he worships the risen Christ with the immortal words “My Lord and my God.” Chapter 11 is another high point, as Mary and Martha worship Jesus as the Son of God. But they had enormous advantages over this man born blind. They were from a background of culture and refinement, and had received the instruction and had enjoyed the fellowship of Jesus over a period of years. This man without sight from birth had to rise out of the depths of deprivation. He suddenly found himself in an encounter with Christ, and through his faith and obedience was healed by a prodigious miracle, but then he was confronted by all the learning, the skill, and the furious opposition which the celebrated leaders of the nation could assembly against him. His reasoning faculties and his ability to declare the facts and state his convictions were most remarkable. His high moral courage and his devotion to the truth were heroic. His confession of faith is for the ages.

091. Chapter 32 - The Good Shepherd

Chapter 32 - The Good Shepherd

John 10:1-21 Impact on the Man This beautiful sermon on the Good Shepherd is like a calm after a terrible storm, when contrasted to the bitter debates which preceded it. The reader is immediately inclined to speculate whether the sermon was delivered where the man born blind could hear or whether he received it by repetition from some hearer. The tender sympathy in the sermon makes one think of the man in his excommunication. Although he was shut out of all the glories of the temple worship, he yet received blessed assurance of a secure fold and a precious fellowship with Christ and His followers which made the temple services cold and barren by contrast. This sermon is in two divisions: (1) The Good Shepherd and the Sheep (John 10:1-6); (2) The Good Shepherd and the Hirelings (John 10:7-18). The aftermath of the sermon is recorded in John 10:19-21. The two key words are shepherd and door.

Sheep Folds For the protection of sheep from wild animals and robbers or even from wandering off in the night and becoming lost, it was necessary to construct folds for their protection. Bernard supposes that Jesus refers to the “open court yard in front of the house, where the sheep were folded for the night,” but the description is general and would fit a fold built out in the desert as well as one in a village. Where a fold was constructed in the desert or an open field, stones so abundant in Palestine would be generally available for a solid wall. Long branches of the dom tree with wide reach of their fearsome thorns placed on top of the wall would deter even a wolf from attempting to surmount. The wall surrounding a courtyard in a village could be more easily scaled. Peril from both thieves and wild animals enters into the sermon. The Robber

“He that entereth not by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber” (John 10:1). Any person with natural rights or good purposes would seek entrance by the door. The very act of climbing over the barrier during the night to gain entrance would show violation of right and would indicate evil purposes. In this opening sentence of the parable Jesus gives no hint of what the application is to be. As in Galilee when the multitude had been puzzled and baffled by His sudden turn to parables for instruction, so here in Jerusalem the people do not comprehend His meaning (John 10:6), until He proceeds with explanation and application (John 10:7-18). The Shepherd

“But he that entereth by the door is the shepherd of the sheep” (John 10:2). Both central elements of the sermon are introduced in this verse. Christ is the true Shepherd; and God’s way for man’s redemption (the door of the fold) is also identified with Christ. The sharp contrast between the shepherd and the thieves, robbers, and hirelings is also seen in Jeremiah: “Woe unto the shepherds that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture….And I will gather the remnant of my flock….I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land” (Jeremiah 23:1-5). Thus the prophet Jeremiah had predicted the coming of the Good Shepherd, whose presence Jesus announced. The Sheep

“To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out” (John 10:3). The porter is merely part of the scenery of the parable and does not represent a definite person or object. One wonders whether the man born blind recalled, as he heard this, how he had recognized Jesus by His voice, while he himself was still blind, and how Jesus had tenderly sought him out after his excommunication. Through the centuries every faithful follower of Christ has found infinite comfort in the promise of this intimate fellowship with our Lord. The life of a shepherd in Palestine is lonely. By the same token his knowledge of the characteristics and needs of each sheep is shown in giving each a name. Undoubtedly the humor of “the red-nosed reindeer” would also appear in the affectionate names given to sheep. Their knowledge of the voice and habits of their shepherd would be like unto his knowledge of them. The Comradeship

“When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice” (John 10:4). The procedure in leaving the security of the fold is again part of the scenery of the parable. The shepherd leads the way because he knows where the best pastures are to be found. If there are dangers to be faced, he will meet them first. The sheep follow in the trust which experience has developed. “A stranger will they not follow” (John 10:5). A traveler in Palestine tells of seeing three shepherds enjoying conversation while their flocks became hopelessly intermingled in the adjacent pasture. The traveler wondered by what difficult process the separate flocks could ever be assembled with no misunderstanding of possession. But after a time one of the shepherds raised his voice in his own peculiar cry; all over the field sheep could be seen lifting their heads and starting to obey his summons. Then another shepherd gave his call, and his sheep responded in like obedience. Soon the three shepherds and their flocks were on their separate ways.

True and False Leaders The parables usually dealt with familiar facts of life. This parable was so general in its nature that the hearers did not as yet comprehend the particular application which Jesus would make (John 10:6). “I am the door of the sheep” (John 10:7). In other parables Jesus also gives more than one application. He is both the door and the shepherd in the explanation. He is both the builder of the church and its foundation in the various comparisons that He made. Jesus continually represented the salvation He offered as unique and solitary. He is not one of many doors; but He is the Door, the only one. “All that came before me are thieves and robbers” (John 10:8). This seems to refer to the present false leadership, the false teachers, such as the Pharisees, who have led the nation astray by their hypocrisy and perversion of the Scripture. Also included may be false Christs, who continually sought to lead the nation into fatal rebellions, and all false teachers since the days of the Old Testament prophets four hundred years before. If all is to be taken in an absolute sense then the meaning would be that the authority of the Messiah and the uniqueness and finality of His revelation are supreme and all other preceding messages fade into insignificance.

Precious Promises

“He shall be saved, and shall go in and go Out, and shall find pasture” (John 10:9). A common expression in the Old Testament is “to go in and out,” which indicates following the ordinary procedure of daily living. Someone has pointed out that the three promises here given to one who enters in by the door are: security, liberty, and nurture. Safety from all the dangers of life has as its

prelude the forgiveness of our sins and release from the bondage to the devil. The liberty which Christ offers enables every man to choose his own particular field of service to which personal gifts and bent may incline him. It does not offer liberty to disobey Christ or to substitute one's own will against Christ's. The promise of abundant nurture reminds one again of the twenty-third psalm. Undoubtedly all His hearers found themselves making mental comparisons with this psalm, concluding that Jesus was here making solemn claim to deity. The contrast between the thief, who seeks to profit himself by stealing and destroying, and the good shepherd, who has the great consuming desire to provide not merely life, but abundant life, now marks the second section of this sermon. The picture of Jesus as the tender Shepherd of the sheep has had a profound influence upon the life of the church. In times of dreadful persecution early Christians treasured this sermon. The catacombs at Rome with their pictures of the good Shepherd are typical.

Universal Invitation

Classified with the thief is the hireling who also is utterly selfish in character and life. The complete devotion of the good Shepherd is seen in the fact that he dies to save His sheep. The mysterious predictions of His voluntary sacrificial death must have given additional difficulty to understanding the profound meaning of the sermon. Sadler suggests that the devil is the "thief"; Godet says the hirelings are the Jewish leaders who believe on Him, but are afraid to declare themselves. More likely these are scenery of the parable which give general content of meaning without the necessity of specific identification.

"And other sheep I have" (John 10:16) indicates clearly the outreach of the gospel through all the world to every creature. Jesus had made no effort to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles, but from the very beginning of His ministry in "Galilee of the Gentiles" frequent gleams of light had shone forth in His teaching that one day the whole world should hear the gracious invitation of God. With typical perversity modernists hold that Jesus, when He found that He had been rejected by Israel, changed His mind and His plans and projected a world-wide campaign among the Gentiles. Jesus Himself carried on no such campaign. The angel who revealed to the shepherds of Bethlehem the birth of the Savior predicted "good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people" (Luke 2:10). The angelic chorus sang not merely of peace to Israel, but to all men of good will: "peace among men in whom he is well pleased" (Luke 2:14). Simeon, that aged saint who tarried in the temple until he should see the Christ, predicted that He would be "both a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" (Luke 2:32). Looking back over the earlier preaching of Jesus, we find the same universality inherent, even though not explicitly stated. Observe that John 3:16 offers salvation not merely to every Jew who believes, but to everyone. God so loved the whole world so that "whosoever believeth…." — no matter what race, place, or time. In the Sermon on the Mount we find this same universality. The earth is not promised only to Jews who are meek, but to any faithful soul; so with the remainder of the beatitudes. The Shepherd Dies for His Sheep The hearers must have wondered at this clear declaration that Jesus had other sheep which are not of this fold (the assembly of Jewish disciples He had thus far won). But the mysterious manner of the parable would have left them uncertain. Jesus gave strong emphasis to the singular authority He possessed and the necessity of unity among His followers: "one flock and one shepherd." The sermon closes with the beautiful portrayal of the love and fellowship between the Father and the Son, and the unshrinking devotion to the will of the Father which leads Him to lay down His life for the sheep. His positive reiteration that His would be a voluntary self-surrender

must have been a great bulwark to the faith of the disciples as they looked back from the glory of the resurrection of Christ to these many predictions He had given them.

Divided Counsel

“There arose a division again among the Jews” (John 3:19). It is not clear whether this is among the leaders, among the multitude, or both. “He hath a demon, and is mad; why hear ye him?” (John 3:20). This charge recalls the earlier accusation that Jesus was in league with the devil. The attempt of these leaders to break the spell of this wonderful sermon is extreme in the sneer that Jesus was demon-possessed and incoherent in His utterance. They would point to (he claims to deity inherent in this sermon. But those who were more open-minded and more favorable to Jesus responded with two solid points of rebuttal. (1) The marvelous content of His teaching was not incoherent; it revealed super-intelligence. (2) The marvelous miracle of healing a man born blind proved that He was authorized and empowered by God. “These are not the sayings of one possessed of a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?” (John 3:21).

092. Chapter 33 - The Mission of the Seventy

Chapter 33 - The Mission of the Seventy

Luke 10:1-24 Judaea and Peraea

Luke makes clear that this wide-sweeping evangelistic program took place after Jesus had left Galilee for Jerusalem. Other than this he does not indicate the sections into which the seventy were sent. Chronologically the mission of the seventy seems to fit best here after the Galilean ministry had ended and in the midst of the campaign at Jerusalem and the events that followed the Feast of Tabernacles. About six months have intervened since the twelve were sent forth two by two on a similar mission. Since their mission had been centered in Galilee, this campaign reached Judaea and Peraea. Since they were sent “before his face into every city and place, whither he himself was about to come” (Luke 10:1), we conclude that they were to go into Peraea as well as Judaea.

Drawing around Jerusalem an imaginary circle of about fifty or sixty miles in radius, we can see that thirty-five evangelistic teams, preaching for several days in each town and village, could have reached an immense number of people. Within range would have been the cities on the seacoast, such as Joppa, and those to the southwest that bordered on the desert, such as Gaza and Beersheba, with all the intermediate places. The centers of Essene population in the wilderness of Judaea at Am Feska and En gedi together with the military fortress at Masada could have been assigned to some of these evangelists. If these people had refused to come out of their isolation to see and hear Jesus, at least they could receive from His chosen messengers instruction, invitation, and solemn warning. To the east of the Dead Sea, Machaerus, Herod’s winter resort, and the mighty fortress of Kerak would have been within reach. The populous centers of the southern Decapolis and Peraea would have offered a vast field for evangelization. The Evangelists

Questions naturally arise as to the identity of the seventy evangelists and why seventy. Early Christian writers record different traditions about various men famous in the early church who were supposed to have been included in the seventy, but these are obviously guesses. The fact that Luke alone recorded this mission has caused some to speculate that Luke was one of the seventy. But this conjecture contradicts Luke 1:1-4. He seems to have been a Greek converted by Paul during his Asia Minor missionary labors. Clement of Alexandria names the following as members of the seventy: Barnabas (Acts 4:36); Sosthenes (1 Corinthians 1:1); Cephas (Galatians 2:11); Matthias (Acts 1:26); Joseph (Acts 1:23); and Thaddaeus (Matthew 10:3). Clement was evidently in error in his attempt to distinguish between Cephas of Galatians 2:11 and Simon Peter. Thaddaeus was one of the twelve apostles and therefore not one of the seventy. Since Acts 1:21 states that Matthias and Joseph had been with Jesus during His entire ministry, they, together with Barnabas, may well have been members of the seventy. Origen records the tradition that Mark was one of the seventy. Eusebius says, “There exists no catalogue of the seventy.” The fact that there were twelve apostles suggests the twelve tribes of Israel and Jacob’s twelve sons. Farther than this we cannot go, except to observe that twelve was a good number, not too large or too

small, and that it was the express will of Christ. The seventy evangelists suggests the seventy elders of Israel appointed by Moses (Numbers 11:1-35; Numbers 16:1-50, Numbers 17:1-13) and the seventy members of the Sanhedrin with the high priest presiding, in imitation of the seventy elders under Moses. But no connection is stated in the Scripture. We do not know why seventy men were sent on this mission. A large number of evangelists were needed, and Jesus chose seventy of the most able men. The Instructions As might be expected, the instructions are very similar to those given to the twelve when they were sent out on a similar mission. Jesus obviously repeated on different occasions instructions, warnings, and appeals which different audiences needed to hear. This is plain common sense. Because a message has been delivered once does not disqualify its further use. Exactly the opposite is true. In ordination of ministers or elders and deacons today the same sort of instruction and charge is given on successive occasions.

One of the striking differences in the two commissions is that the prohibition against going into any way of the Gentiles or Samaritans is not repeated. This may be because the strong Gentile population of the Decapolis might have caused them to be confused as to their procedure. To the north of Jerusalem, before they reached Shechem, they would find themselves in the borderland of Samaria. The reason for sending them forth is the same; the need was great; the harvest was perishing; the time was short; the laborers few (Luke 10:2; Matthew 9:35-38). The command to begin with prayer and to pray that the Lord would send forth other laborers into the harvest causes one to meditate upon how many humble toilers who heard these seventy may have been inspired to go and tell others about Christ.

Warnings The same warning of persecution is given. In the midst of the efforts to kill Jesus that had just taken place at the capital this warning must have had new meaning. The prohibition against securing extra equipment for their journey and the command to go trusting God and gladly receiving the daily support of faithful servants of God are the same in both commissions. Having found the home of a God-fearing man to serve as headquarters, they were not to change locations in order to secure the comfort and luxury of a more palatial home that was offered to them (Luke 10:7; Mark 6:10). They were to fit into the daily routine of the homes, not causing extra effort and expense in affording more fastidious meals.

They are to consider themselves as members of the family, not as intruders; for their food and shelter are salary and not alms….They are to eat just “what is offered,” without demanding more or anything different. They must be neither greedy nor fastidious (Plummer). In the command not to go from house to house, the Greek verb means “do not keep on changing from.” This did not prohibit evangelization of each home; this was the very purpose for which they were sent. It means rather that they were not to indulge in the round of social festivities customary in the East and apt to thrust aside their evangelistic mission. They were not to seek more pleasant quarters. They were not to return to those who have rejected and scorned them. They were not to worry about being a burden to their first hosts. The Holy Spirit was granted to them with miraculous power to heal, and they were commanded to give freely in healing the sick in any town they entered. The Message The message they were to deliver was similar to that given to the twelve. They were to announce the approach of Jesus, for they were preparing the way for His coming into these cities and towns. This implies that they were to tell the people about Jesus and His wonderful ministry. That this would have fallen short of explicit declaration that Jesus was the Christ we conclude from the prohibition against the apostles telling about the good confession of Peter (Matthew 16:20).

The inevitable question these messengers would meet in every community would be the identity of Jesus; was He the Christ? Their instructions were that they should announce the near approach of the kingdom. It was close at hand in the sense that the King was at hand and the time near for its establishment. These advance messengers would naturally refer the questioners to Jesus for further information since He would soon be among them. To the disobedient, hostile cities the message was the same; the kingdom of God was about to come whether they believed it or not, whether they wanted it or not. Woe be to them!

Past Experiences Cited

It may seem strange that the denunciation of the great cities of Galilee should be repeated in Judaea and Peraea, but what is more natural than for an evangelist preaching in New York or Chicago to cite the rejection that had been experienced in San Francisco? The powerful denunciations recorded in the eleventh chapter of Matthew are repeated now to the seventy going forth in Judaea and Peraea. It was both for their encouragement and warning that Jesus reminded them of how He Himself had been scorned in these populous cities of Galilee, where most of His ministry occurred. We are reminded again of how little we know about the endless details of His ministry. Chorazin is never mentioned in the New Testament except in Luke 10:13 and Matthew 11:21. Jesus refers to the great number of miracles that He had worked in Chorazin. Yet we do not know of a single one. This confirms John 21:25 that only a few of the words and deeds of Jesus have been recorded. The ones recorded are those most essential to an understanding of the person and work of Jesus, and the choice was directed by the Holy Spirit, who brought all things to their remembrance and guided them. These messengers were sent forth with the solemn authorization that they should go in the name of Jesus, and any who rejected them would be rejecting Him, just as anyone who rejected Him was rejecting the Father.

Satan Fallen With typical brevity the narration does not attempt to follow any one of these evangelistic teams and relate their experiences. There is only the record of tumultuous joy with which they all returned and told Jesus of their glorious experiences. The climax of their testimony is given: “Lord, even the demons are subject unto us in thy name.” Had the failure of the nine apostles to cast out the demon from the boy at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration caused them to consider this a critical test of the miraculous power which now had been granted to them? The answer of Jesus was enigmatic, but thrilling: “I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18). Two general interpretations of this declaration are given: (1) The pre-existent Christ beheld Satan fall from heaven when Satan was cast out by God because of his rebellion Jude 1:6; 2 Peter 2:4; Revelation 12:7.). This fall presaged the conquest of these disciples over the demons through the power of God’s Son. (2) In the victory of His faithful followers over the devil’s emissaries Jesus saw the evidence of the final victory over the devil and his wicked designs. Some commentators attempt to refer this statement to the incarnation and the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, but this explanation is not convincing.

Joy or Rebuke?

Some make the words an expression of great joy on the part of Jesus; others insist it is a rebuke. Plummer suggests that the disciples are elated at their victory over the demons, but they should remember that there is something much more admirable, i.e., the actual conquest over the devil himself in their own hearts and lives whether in the past or the future. Some suggest, “You are

elated at your victory over the demons, and are proud of your spiritual powers. Beware of spiritual pride. There was a time when I beheld Satan fall even from heaven because of this sin of pride." Others would interpret, "You are overjoyed at finding that demons are subject to you. That is no great thing. I once beheld their sovereign cast out of heaven itself. The subjection of these demons was involved in his overthrow." The a.v. has fall; the a.s.v. translates, fallen. I beheld Satan fallen means "I saw him prostrate after his fall." The a.v. translation means "I saw him as he was falling." The Greek verb is an aorist participle and either translation is possible. It is interesting to see the two standard translations set forth the two possible renditions.

Seemingly both joy and rebuke are found in the reply of Jesus. His first exclamation was one of joy as He joined them in their exultation. The rebuke followed, but it should be observed that in recounting their victories they had given the credit to Jesus: "...are subject to us in thy name." "I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions" (Luke 10:19). Those who are startled at the record of the closing verses of Mark, "They shall take up serpents" (Mark 16:18), need to tarry over this promise recorded in Luke 10:19. Jesus declares that not only His power to cast Out demons, but His protective care is given against "all the power of the enemy." They were not, however, to rejoice so much in the miraculous power they possessed, but rather in the spiritual redemption they proclaimed and must achieve for themselves by their daily victories over the devil in their own lives. Their salvation would not depend upon any miraculous power they had been given, but upon actual character which they must achieve. "A Judas might cast Out demons." Their names were "written in heaven" (Luke 10:20) in the Lamb's book of life. "And if any was not found written in the book of life he was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15). Jesus is not giving a statement of "once in grace always in grace" to the seventy. God warns the apostate that he will "take away his part out of the book of life" (a.v. , Revelation 22:19). God will blot his name out of the book of life (Revelation 3:5). The Holy Spirit

"In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit had joined Jesus in person at the baptism, had led Him into the wilderness for the critical combat with the devil; and "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee" (Luke 4:14). The fellowship must have been constant throughout Jesus' ministry, but it is only in this passage (Luke 10:21) that we find specific mention of Jesus and the Holy Spirit rejoicing in such exultation (Mark 8:12 has, "he sighed deeply in his spirit"). The thanksgiving which follows is similar to the prayer Jesus had offered in the midst of His towering sermon on John and the current unbelief (Matthew 11:25, Matthew 11:26). There is nothing surprising about offering a prayer of thanksgiving on two different occasions. The utterance that is similar is very brief, and in the sermon of Matthew it is followed by the great invitation, "Come unto me," while in the address to the seventy it is followed by a blessing upon these faithful followers.

Here, as in Matthew 11:25, Matthew 11:26, Jesus rejoices over His faithful little band of disciples, unknown and poverty-stricken, but destined to conquer the world in His name. This is the kind of thanksgiving we should expect Christ to repeat. The intellectual aristocracy of the nation had rejected Christ (John 7:49; John 9:40, John 9:41). Jesus had just concluded a series of controversies with these unbelieving scholars in Jerusalem, and He was moved to be grateful again for His faithful followers, despised by the mighty of earth, but known and honored in heaven.

Assertion of Deity

“All things have been delivered unto me of my Father” (Luke 10:22). Jesus speaks of Himself as the Son of God and declares His absolute authority over all things. He is in unique relationship with God, and in His very Person He is the means of approach to God. Radical critics argue that Jesus never spoke thus concerning Himself. To sustain this position, they deny the historical verity of John’s Gospel and attempt to affirm that Jesus never speaks thus of Himself in the Synoptic accounts. This claim is destroyed in a great number of passages, such as the good confession of Peter, where by His joyous approval Jesus affirms precisely what Peter had affirmed. The good confession which Jesus made when on trial for His life also proves that the Synoptics record claims to deity. There is no passage in the Synoptic accounts clearer on this issue than these two reports of Matthew 11:1-30 and Luke 10:1-42. His language here is the same as that which abounds in the Gospel of John. Even extreme critics who dissect the Gospel narratives in their efforts to sustain various theories of their origin from written “sources,” find themselves forced to admit that this declaration of Jesus is authentic.

Holzmann, Ewald, and Weizsacker hold it is a part of Q. Keim says, “There is no more violent criticism than that which Strauss has introduced” (i.e., in rejecting this passage). Sanday writes, This passage is one of the best authenticated in the Synoptic Gospels….And yet once grant the authenticity of this passage, and there is nothing in the Johannean Christology that it does not cover. Even the doctrine of the pre-existence seems to be implicitly contained in it” (The Fourth Gospel, p. 109).

Plummer says, The importance of this verse, which is also in Mt (Matthew 11:27), has long been recognized. It is impossible upon any principles of criticism to question its genuineness….And it contains the whole of the Christology of the Fourth Gospel. It is like “an aerolite from the Johannean heaven”...and for that very reason causes perplexity to those who deny the solidarity between the Johannean heaven and the Synoptic earth. It should be compared with the following passages: John 3:35, John 6:46, John 9:19, John 10:15, John 10:30, John 14:9, John 16:15, John 17:6, John 17:10(Commentary on Luke, p. 282).

“And turning to the disciples, he said privately” (Luke 10:23). The implication is that a larger assembly had heard the report of the seventy and the address of Jesus to them. This final word of congratulation is given to them. This is another saying which Jesus repeats. He had given this same beatitude to the disciples in Galilee in the midst of the sermon in parables (Matthew 13:16). It seems implied that there is an interval here in which the crowd disperses. A blessing is pronounced upon these disciples, who see the grand fulfillment of the thrilling Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. One might name any of the good kings and any of the prophets who must have experienced intense longing to see the kingdom of God about to be established and the King in His campaign. Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration show the intense interest the prophets had in Paradise in following the course of Jesus’ ministry as it led to His death on the cross.

093. Chapter 34 - The Good Samaritan

Chapter 34 - The Good Samaritan

Luke 10:25-37 The Lawyer

Out of this period of Jesus' ministry Luke has selected an exciting encounter with one of the scholars of Israel. The inner group of scholarly leaders of the Pharisees are usually called "scribes" in token of their meticulous labors over the precious manuscripts of the Old Testament. Luke calls this man a "lawyer," one who by reason of his intensive study of the Scripture was qualified to expound its content and argue its implications and obligations. This man was deeply troubled with a problem. It arose out of the contrast between his way of life and what he had heard and observed in the ministry of Jesus. In the splendid isolation of his luxurious palace he had studied the law and sought to follow the high road in life, but his chief interest in the vulgar multitude had been to avoid any contact with them. Jesus accepted extreme poverty, privation, and hardship that He might spend His life's energy and influence in the homes of the poor, the unfortunate, the sinful. The lawyer could see with dismay the vast chasm which separated His way of life from Christ's. He desired to justify Himself. The Interruption The lawyer did not ask at first the thorny question which distressed him. He came to it in a circuit by beginning with a general question. In a college classroom today where freedom of discussion is encouraged, a student usually raises his hand to ask permission of the professor to raise an objection, ask a question, or interject a comment. This lawyer stood up to indicate he had such a desire. Jesus allowed complete freedom of discussion in His teaching. In His tremendous sermons there were no interruptions. It sufficed for the audience to breathe. But in ordinary periods of instruction anyone might interrupt. They did not need to stand to attract His attention. "Stood up and made trial of him" indicates poise and self-assurance combined with determination to find out for himself the extent of Jesus' mastery of God's revelation and of the mysteries of life. The Question

"Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25). It is to the credit of this lawyer that amid the abundance of earthly possessions he yet was deeply concerned about the life after death; he was eager to share in its glory, and realized he must do something to gain heaven. He seems to have shared the idea that eternal life can be earned by some tremendous act of sacrifice or service. The aorist tense of the verb suggests this. At the close Jesus uses the present tense, "keep on doing likewise."

One of the chief lines of attack of modernists upon the Old Testament is to deny that it teaches there is a life after death; in other words, they agree with the Sadducees. The question of this lawyer and the answer of Jesus strike a deathblow to this theory. The lawyer uses the term inherit, which suggests that heaven is a gift, but the idea that the descendants of Abraham have an exclusive right to this inheritance was the concept of the Pharisees.

Counter Question

“What is written in the law? how readest thou?” (Luke 10:26). This skillful reply thrusts the problem right back upon the lawyer. He obviously had meditated deeply upon it and had decided ideas. Jesus gave him full opportunity to express his views. There seems to be a play on the words lawyer and the law. “You ask me; you, a lawyer? In the law what is written? How do you read it? Your question is answered plainly in the law, is it not?” Some suppose that Jesus pointed to the lawyer’s phylactery, but this seems improbable. The first commandment cited was written on the miniature manuscript in the phylactery, but not the second. The lawyer did think he knew the answer to the question. He spoke with assurance. The Lawyer’s Answer

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God...” (Luke 10:27). This was one of the most familiar of all the passages in the Old Testament. The Jews recited this verse every morning and evening. Its selection for their phylacteries shows their estimate of its importance. But the second passage was not so frequently quoted. How did it happen that the lawyer coupled these two passages together? It might have been from his own deep study of the Old Testament. He might have heard the teaching of Jesus that these two passages summed up all the law. His eagerness to defend his way of life as contrasted to the ministry of Jesus might have caused him to desire from Christ a definition of neighbor and thus led him to quote the second passage. There is an overlapping of terms in heart, soul, strength, and mind. The heart means the entire spiritual nature — the understanding, the emotions, the will. This obviously overlaps mind. Strength encircles the other three. This repetition is for emphasis; all there is in a man’s being must be dedicated to God without reserve. The Scripture does not forbid a man to love himself. Self-respect demands it. But he must have the same high regard and devotion to his neighbor. The Central Question The instant, calm commendation Jesus gave to the lawyer for this answer must have been disconcerting. Jesus made a subtle contrast between saying and doing. The lawyer had answered correctly; now he must translate the words into deeds. The change of tense to the continued action of the present tense is significant; the complete consecration to God and His service is a way of life for every day. Some suggest that the lawyer asked the second question to justify himself for having asked the first. The answer of Jesus had been so skillful it made the lawyer look ridiculous. He now tried to justify himself for asking such a question by insisting that the matter was not so simple as it sounded and needed explanation. It seems that the justification the lawyer sought was much deeper and covered the entire pattern of his life as contrasted to that of Jesus. What the lawyer was asking concerned how many people were to be included in the circle of “neighbor.” He made the circle very small and wanted to keep it so. Lightfoot quotes from the writings of the rabbis their interpretation of this passage (Leviticus 19:18) to show that they claimed Gentiles were not to be specifically included as “neighbors.” This fact gives particular point to the fact that a Samaritan served and saved in the account Jesus gave. Neither the priest nor the Levite attempted to discover whether the wounded man was a Jew or a Gentile. Their neglect was not based on racial prejudice. On the Jericho Road

Jesus’ immortal response to the lawyer’s second question is usually called a parable. But Jesus did not say it was a parable. It might have been a historic case. He did not say that this “certain man” was a Jew, but this is strongly implied. The implication is really at the heart of the illustration. “A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho” (Luke 10:30). The geographical accuracy of the Scripture is always most impressive. Jerusalem is on the backbone of the mountain range 2,600 feet above sea level ; Jericho is in the rift through which the Jordan flows,

nearly 1,300 feet below sea level. The road was steep, lonely, and dangerous. About halfway down the mountain is the traditional spot where the man is supposed to have been left in the care of the innkeeper. The ruins of an ancient Kahn, fort, and pools show that this place has been through the centuries a haven for travelers unable to complete the trip by day. Evidently the attack itself took place in some lonely stretch of the road. Roman historians, early Christian writers, and chroniclers of the crusades all join Jewish writers in telling of the desperate brigands who infested this road. The most desolate section of Palestine is the Wilderness of Judaea, just west of the Dead Sea. This region between the Jordan and Bethel is the second most desolate. The fact that the main east-west highway passed through this territory made it a prime target. The robbers first stripped the man and then beat him unmercifully. The possessions and money of the man were seized; since clothing was so expensive in the ancient world, the preservation of his clothes was a matter of importance. Naked and bleeding, the man was left to die in the broiling sun. The Priest and Levite That Jesus should have told of a priest and a Levite at this juncture may be because this is history; this is what actually happened. “And by chance a certain priest was going down that way” (Luke 10:31). Plummer suggests “by coincidence” instead of “by chance.” There is the implication that the priest and the Levite were both coming down fresh from the worship of God, perhaps from a term of service in the temple or its environs. Thus Jesus joins together in practice the love of God and the love of man which the lawyer had joined in theory; flashlight photographs from the lives of two religious leaders of the day give revealing application. It is interesting to note that Jesus did not represent a Pharisee and a Sadducee coming down the road that day. The priest might have been a Sadducee. Actual history being related may have kept Jesus from having a Pharisee as one of the selfish travelers, or Jesus may not have wished to become too personal and thus allowed the lawyer to make his own applications. This is the only time in the teaching of Jesus that priests and Levites come in for particular condemnation. The priests were the descendants of Aaron and had specific charge of the temple worship. The Levites were the larger group descended from Levi who performed the secondary tasks necessary for maintenance of the temple worship. They also were religious leaders of the nation who lived in cities set apart for their use. Both by reason of their office, and opportunities, and training the priests and Levites could be expected to he foremost in humanitarian service. The priest saw this dying man from a distance and went around to avoid a closeup of his need. “A Levite also, when he came to the place, and saw him” seems to suggest that he came closer and had a cold-blooded survey before he turned off and left him to die.

All sorts of excuses may have been in the minds of the two: (1) too busy to halt, (2) too limited in equipment; only one animal so both could not ride; (3) too hopeless a case; the man was already dying, and it would be wasted effort; (4) too dangerous; these robbers were probably watching them and were ready to pounce upon them; (5) too limited in financial means; the man might become a burden to them for a long time; (6) Someone else better equipped would probably come by and help. (7) No one was in sight and would know or report their cruel neglect of the man. (8) If laid on the doorsteps of their houses where the praise of men could be had, they would have helped quickly, but out here on this dangerous road the responsibility was not theirs. The Samaritan

Some suggest that the reason Jesus made the rescuer a Samaritan was to rebuke James and John for having asked to call down fire from heaven upon an inhospitable Samaritan village. But

one might as well speculate that it was returning good for evil and showing divine love after his recent rejection in Samaria. It was in spite of the fact that the bitter charge had been made against Him in Jerusalem that He was a Samaritan. This discourse of Jesus was now delivered before a crowd and would travel far and wide. Such slander could not move Him from His course in teaching the truth. The best explanation of the introduction of the Samaritan is that it was actual history. The racial element was not underscored, but the wounded man must have been a Jew; otherwise, one loses the strong contrast of the priest and Levite failing to help their own countryman and then a hated Samaritan doing what they had failed to do. To have had a Gentile aid a wounded Jew would have taught the same lesson against racial prejudice; but, if this was known history, the recital would have had the greater effect. The Samaritan is not represented as "coming down from Jerusalem." While the Jews and Samaritans had nothing to do with each other in social or religious affairs, yet they did carry on commerce. They did travel in the other's territory if necessity of trade so required. This Samaritan was accustomed to traveling this lonely highway. He was well-known to the innkeeper, who trusted him implicitly.

Compassion

"He was moved with compassion" (Luke 10:33). Here is the beating heart of this account. We come close to the answer to the lawyer's question. Here is love in action. He did not seek first to learn the nationality and identity of this man wounded and dying by the roadside. How far removed he was from philosophical speculation of the question, "Now is this man my neighbor or not?" He immediately rushed to his aid. Olive oil and wine were the best current remedies to prevent infection (often used separately, or in conjunction, or mixed together before applying). He bound up his wounds and undoubtedly put on him some of his own spare clothes. Putting the man on his own beast, he slowly walked alongside supporting the wounded man as they traveled through this lonely robber-infested area. He did not demand or suggest that the innkeeper join in the rescue by furnishing free lodging and care for the unfortunate man. He paid for his care and promised any further payment that might be entailed, when he came by on his next trip. Who Is the Neighbor? The common answer to the question as to who is the neighbor in this account is to say that the wounded man is the neighbor, and the fundamental lesson is that any person in need regardless of race or condition must be included in the term neighbor. That this answer should be so instantly and universally given shows that this phase of the account cannot possibly be missed. But this answer is not the one Jesus required of the lawyer. How very embarrassing to the lawyer to have him now answer his own question. More than this, it is his question turned upside down. He is prevented from giving the easy and obvious answer to the question. He is asked a different question. Jesus corrects not merely the false concept of the man; He corrects the question he asked.

"Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers?" (Luke 10:36). Jesus' question does not permit the answer, "the man who was in need." He limits the lawyer to three people in his answer. Neighbor is a positive, and not merely a negative, title. It must be earned by unselfish, sacrificial service. The lawyer had asked, "How many people am I compelled to love?" Jesus answered that the term neighbor is a high title conferred on those who earn it. The glowing light of this beautiful account stretches out in a gleam of compassion to the whole wide world with all of suffering humanity in view, but it places a halo of glory upon the neighbor who rises above all barriers and selfish inhibitions to serve all who need his help.

Answer to the First Question

Jesus also gave the answer to the lawyer's first question. One might wonder why Jesus should have allowed the lawyer to ask a question which implied that one may earn eternal life without correcting such an idea. But the correction is inherent in the account and the final exchange. Jesus shows that salvation is not to be achieved by any single good deed, but by devoted, daily obedience to God. And man can never earn his salvation by any means. The way of life which Jesus revealed to the lawyer was so lofty he must have seen that be could never reach and constantly maintain such a high position. He must cast himself upon the mercy of God in the midst of constant failures. The parable of the laborers in the vineyard is devoted definitely to showing that salvation is the gift of God, which man can never earn.

Evangelizing the Samaritan? The instruction given to this lawyer follows the regular pattern of Jesus' teaching. He did not fire broadcast at the universe, but selected a single target which He always pierced. The lawyer's problem as to how many he had to include in the term neighbor received the concentrated attention. One might as well express surprise that in this high drama on the Jericho road Jesus should have presented as the hero of the account a Samaritan, without adding a word about the false system of worship of the Samaritans or without having the wounded man express his deep gratitude by expounding the way of the Lord more perfectly to the Samaritan and by leading him to a more accurate faith. Certainly Jesus was not teaching that it does not make any difference what religion a person follows just so he has a generous, sympathetic attitude toward his fellowmen. It is again a case of concentration on a single objective at a time. The Samaritan woman had deliberately introduced this controversy: "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Jesus gave a blunt response: "Ye worship that which ye know not...for salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:20-22). He then pictured the glorious reign of the Messiah when a person might worship at any place in all the world if he worshiped in spirit and in truth. It must have been particularly shocking to this lawyer to have the Samaritan's compassion offered as an example to follow. All of the different angles of doctrine which Jesus presented on different occasions must be joined together to get the complete picture of His teaching.

Mystical Interpretation

Early Christian writings abound in mystical interpretations of this account. They interpret that Jesus meant the good Samaritan to represent Himself and the course of the parable to represent Christ's ministry to the lost. Augustine even goes to the extreme of trying to prove that Jesus was a Samaritan in order to sustain this mystical interpretation. No Christian would deny that Jesus is the only perfect embodiment of the teaching and example of mercy set forth in this account, but that Jesus meant for the good Samaritan to represent Himself is more than can be affirmed. It certainly is a part of His revelation of Himself as the Christ, and we can write here at its close the epilogue, "I that speak unto thee am he" (John 4:26).

It is a question as to how many doors of opportunity were open to this Samaritan. Even if he could have become a proselyte, would he have been welcome in the temple worship? Would not bitter hatred and sarcastic jibes have foredoomed to failure even such a determined effort to follow the truth God had revealed in the Old Testament? There is much of gentle frustration and bewildering hope in the Samaritan woman's excited gasp, "I know that Messiah cometh (he that is called

Christ): when he is come, he will declare unto us all things" (John 4:25). The tremendous evangelistic campaign which Philip carried on in the city of Samaria presents the universal gospel of Christ as the answer. The Better Samaritan

Modern critics of the teaching of Jesus like to preach on the theme "The Better Samaritan." They will admit that Jesus did fairly well in this account, but they set forth that they can do much better in constructing a parable which will proclaim the social gospel. They represent that "the better Samaritan," after rescuing the wounded man, would have gone back to Jerusalem and organized an army of soldiers who would have destroyed this band of robbers and thus have launched a campaign of prevention instead of cure. This is an astonishing picture of an unknown Samaritan taking command in Jerusalem, setting aside Roman authority, and marching out with an army of soldiers to achieve what Rome with all her discipline and power had not been able to accomplish on the Jericho road. Our present experience with guerrilla warfare in Vietnam has shown that ferreting brigands out of a vast wilderness is not easy or of short duration.

We are not to conclude because this element is not found here in Jesus' account that this means He was not in favor of law and order, of punishment of crime, and of protecting the innocent and helpless from the bloody oppression of criminals. Jesus did not urge political revolution. He came rather to offer individual salvation. This process would transform the world so far as it could he transformed with the devil still at work. In many parables and in much of His teaching Jesus did urge law and order, punishment of crime, law enforcement. Here is again another illustration that Jesus was concentrating on the target the lawyer had set up and not trying to cover the entire field of human conduct in one discussion.

Monetary Analysis As the debates with the Pharisees during the Judean-Peraean campaign became more hectic, Jesus denounced them for their love of money (Luke 16:14). It is highly probable that economics as well as ideology entered into the lawyer's question, "Who is my neighbor?" It was not merely his pride in his piety and moral achievements and his separatism from the vulgar multitude of "publicans and sinners," but an intense love for wealth, luxury, and ease that would have influenced him on the Jericho road. Someone has made a very attractive homiletical analysis of this parable from this approach. What is the attitude of the various persons in this drama toward worldly possessions? The analysis divides everyone into one of three classes: (1) the robbers: "What is yours is mine; I will seize it." This is the age-old warfare between the "have-nots" and the "haves." This is the sort of stuff from which communism and all other revolutions spring. (2) the priest and the Levite: "What is mine is my own; I will keep it." Selfishness and indifference are the breeding ground for revolutions. How often Jesus pointed out that selfishness will he the ground for eternal condemnation of many. (3) the good Samaritan: "What is mine is God's; I will give it." The Innkeeper This interesting monetary analysis overlooks one of the persons who had an important role in the drama of the Jericho road — the innkeeper. Perhaps we might fit him into the analysis as the representative of "strictly business" or "business as usual." But we are often unjust in our estimate of persons with whom we have a very slight acquaintance. We do not know enough about this innkeeper to become too severe in our criticism. Jesus allows us only a tiny peek into his inn; He quotes only a sentence from the conference between the Samaritan and the innkeeper. After all, this man was keeping a hotel, not a hospital. He assumed a very considerable responsibility in agreeing to take care of the desperately wounded man and to nurse him back to good health. If the innkeeper earnestly sought to share

further in the rescue by offering to take in both the Samaritan and the wounded man without charge and to care for the man at his own expense, and, if the Samaritan insisted that, having risked his life to rescue the man on the roadway, he did not wish to surrender the privilege of paying for any care necessary for recovery, then we would change our estimate of the innkeeper accordingly. If tradition is correct in locating this inn and the protecting fort alongside halfway up this wild mountain road, then the innkeeper might have been one of those hardy pioneers of the frontier to whom this was “all in a day’s work.” On the other hand, it might have forced him to face being involved in unforeseen consequences.

What Jesus omits from the account is second only to what He includes. Brevity is the soul of all the marvelous teaching of Jesus. This scintillating gem concerning the Good Samaritan is only one example of many. The deliberate purpose of Jesus in this account is to concentrate the spotlight upon the compassion of the Good Samaritan.

094. Chapter 35 - Discourse on Prayer

Chapter 35 - Discourse on Prayer

Luke 11:1-13 The Request

“Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples” (Luke 11:1). Both the example of Jesus and the Instruction of John prompted this request. Luke relates, “As he was praying in a certain place...when he ceased, one of his disciples” made this request. One wonders whether their appeal for instruction was inspired by Jesus’ lengthy communion with the Father, which they were unable to achieve. If so, the brevity of the model prayer becomes all the more impressive. Quality ranks above quantity in prayer.

John’s Prayer Life As we reflect upon the profound impression which John’s prayer life and his instruction on prayer had made upon his disciples, we face again the fragmentary nature of our Gospel accounts. Not one prayer of John’s is recorded. Not one word concerning his prayer life or the instruction he gave on this central spiritual experience is known to us. That he was powerful and persistent in prayer needs no further proof than his bold, magnificent life and death. He had come “in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:17). The power of Elijah was the distilled essence of prayer, “he prayed fervently” (James 5:17). Similarities in the careers of these two prophets are impressive: their appearance, their dynamic personalities, the sensational challenge which they gave to the nation in a critical time, their bold denunciation of wicked kings, the revengeful persecution they endured from wicked queens. Luke now adds another parallel — their prayer life. The Model Prayer

It is not surprising that Jesus should repeat the model prayer He had taught a different assembly of disciples in Galilee some two years before. This sort of teaching needed to be repeated so other disciples might learn the basic truths embodied in the condensed prayer. We are not specifically told that the seventy were present and that one of them made the request, but obviously a large congregation received this teaching. A comparison of the two versions of the prayer as given on the different occasions is informing.

Matthew 6:9-13

Luke 11:2-4

Our

Father,

Father

who art in heaven,

Hallowed be thy name.

Hallowed be thy name,

Thy kingdom come.

Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth

Give us this day our daily bread

Give us day by day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts,

And forgive us our sins;

as we also have forgiven our debtors.

for we ourselves also for- give every one that is indebted to us.

And bring us not into temptation,

And bring us not into temptation.

but deliver us from the evil one. (For thine is the

kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever Amen. a.v.)

Adoration In the Old Testament the usual concept is that God is the Father of the nation Israel, but the idea that God is the Father of the individual believer is sometimes also given. “Like as a father pitieth his children, so Jehovah pitieth them that fear him” (Psalms 103:13). Jesus puts a new content into the word father and gives the full revelation Of God’s character. How much God loves us as our Father is fully revealed in Christ.

There are three elements essential in a prayer: adoration or praise, thanksgiving, and petition. The adoration in this model prayer is exceedingly brief. It consists of the address in terms of intimate fellowship and deep reverence. In Luke’s account this is reduced to the absolute minimum, “Father.” The plural our indicates that this is a model for a public prayer, and the plural pronouns throughout indicate that a plurality of Christians are sharing the fellowship of prayer. But there is here a model also for private, individual reactions and needs.

It has been suggested that this is a prayer for the morning as petition is made for the necessary food to sustain life during this day. Too often we fail to begin the day with prayer and wait until the day is over and we are exhausted from our labors before we talk with God. But this prayer is appropriate at high noon or at eventide as well as in the morning. If it is at the close of a day of labor for God that we offer this prayer, then we are looking forward to the coming day as we pray for the necessities of life.

Thanksgiving

There is no specific statement of thanksgiving in this prayer. But every petition carries a deep undercurrent of thanksgiving for the blessings which make the abundant life possible. In other prayers of Jesus thanksgiving abounds (Matthew 11:25, Matthew 11:26; Matthew 14:19; Matthew

15:36; John 11:41, John 11:42; Matthew 26:26, Matthew 26:27; John 17:1-26; Luke 24:30). The model prayer carries a sense of urgency as it is almost completely devoted to petitions. These are concentrated first upon the grand objectives of God. Only after we have offered fervent prayer for the victorious sweep of His kingdom and have dedicated ourselves to this divine objective are we in a position to ask for the daily bread which will enable us to continue the battle for Him.

Someone has pointed out the extraordinary collection of relationships which emerge in this prayer:

(1) Our Father

father and child

(2) Hallowed be thy name

God and worshiper

(3) Thy kingdom come

king and subject

(4) Thy will be done

master and servant

(5) Give us this day our daily bread

benefactor and suppliant

(6) Forgive us our debts

creditor and debtor

(7) Bring us not into temptation

guide and debtor

(8) Deliver us from the evil one

redeemer and redeemed

In every one of these there is the most vital and intimate relationship between God and the worshiper.

First Petition The first petition presents adoration and praise in the fitting manner of an implied confession of our lack of humility and our need for more reverence. The address to God as Father is so intimate there is need for the utmost realization and acknowledgment of God's power, wisdom, glory, and love. Wrongdoers are constantly tempted to defend themselves by pointing to someone else who has done something worse. When we offer this petition, "Hallowed be thy name," it is easy to think of the wicked world and the filthy, contemptuous, blasphemous use of the name of God in cursing and swearing. It is most proper for us to pray thus for those very far away from God. But there is great need that we think of our own irreverence, especially if we are offering this prayer in a mechanical manner, repeating words with no thought of our own. Congregations which repeat this prayer each Sunday morning as part of their regular order of service need to

have an alarm sounded frequently from the pulpit lest they fail to hallow God's name or give intense concentration of thought to the divine meaning of the words they utter. The Kingdom

J. W. McGarvey thought that the petition thy kingdom come is obsolete now and should not be offered in our present day. The kingdom was established on the day of Pentecost following the ascension of Jesus. It was of great importance that the disciples should be praying for the coming of the kingdom when Jesus gave this prayer to them. But why should we now pray for the kingdom to come when it has already come? The argument, however, hinges on the meaning given to the verb come. Before Pentecost come' looked forward to the initial establishment of the kingdom. As we offer the prayer today, it should look forward to the coming of the kingdom in its triumphant sweep over the world and in the final consummation at the second coming. This petition declares the unreserved dedication of the worshiper to the world-wide campaign which Jesus gave in the great commission. The Will of God

"Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." This appeal defines and enforces the preceding request. What we mean by our prayer that the kingdom may come is thus defined as the universal dedication of all men to the doing of the will of God. Perfection is not possible for us in this world, but nothing short of perfection should be accepted as our goal. The perfect obedience in heaven is the ideal which is set before the wicked world in its rebellion against God. Again the great commission comes into view in this prayer, and there is the strongest emphasis upon the solemn responsibility for the Christian to be the light of the world and the salt which will preserve it from utter corruption. Each of these petitions should awaken our hearts to confess how far short we have fallen and to pray earnestly for assistance in making the most personal application All these requests are at once personal and universal.

Daily Bread

"Give us this day our daily bread." The very fact that prayer is based on a day-by-day appeal underscores thanksgiving for what has been given and request for further provision. Here is the answer to the question as to whether it is right for a Christian to pray for money. It depends on whether he is a Christian and the purpose to which the money is to he dedicated. Jesus did not instruct us to pray for the luxuries which the world seeks, but for food which will enable us to live for God. As the first three petitions sought universal reverence for God, universal sway of the kingdom of God, and universal obedience to His will, so the next three petitions are intensely personal for our physical needs, the forgiveness of our sins, and spiritual welfare for the future. Our Debts

"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). Luke has, "...sins; for we ourselves also forgive every one that is indebted to us" (Luke 11:1). The concept of debts enters into Luke's report in the verb indebted. A common mistranslation is "Forgive us our trespasses." The two Greek words are quite different. Jesus uses trespasses in the injunction which follows the prayer (Matthew 6:14, Matthew 6:15). From this location the word is inserted in the prayer itself by those who use this version of the prayer. Trespass emphasizes sins of commission. God says, "Thou shalt not," but we disobey. Debt is a wider term and includes both sins of commission and omission. The Greek verb parabaino means to go in a forbidden direction; we stray from the divine path, or we deliberately choose to disobey God and go in the way of the world. These are the sins of commission. The verb hamartano means to miss the mark; we aim at

an extremely difficult target and fail to reach it. This emphasizes sins of omission, but both types of sin are included in this prayer. Both of these words for sin are used constantly in the New Testament, and the distinction between them is most interesting. The usage of the Roman Catholic church is to have trespasses in the prayer. The prayer books of the Episcopal and Methodist churches have trespasses. In as we also have forgiven, the verb of Matthew's account is perfect tense, which means completed action. We have wiped the slate clean of all hatred and unforgiving spirit toward others before we ask God to forgive us. Luke has, "For we ourselves also forgive every one" ; the verb here is present tense, expressing continued action. This is the course of conduct to which we are constantly committed.

Temptation

"And bring us not into temptation." God permits the devil to tempt us. But he has promised that no temptation will come upon us that we cannot resist. He always provides a way of escape if we will but watch for this exit. We pray that God may help us to curb our selfish desires and our worldly folly and lead us in paths where we may be victorious. We should remember the petition, "Give us this day," as we pray, "Bring us not into temptation." Too much prosperity, too much luxury is most often the way of defeat. But how many of us ever pray for God to see to it that we never have more worldly possessions than we can control?

Deliverance

"But deliver us from the evil one." Luke's account does not have this petition. The a.v. translates "from evil"; the a.s.v. has "the evil one." The adjective ending can be either masculine or neuter. The presence of the definite article seems to favor the a.s.v. translation, "the evil one." But a rule of Greek grammar supports the a.v. translation; ho anthropos usually means "the man," but it can mean a generality-humanity, or mankind. The a.v. chose to take this as evil in general. Frequently, where there are two possible and powerful translations, the two standard translations present the two renditions.

"Bring us not into temptation." "Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations" (James 1:2). There is no more contradiction in these two passages than there is in the actual experience of a soldier who engages in the most serious meditations and prayers the night before the battle, but who charges forth over the top in the most triumphant spirit into the battle for all that is noblest and best. The context in James' discussion shows that he is concentrating on trials such as poverty, ill health, misfortunes, and persecutions. But it also shows that he is talking about the temptations with which the devil seeks to overcome and destroy us. That we have the opportunity to prove our devotion to God should always be a subject of thanksgiving, even as we earnestly pray for His guidance, presence, and help.

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." The a.v. , which followed mainly the Textus Receptus, the text received at that time with its main dependence on Alexandrinus and some late cursives, has this impressive close to the prayer. The translators of the a.s.v. felt that the manuscript evidence was not sufficient for them to include it. This close of the prayer parallels its opening with adoration and praise. It reminds one of the magnificent outbursts of praise in Revelation (Revelation 5:13; Revelation 7:12; Revelation 11:17; Revelation 14:7; Revelation 15:3; Revelation 16:7; Revelation 19:6, Revelation 19:7).

Private Prayer The context in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew shows that the model prayer was given on that occasion in the midst of warnings against offering private prayers in public to be seen of men. Private prayers can be offered in public with a bustling multitude all around without the worshiper being seen of men to pray. It is not even necessary to close one's eyes in order to pray. Closing the eyes is our manner of entering into the inner chamber and closing the door. But when the need is desperate it is possible to insulate the spirit without isolating the body. Under ordinary circumstances, however, both the Injunctions and the example of Christ lead us to seek privacy from the disturbing interruptions of the world. But we should beware lest the manner in which we seek privacy may in itself become a loud announcement to the world that we are about to engage in private prayer. The context in Matthew urges intensity in prayer; Luke's context urges frequency and persistence in prayer. Repetition is urged in Luke's account; vain repetition is condemned in the Sermon on the Mount. Vain means empty. We insult God when there is mere sound and no thought content in prayers. In the agony of Gethsemane Jesus repeated his prayers, but it was anything but vain repetition. James declares that the reason for the barrenness of many Christian lives is that we do not pray: "Ye have not, because ye ask not" (James 4:2). He then offers a stinging indictment of the kind of prayers we offer: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your pleasures" (James 4:3).

Persistence in Prayer The little parable of the persistent friend who finally routs his neighbor out of his comfortable bed to furnish him some much-needed bread for his unexpected guests teaches persistence in prayer. There is something of comedy in this parable. "Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee" (Luke 11:7). We cannot quite be sure whether the man considers this borrowing neighbor a pest, whether he is only half awake in his surly refusal, or whether it is pure selfishness. It is evident that it is winter for he has the children in bed with him as all of them are trying to keep warm. Sometimes in winter ice and snow occur in the uplands of Palestine. They are all so nice and warm ready for a restful night of sleep, and then comes this demand that he get up in the cold and find three loaves of bread for his neighbor.

We must not be puzzled when the details of parables do not fit. We must seek for the principles. God is not like this man, seeking his own comfort instead of giving instant help to one in need. The principle is that if a churlish man will finally yield to the persistence of one in need, how much more will our loving heavenly Father give to us the things which are best for us. When we do not immediately receive that for which we pray, we need to reexamine our prayer, our motives, our efforts to do our part. We should pray with expectancy, but we should always keep our own judgment in subjection: "Not my will but thine be done." We sometimes pray with desperate urgency for things that are matters of judgment, and we persist in a manner which would imply the infallibility of our judgment. We must combine fervent requests with humble subjection to the will of God. The Holy Spirit In the further discussion Jesus shows that He is contrasting imperfect man with perfect God. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children..." Stones abound in Palestine that are similar in size and shape to the loaves of bread in use. Bread, fish, and hard-boiled eggs were articles of diet. A scorpion, when its legs are folded in, looks very much like an egg. In the Sermon on the Mount these same illustrations are used in urging the same course of conduct — persistence in prayer. The conclusion in that sermon is, "How much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him" (Matthew 7:11). The

conclusion in this instruction, given nearly two years later, is, “How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him” (Luke 11:13). In the Sermon on the Mount we are promised that if we will seek first the kingdom of God all the other things necessary for life will be added to us. Even in the very presence of a martyr’s death the Christian, as he dies for his faith, can rejoice in this promise. He is about to enter into life in its full and final phase. In the instruction Luke records that Christ promises “the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.” This is the supreme and all-inclusive promise of life in its fullest and most perfect experience. How many of us pray daily for a larger measure of the Holy Spirit? How many make room for Him in our hearts? What adjustments would be necessary in our objectives, our places and manner of relaxation and amusement, our entire conduct of life?

095. Chapter 36 - Further Controversies

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Luke 11:14-54

Hostile Hearers

Hostile Pharisees in Judaea and Peraea repeated the attacks upon Christ which their colleagues in Galilee had made some years before. This opposition was natural. The lines of attack were strictly limited by His sinless life and His unselfish spiritual teaching. When Jesus cast out a demon during this Peraean ministry, the Pharisees revived the charge that He was in league with the devil and that by the power of the devil He was casting out demons. They followed this with a demand for a sign, or miracle, from heaven. The insulting insinuation was that Jesus had not as yet worked any miracles. Jesus responded with t scorching denunciation of the Pharisees Amid the animated exchange, a woman spoke up out of the audience in praise of the mother of Jesus.

Similar Events

Critics undertake to deny that these events happened and hold that Luke is merely working over and rearranging material which he copied from Matthew and Mark. While some repetition naturally occurred in Jesus' teaching as He addressed different audiences, there is an abundance of new material in Luke's report of this ministry in Judaea and Peraea. Those who assail Luke's account point out that when the charge of Jesus' being in league with the devil had been recorded in Matthew and Mark, Jesus cast out a demon from a deaf and dumb man

These same attacks must have been made frequently when He healed a dumb demoniac. Distinctly different details in the events appear when comparison is made. The man healed in Matthew's account of the earlier controversy had been blind as well as dumb. On that occasion the scribes who made the charge that Jesus was in league with the devil were national leaders who had come out from Jerusalem (Mark 3:22). The demand for a sign from heaven was made at various times (Matthew 12:38; Matthew 16:1). There is no indication that the mother of Jesus was present here in Peraea; there is merely a reference to her by a woman in the audience. Similarities in the instruction Jesus gave on different occasions are precisely what we should expect because different audiences needed to hear the same teaching and warnings. The denunciation of the Pharisees has many criticisms similar to those Jesus offered on the great day of questions of the final week in Jerusalem, but again Jesus gave what was needed both times. There are a number of new elements in this discourse. The Demoniac

"And he was casting out a demon that was dumb" (Luke 11:14). The demon had caused the dumbness of the man, hence the demon is referred to as a dumb demon. "The multitudes marveled" because at this time Jesus was evangelizing in a new territory where His miracles had not been seen before. "But some of them said, By Beelzebub the prince of demons casteth he out demons" (Luke 11:15). The spelling in some manuscripts is Beelzebul. Beelzebub was a god of

the Ekronites; the name means “god of flies.” Beelzebul means “lord of the dwelling,” or “lord of the dung hill,” i.e., the god of all idolatrous abominations. Jesus had recently been accused of being possessed with a demon, and a heated argument among the Jews in Jerusalem had followed (John 8:48; John 10:20). This new accusation may have had some relation to the recent attack. The Pharisees seem to have been circulating the charge privately this time: “But he, knowing their thoughts said unto them” (Luke 11:17).

Jesus’ Defense

Jesus made no effort to defend Himself against attacks such as the charge that He was a gluttonous man and a winebibber. His life was an open book which all might read. The charge was so manifestly false it could be treated with complete contempt. But there was the strong possibility that people could be led astray by the mysterious charge that He was casting out demons by the power of the devil. He had guarded against anything which could be construed as evidence in support of such a false charge. He had refused to allow the demons to testify to His deity when He had cast them out. If he had submitted them as His witnesses, the charge would have seemed to have had some foundation. The arguments which Jesus used to demolish this charge are similar to the ones He had formerly used in Galilee: (1) Satan would not be fighting against his own subjects, else his kingdom and power would quickly perish. (2) They claimed that their Jewish exorcists were able to cast out demons. If their claim were true, by whom would their sons be casting out demons? Let these sons speak up and judge the charge now made against Him. (3) “But if I by the finger of God cast out demons” puts express emphasis upon the fact that He used no hocus-pocus or magic formula; it had been an instant miracle. “Then is the kingdom of God come upon you (Luke 11:20). The King is in the midst and the kingdom is about to be established, and yet they remain aloof in rebellion against God.

“When the strong man fully armed guardeth his own court...” (Luke 11:21). Satan is the strong man, fully armed and guarding his own domain. This parable of his defeat by One who is stronger and invincible illustrates the Overwhelming disaster which Satan is facing at the hands of the Son of God. A solemn warning is given to all who refuse the Messiah or neglect to join Him in His campaign of the ages: “He that is not with me is against me” (Luke 11:23). It is not possible to occupy a neutral position in this critical conflict. The Empty House A further parable, of the demon who voluntarily left the home which he had gained in taking possession of a man, describes the restless wandering of the demon in the desert places. This reminds one of the fateful meeting of Jesus and the devil in the wilderness at the very beginning of His ministry. There is so much we do not know about the spirit world that we cannot tell why this demon should have sought the desert places. He found no resting place and returned to find that the man he had formerly possessed had left his heart unoccupied. Although he had renovated, he had not dedicated. The saying, “An empty brain is the devil’s workshop,” probably had its inspiration in this passage. The demon took seven other demons “more evil than himself” and possessed this man again. “The last estate of that man becometh worse than the first” (Luke 11:26). When Jesus used this parable on a former occasion, He had applied it to the nation, with its state growing constantly worse in the midst of hesitating, faltering refusal to accept His Messiahship. Jesus now applied it to the individual who hoped to reform, but had not the courage to dedicate Himself to the service of God. A Woman’s Praise The marvelous character of Jesus’ words and deeds and His divine personality so impressed a woman in the crowd she spoke up in praise of Him with reflections of how wonderful it

must have been to have been His mother. “And it came to pass as he said these things, a certain woman out of the multitude lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the breasts which thou didst suck” (Luke 11:27). This interruption is typical of the democracy in His teaching sessions. A lawyer could stand up and challenge Jesus. A woman in the midst of a throng could cry out with such a tribute as this. Her remark reminds one of the predictions of Elizabeth (Luke 1:42) and of Mary (Luke 1:48). Some commentators would connect her statement with some previous event in her own home where a demon had been cast out, but there is no hint of this in the text. As he said these things seems to underscore the masterful nature of His reply to the false charge which had been made. If her home had merely been one where a tragic experience of demon possession had occurred, she could have been expected to express a lament and an appeal for help, or a thanksgiving, if a miracle had already been granted.

Luke’s Gospel has been called “The Gospel of Women” because of many beautiful characters and incidents peculiar to Luke’s account. Looking over the Gospel narratives, we find no record of a woman condemning or assailing Jesus. In light of John the Baptist’s murder by Herodias, many wicked women in the throngs may have demanded the crucifixion of Jesus, but no mention is made.

Worship of Mary In His reply to the woman’s praise Jesus accepts her declaration as true, but corrects her false emphasis. Everything possible has been done in the Gospel narratives to warn the followers of Christ away from any special veneration of Mary. The very predictions that all generations would realize her godly character, her tribute of faith and devotion to God, and would call her “blessed” is fulfilled in this incident; and the negative reaction of Jesus is significant: “Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it” (Luke 11:28). Yea means “yes”; thus Jesus agrees that Mary had been accorded a unique privilege in being chosen by God to become the mother of the Messiah. But the reason for this choice was the nobility of character which Mary had achieved. The open door of heaven is before all who hear the word of God and keep it. Therefore Jesus pronounced the superior blessing upon those who rise up in faith to meet God’s universal call.

Demand for a Sign

“This generation is an evil generation: it seeketh after a sign” (Luke 11:29). The Pharisees had demanded “a sign from heaven” (Luke 11:16), by which they meant some such prodigious miracle as when God parted the Red Sea before Moses or sent down from heaven fire to consume Elijah’s sacrifice on Mount Carmel. The implication had been that Jesus had not actually worked miracles. They had openly argued this proposition (John 6:30.). They had just charged that Jesus was casting out demons by the power of the devil. The evil character of the generation was thus shown by their rejection of God’s supreme messenger and of the miracles He had wrought.

Jonah and Nineveh This new phase of the discussion seems to have come after a break in the preaching service: “And when the multitudes were gathering together unto him, he began to say.” As the service was resumed, Jesus took up the second attack which had been made. “There shall no sign be given to it but the sign of Jonah” (Luke 11:29). No sign differing in character from the miracles they had already been granted could be expected from His ministry except the climactic sign of His own resurrection. Jesus continually cited this as the final proof.

“Even as Jonah became a sign unto the Ninevites….” There is no record of Jonah’s having worked any miracles in Nineveh to confirm his preaching, but he undoubtedly testified to them of his disobedience to God, the punishment God had given him, and how he had finally been spared from the living death in the fish after he had repented. He was appealing to the people of Nineveh to repent and was warning them of imminent destruction. The most convincing evidence he had was his own recent experience. Thus Jonah became a miracle to the Ninevites by the testimony of the great miracle God had just wrought in his own experience.

“So shall also the Son of man be to this generation” (Luke 11:30). This prediction would come to pass in the sublime miracle of His resurrection. “The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and shall condemn them” (Luke 11:31). What a picture is given of the final judgment when those who had smaller opportunities to know the will of God shall stand up and testify against those who had the greatest revelation and the most impelling evidence and yet scorned God’s mercy. The Queen of Sheba came from a great distance to the south. This place is generally held to be in the southern section of Arabia. Ethiopians like to claim that she came from their country. “A greater than Solomon is here.” This is not some peculiar record in the Gospel of John, but the continual proclamation of deity by Christ recorded in the Synoptics (cf. Matthew 12:42). “The men of Nineveh….repented at the preaching of Jonah” (Luke 11:32). The preposition in the Greek is eis. It does not mean “because.” The primary meaning of eis fits completely in this passage. The men of Nineveh repented into a state of harmony with the preaching of Jonah. Eis ordinarily meant into ; it can mean “to,” towards”; it sometimes means “against”; but it never means ‘because.” Plummer translates the statement they repented at the preaching of Jonah, “they turned towards it and conformed to it.”

Light and Its Use

Jesus closed the discussion with one of His favorite parables of the proper manner in which to use a lamp when it has been lighted. As in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus used this illustration to cause the unbelieving generation to open its eyes and see that the Christ was in the midst. “A lamp is for lighting; the eye for seeing; the soul for spiritual discernment; but the soul may be blinded by sin within.” Under the bushel suggests the bushel always present in the house for instant use, but not this kind of use. It would set the bushel on fire. This is not the point Jesus makes. He speaks only of the folly of failing to use the light. In another exchange Jesus had spoken of the absurdity of putting a light under a bed (Mark 4:21). It has remained for people in our present generation to exhibit the folly of burning themselves alive by taking the light to bed with them as they go to sleep smoking a cigarette.

“When thine eye is single….” Single means, “Free from distortion, normal, or sound” (Plummer). Each object is seen clearly in single vision. It is the drunken man who sees double and undertakes to walk between the two automobiles he sees approaching.

Faith, when diseased, becomes the darkness of superstition; just as the eye, when diseased, distorts and obscures….Those whose spiritual sight has not been darkened by indifference and impenitence have no need of a sign from heaven. Their whole body is full of the light which is all around them, ready to be recognized and absorbed (Plummer, Commentary on Luke, p 108). The Dinner Guest The current debate shifted to the home of a Pharisee who invited Jesus to dine with him. A large group of his select associates, lawyers and scribes, were also present at this banquet

(Luke 11:45, Luke 11:52, Luke 11:53). We are not told whether the apostles were invited, but the invitation was probably limited to Jesus. “He went in, and sat down to meat. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that he had not first bathed himself before dinner” (Luke 11:38). It is not certain that this scene followed immediately upon the preceding discussion. A considerable interval and change of location may have occurred, but the fierceness of the controversy was still in evidence. The Pharisee seems to have invited Jesus to an early meal of the day rather than the evening meal. There is no clear declaration that the Pharisee invited Jesus into his home in order to entrap Him, rather than as a sincere effort to study Jesus at close range. The denunciation of Jesus, however, implies that his motives had been evil. This censure indicates that the amazement of the Pharisee that Jesus did not take a bath before dinner (Luke 11:36) was probably feigned and hypocritical. The terrible bitterness of the Pharisees at the close indicates the failure of a carefully laid plot, which had reacted disastrously against them. Some of the denunciations Jesus gave here He repeated in Jerusalem five or six months later on the great day of questions (Matthew 23:1-39).

“He had not first bathed himself.” The Greek verb is baptidzo, which means to immerse. The Greco-Roman palaces of the rich Pharisees had abundant facilities for taking a bath. The Pharisee evidently had been very meticulous about taking a bath to rid himself of any possible ceremonial defilement from having touched sinful people in the midst of the crowd that thronged about Jesus. Jesus refused to keep these traditions of the Pharisees in protest against their concentration on such matters to the neglect of the weightier matters of the law, which brought defilement to the soul. “For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands diligently, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders; and when they come from the marketplace, except they bathe themselves, they eat not” (Mark 7:3, Mark 7:4).

Hypocrisy Unveiled

“And the Lord said unto him,” evidently answering the thoughts of the heart of this Pharisee. There may have been whispered scoffing or unspoken sneers. In surroundings where false human traditions and super-fastidious ceremonialism were used to the bring the great Teacher into ridicule, Jesus stood forth and spoke as only the Lord could. He had a message to deliver to this jeering Pharisee. “Ye the Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the platter; but your inward part is full of extortion and wickedness” (Luke 11:39). In the final denunciation in Jerusalem Jesus contrasted the pious ceremonial cleansing of the outside of the platter and the wicked neglect of the fact that the inside contents of the platter had been gained by robbery and excess. Here the cleansed exterior of the vessel is contrasted to the wicked hearts of the Pharisees.

“But give for alms those things which are within; and behold, all things are clean unto you” (Luke 11:41). Jesus had just asked the question, “Did not he that made the outside make the inside also?” Did not God, who made the material universe, make men’s souls also? in other words, what folly to imagine that they could please God by cleansing material things while neglecting God’s choicest creation, as they left their souls polluted and full of corruption. Some would make the comment about giving alms of the contents of the vessel ironical: “Give to the poor out of your luxuries, and then (as you fancy) all your robbery and wickedness will be condoned” (Erasmus, Schleiermacher, etc.). But either of the two following interpretations is better: (1) “Benevolence is a better way of keeping meals free from defilement than ceremonial cleansing of vessels.” This

urges, “The contents of your cup and platter give ye to the poor, it is better than washing the outside of the vessel.” (2) “Those things which are within your own heart (not the pot or kettle) give to the work of God.” If you will give your own heart to the poor in their misery, you will find yourself free from robbing them or indulging in excess.

“Ye tithe mint and rue and every herb” (Luke 11:42). Mint grows in abundance in Asia Minor. There are several species. Horsemint, one of the most common, grows wild on all the hills of Syria. The particular variety cultivated in the gardens of the Jews is not known. Rue was “a half-shrubby plant, two or three feet high with pinnated bluish-green leaves, all dotted over with odoriferous glands.” Mint was sweet-scented, but rue had a much more powerful odor. Rue was cultivated in Palestine as a medicine and probably as a condiment for food (Davis, Dictionary of the Bible).

Tithing

These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone” (Luke 11:42). “Justice and the love of God” are the weighty matters of life which the Pharisees had neglected. Jesus did not condemn them for their finesse in cutting off a tenth part of garden herbs to present them to the Lord. He did not condemn the Pharisees for tithing, but their legalistic tithing of tiny garden vegetables was hypocritical display. The refusal to surrender their hearts to God was what brought His denunciation. Justice would have kept them from robbing their fellowmen; the love of God should have led them to dedicate themselves to His service. The use of this passage and Matthew 23:23 to prove that the Christian is commanded to tithe in the New Testament overlooks the critical question as to when and to whom this was spoken. This event occurred before the cross. These Jews were under the law and should have been obedient to it. The law was nailed to the cross. We are not under the compulsion of command in our giving, but under the urgent impulse of love. Certainly a Christian should give more than a tithe else he places a shameful estimate on his redemption in Christ. A tithe is a good, practical working minimum. We can learn this much from the Old Testament. Only when we go beyond a tithe and any legalistic counting do we gain the deeper joys of giving.

“Ye love the chief seats in the synagogue” (Luke 11:43). The Greek word is singular: the chief seat. This seat was “the semicircular bench around the ark and facing the congregation.” They desired the most prominent place where they could be seen and praised by men. They desired prominence rather than the approval of God which comes to the humble and the devout. “Ye are as tombs which appear not, and the men that walk over them know it not” (Luke 11:44). It caused ceremonial defilement to touch a tomb (Numbers 19:16). For this reason it was customary to whitewash the tombs so those passing by might be warned and avoid contact. The hypocritical nature of the Pharisees gave those around them no warning, and thus they were constant sources of defilement. The people associated with them imagining they were pure and noble, while they became corrupted by their example. In Matthew 23:27 the reference is given a different application; the Pharisees are compared with graves that have been carefully whitewashed on the outside, but on the inside are full of corpses and all manner of uncleanness. The Scholars

“And one of the lawyers answering saith unto him, Teacher, in saying this thou reproachest us also” (Luke 11:45). The very highest scholars of the Pharisees were responsible for the customs and traditions that prevailed. The lesser Pharisees, who were not lawyers or scribes, followed the teaching and example of these leaders. The lawyer felt his group was the “holy of holies” of the

nation; “thou insultest even us.” Instead of apologizing to this lawyer and retracting aught He had said, Jesus proceeded to give forth a blistering denunciation of them: “Woe unto you lawyers also! for ye load men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers” (Luke 11:6). The interpretations which the scribes placed upon the law made it more severe and exacting than had been intended. They built up an intricate system of ceremony which would require all the time and energy of a rich man and which a poor man could not hope to observe. Instead of leaving many details to the good judgment of the individual and the particular circumstances he faced, they undertook to lay down foolish discriminations and impossible regulations. They had no sympathy or mercy for the poor and unfortunate who could not keel) their system. They would not even reach out with their finger to lift this ceremonial burden they had attempted to bind on the nation. They were more interested in theoretical discussion than in practical living. They loved themselves rather than God and humanity. Some hold Jesus means that they tried to bind these traditions on others but with the clever legalism of the lawyer they found shrewd ways to evade the regulations themselves.

“Ye build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them” (Luke 11:47). Their ostentatious erection of elaborate tombs to the prophets who had been murdered by their fathers was another false claim they were making, for they refused to obey the injunctions of these very prophets they pretended to honor. They were rejecting in this very hour the Great Prophet, Priest, and King. These tombs they built could not conceal their disobedience to God. The Martyrs

“Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send unto them prophets and apostles; and some of them shall they kill and persecute” (Luke 11:49). Some suppose that Christ is here quoting words which He had uttered on former occasions as He later spoke them in Jerusalem (Matthew 23:34), but Christ does not in any other place call Himself “the Wisdom of God.” It is not certain that He is referring to Himself here, even though Paul later applies this title to Him (1 Corinthians 1:24, 1 Corinthians 1:30). It seems rather that Jesus means by the wisdom of God simply God’s counsel which He knows perfectly; thus He is referring to the whole Old Testament revelation, which is summarized in the dark picture which He paints. Particularly in point are such passages as Proverbs 1:20-31; Proverbs 8:1-36; 2 Chronicles 24:20-22; 2 Chronicles 36:14-21. Jesus couples the apostles with the Old Testament prophets, showing the continuity of God’s revelation in His chosen messengers and of Israel’s rejection of the prophets and the Messiah and His chosen messengers. The deity of Christ is clearly affirmed as His authority in sending forth His apostles is identical with the divine authority which had sent the prophets.

Jesus predicted the persecution and martyrdom the apostles and His other chosen messengers would receive at the hands of these unbelieving Jews. “That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation” (Luke 11:50). Instead of being warned by the disobedience of their parents and the dreadful fate which both the northern and the southern kingdoms had met, they deliberately rejected God’s Messiah and took upon themselves the iniquity of their fathers. As they now had the added advantage of seeing and hearing Christ and God’s final revelation, they heaped upon themselves the responsibility of the preceding generations for all the combined revelation and appeal they now faced. The reference obviously is to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, which would exceed in tragic suffering and in its finality anything in the old Testament.

Zachariah

“From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zachariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary.” Abel is cited as the first of the prophets. Paul refers to the fact that Abel is still speaking out for God, even though he has been dead for so many centuries (Hebrews 11:4). The fragmentary nature of the accounts makes it difficult to be sure of the identity of the Zachariah to whom Jesus refers. It is natural to think of the prophet Zechariah, who carried on his ministry at the close of the Old Testament. This would make the sweep of history, Abel to Zechariah, complete. We do not know how Zechariah died, but we do know that it was the common fate of the prophets to be murdered in the most shocking manner. In His later use of this trenchant denunciation Jesus says, “Zachariah the son of Barachiah” (Matthew 23:35). The prophet Zechariah was the son of Barachiah. Some have pointed out that Josephus tells of Zechariah, son of Barachiah, who was killed in the temple by the Zealots at a later time than this, but Jesus is reviewing past history and not predicting a murder as yet not committed. From 2 Chronicles 24:20 we learn that Zechariah, son of Jehoiada, was slain thus between the altar and the sanctuary. Andrews suggests that Barachiah may have also had the name Jehoiada as it was a common practice for Jews to have two names, or that Barachiah may have been the father of Jehoiada and thus suggest that the name Barachiah in Matthew 23:35 is a scribal error and that it should be Jehoiada. The martyrdom of this Zechariah also occurred close to the end of the Old Testament period. A call for vengeance is recorded in the death of both Abel and this Zechariah: “The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground” (Genesis 4:10); “Jehovah look upon it, and require it” (2 Chronicles 24:22). McGarvey favors the solution that it was the prophet to whom Jesus refers. The fact that the manner of his death is not known to us is of no moment. The reference of Jesus was clear to His hearers, and the general meaning is clear to us. The exact details of the reference are unimportant. The Key of Knowledge The climax of Jesus’ denunciation of the lawyers was the charge that they had taken away “the key of knowledge: ye enter not in yourselves, and them that are entering ye hindered” (Luke 11:52). By their lifelong study of the Scripture the lawyers possessed the key of knowledge, for God’s revelation opened the door to life everlasting. But in rejecting the Messiah, they were refusing to enter the door, and they even tried to prevent others from entering by their vicious attacks upon Christ. The key which opened the door to knowledge was the superior educational advantage they had over the common people. By exercising their leadership, they could help turn the whole nation to God. By their false interpretations of the law, their idea of a political Christ, their wicked lives, and by their selfish and proud contempt for the common people, they had taken away the key of knowledge.

“And when he came out from thence, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press upon him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things” (Luke 11:53). The banquet ended in a most exciting manner. The Pharisees in their fury followed Him out of the house and crowded around Him, seeking desperately something which they might use against Him. Their effort to assail Him for His failure to keep their traditions of ceremonial cleansing had brought forth such a searching presentation of their sins that they became like a fighter who loses his head and strikes out blindly in all directions. They sought to upset Jesus with all sorts of questions and traps. The character of Jesus’ denunciation and their bitterness at the close show how hypocritical and malicious had been the session planned by the Pharisee who had invited Him into his home.

096. Chapter 37 - The Fear of Men Versus Trust in God

Chapter 37 - The Fear of Men Versus Trust in God

Luke 12:1-34 The Crowd The scenes that follow in the Peraean ministry contain varied discussions which in the main concern the fear of men and the trust in riches as contrasted to trust in God. The encounter with the Pharisees in the home of one of them must have become known to the multitude by the hectic lobby which spilled out into the midst of the crowd. The disciples would have learned from Jesus more of the details. It was a most fitting time to issue stringent warnings against being afraid of men with their social prestige, and political and military power. The disciples were in constant danger of coming under the influence of these shrewd politicians. Crossing the Sea of Galilee after the day of controversy in the synagogue in Capernaum, Jesus had warned His disciples severely against “the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees’ (Matthew 16:6). This occasion appears to be a similar one. Jesus repeats certain important warnings He had given in the commission to the twelve and in the Sermon on the Mount. The Excitement

“And in the mean time, when the many thousands of the multitude were gathered together, insomuch that they trod upon one another” (Luke 12:1). The perfect order which Jesus always kept in His assemblies seems to have been contravened here as the crowd in their excitement and determination to see and hear evidently began to shove one another and to seek a closer approach. The Greek text is of the greatest help at this point. Neither the a.v. nor the a.s.v. gives the reader required assistance here by way of a footnote. There are two types of result clauses in Greek, both introduced by the word hoste (1) With the indicative hoste shows the result actually produced. (2) With the infinitive it shows the tendency or that something was about to happen. The infinitive is used here and means actually no one in the dense crowd was injured; they did not tread upon one another; that sort of disorder frequently leads to the death of many who are trampled underfoot; but this was the tendency and the peril of the situation. The crowd was so great and so determined that it almost became unruly. The Warning

“Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy” (Luke 12:1). This warning sounds like an epilogue to the heated debate which had just taken place. These Pharisees were leaders who controlled the life of the nation and before whose wrath the common people faced ostracism and excommunication. A survey of the Book of Acts, with its record of the persecution of the early Christians by these Jewish leaders, confirms the urgent need for repeated warnings by Christ. In His commission to the twelve Jesus had said, “What I tell you in darkness, speak ye in the light: and what ye hear in the ear, proclaim upon the housetops (Matthew 10:27). While urging His disciples not to fear persecution and death as a result of proclaiming the gospel, Jesus was not telling them He was going to whisper in their ear what they were to shout aloud from the housetops and bear the consequences. Such an idea was silenced by the crucifixion. The proposition of Jesus was always for them to take up their cross and follow Him. In this sermon recorded by Luke, Jesus is renewing the assurance that “there is nothing covered up, that shall not be revealed” (Luke 12:2). The difficult and profound doctrines of the gospel, such as the deity of

Christ and the atonement, could only be discussed now “in the inner chambers,” but the day would come when they would be proclaimed from the housetops. The Reasons

Jesus gave a number of reasons why they should not fear men as they went forth in His name to proclaim the divine message: (1) Men cannot offer ultimate harm. All they can do is kill the body. They cannot touch the soul without your consent. (2) God rather than man is to be feared because He has complete power. (3) God follows the course of even the sparrows. Therefore fear not men, for God cares for you. Even the hairs of your head are numbered. (4) If we confess Christ before men, He will confess us in heaven. (5) There is such a sin as the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit; therefore beware of apostasy. (6) The Holy Spirit would guide them in what they were to say when put on trial for their teaching. In these last reasons a sharp contrast is made between confessing and denying Christ, and between the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and their miraculous inspiration by the Spirit. In the detailed discussion of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (chap. 5) it has been noted that the sin may be committed both by enemies who assail from the outside, and by erstwhile followers who betray their Lord from the inside. The context here has nothing about Jesus’ being accused of association with the devil. The warning was directed to His followers lest they should turn against Him and become guilty of this fearful sin. Dark days of trial were ahead for them. They had to beware lest they denied their Lord. “Be not anxious how or what ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Spirit shall teach you in that very hour what ye ought to say” (Luke 12:11, Luke 12:12). This is another of the great affirmations of the inspiration of the New Testament writers. It was much more impressive to have recorded these explicit promises of Jesus in their historical setting than for the writers to have given their own affirmations of inspiration. The New Testament abounds with both types of claims of the writers to miraculous, divine guidance.

Covetousness The Parable of the Rich Fool was given in answer to a man who requested Jesus to be judge in the division of an inheritance. It does not really change the general topic of trust in God. Evidently a young man was being dispossessed by his older brother, and the man felt Jesus should demonstrate the love of justice He preached by compelling the older brothel to share the inheritance properly. The text does not state whether the man was justified in his claim. The sharp rebuke Jesus administered to him closed the case. The man may have felt that he had been unable to get justice through ordinary legal channels. He evidently was sure of the truth and justice of Jesus, and felt He had the power of personality to enforce His decision. Jesus refused because He was engrossed in trying to turn the minds of men away from earthly possessions to heavenly pursuits. To have judged such a matter would have been out of place in His purely spiritual ministry. His warning against covetousness suggests that the man was being tempted sorely in this direction and needed such a rebuke. At least the quarrel had been caused by the covetousness of the older brother, and the world is full of strife because of covetousness. All those present and all the ages needed to hear His warning. The Rich Farmer The parable does not imply that the rich farmer had acquired his wealth in an unjust manner. Rather, he had become so completely self-centered, earth-centered, money-centered that he had no room in his heart and life for God. It was a love-of-money tragedy. This fact suggests that the worship of money may have been afflicting the man who made the appeal for justice. The rich man was foolish in the following ways: (1) He devoted all his energy to gaining earthly possessions. (2) He failed completely to realize his dependence upon God. He showed no gratitude toward God and imagined he was a

“self-made man.” (3) He was guilty of hoarding instead of sharing. (4) He disregarded his duty toward God and man. (5) He even imagined he could feed his soul on mere earthly things. (6) He accepted his abundance as an excuse for luxurious, if not riotous, living. (7) He refused to consider that death ends all such plans and brings the judgment day. To have robbed and murdered, or to have spent his time in drunkenness and riotous living would have been still greater folly, but it was enough that he was covetous. Observe how this rich man looked forward to retiring. And we have talked as if retirement is a modern social development! He had no time now for anything but work, work, work, and more, more, more; but he looked forward to the time when he would retire. He planned finally that when he had enough, he would retire and eat, drink, and be merry. How long would he have lived under the ordinary course of nature when he stopped his work to turn to indulgence?

Egotism The egotism of this rich man is omnipresent and very oppressive. When the man spoke, he used I and my at every turn: “I do”; “I have not” ; “my barns” ; “will I bestow”; “my grain” ; “I will say”; “my soul.” He foolishly drew a circle about himself to shut out God and all mankind. He did not recognize that all his gain had been by God’s merciful help or that all he had belonged to God. He talked to himself as if there were no one else from whom to secure advice. He addressed his soul, but this may be hidden irony; he talked as if his soul could feed on material things. The Judgment

God’s patience and mercy toward the rich fool had been extended over many years, but the more God had blessed him the greater was his ingratitude and folly. He considered all his possession his own, gained solely by his own labors. God finally despaired of the man and demanded an accounting. God showed him by this tragic summons that even his own soul did not belong to him, but was subject to God’s final call. How about all the years of toil and planning bestowed on earthly goods? Wasted! It was left behind to curse some other family with a quarrel such as had just rent the home of the man who made request for judgement against his brother. The interesting plural form in the Greek text, “They are demanding thy soul of thee” (“thy soul Is required of thee”), may refer to tile angels sent forth to bring the man to judgment.

Death

God caused the end of this man’s life. Just how God said, “Thou foolish one this night is thy soul required of thee,” is not made clear, but He did cause the immediate end of the man’s life. He can cause the death of any person at any time, but to say that God directly brings the end of every man’s life is asserting more than we know. God does cause the end of every person’s life in the general sense that He has laid down the inviolable laws that sin brings disease, suffering, and death, that old age finally comes on since man no longer has access to the tree of life. But we cannot determine in the ordinary case of death whether God has permitted His laws of nature to take their usual course or whether He has intervened directly.

We can bit wonder what effect his encounter with Christ had had upon the man whose request had evoked this discussion. Was he brought to trust in God rather than in riches? The next sermon recorded by Luke is devoted to this very thing — trust in God. Did he desist in his quarrel with his brother, cease his endless yearning and striving for earthly treasures, and give his energy and effort to the doing of God’s will?

Trust in God

“Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on” (Luke 12:22). If this sermon followed immediately as it does in Luke’s record, then this man received further timely instruction. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus had given similar instruction to a different audience. All the world at all times needs to be reminded of our need to trust in God. It is specifically stated by Luke that this sermon was delivered “unto his disciples.” The rest of the vast multitude must have listened with rapt attention whether or not they were willing to change their way of life at such a startling challenge. From the fear of men and yielding to covetousness Jesus turned to the opposite: trust in God. He had just shown that there is no security or lasting joy in earthly treasures, even as there is nothing really to fear from men. He now showed that in trusting God there is absolute safety and blessedness. Observe how this sermon is interwoven in the most intricate way with the parable of the rich fool: sowing, reaping, abundant harvest, store chamber and barn. The word translated life in Luke 12:22 is psuche; it is the same word translated soul in the preceding parable (Luke 12:20). The Greek word can have either meaning. The translators have to decide which meaning is demanded by the context. Both the a.v. and the a.s.v. agree in their renderings here. “Be not anxious for your soul” might be thought to refer to the rich man who thought he could feed his soul on earthly goods, but the rest of Luke 12:22 seems to make the reference plainly to “life.” Life is sustained by food, and the parallel between “life” and “body” as between food and raiment is quite clear. The Ravens

“Consider the ravens” (Luke 12:24). Ravens are mentioned frequently in the Old Testament, but only here in the New Testament. We think of Elijah being fed by the ravens while he kept his vigil for many months in the dark canyon of the brook Cherith. The word raven “covers the whole of the crow tribe (including rooks and jackdaws) which is strongly represented In Palestine. Like the vulture, the raven acts as a scavenger. Jesus used the raven as an illustration because it was common and familiar to all. Some hold that since ravens turn their young out of the nest and leave them to fend for themselves, Jesus chose them as an illustration. But this is not true of ravens: “The raven is very careful of its young: and God feeds both old and young.”

Anxiety

“Which of you by being anxious can add a cubit to the measure of his life?” (Luke 12:25). The a.v. has “can add to his stature one cubit.” The Greek word can mean either life or stature, but “add a span to his age” seems better than “to his stature.” Who wants to be eighteen inches taller than he is, unless it is an American college student seeking a basketball scholarship? On the other hand, how can one talk about adding, not eighteen seconds, months, or years to his life, but eighteen “cubits”? The choice between the two renderings inclines one to accept the a.s.v. as giving the more profound content to the statement. Children are anxious for more rapid increase in stature. They like to have a special place in the house where they can mark their height and their increase in stature every few months. But who is there, young or old, who does not ardently desire td increase the length of his life? If life is accepted as the preferred translation of helikia, then of necessity cubit must be considered a comical turn which gives a subtle color of humor to the passage. There is much more humor in the teaching of Jesus than is generally recognized. Just at the instant when His hearers expected Him to affirm that no one by anxiety can add a single day to the length of his life, Jesus said, “can add eighteen inches to the measure of his life.”

Lilies

“If then ye are not able to do even that which is least, why are ye anxious concerning the rest?” (Luke 12:26). That which is least is the extension of the life by the slightest margin through anxiety. The rest sums up the necessities and luxuries of life which occupy so much of our anxious thoughts and efforts. From Luke 12:26 to Luke 12:32 the reasons given for not yielding to worry are similar to those in the Sermon on the Mount. Various conjectures have been made as to the particular flower which is meant by the more general term lily. “Some flower with a brilliant color is meant, and the color is one to which human lips can be compared (Song of Solomon 5:13).” Some think it is the poppy, which furnishes a riot of color to fields in Palestine; some favor the scarlet anemone. The wild flowers of Palestine are of surpassing beauty with more than two thousand varieties.

Grass

“The grass in the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven” (Luke 12:28). The oven refers to the Outdoor ovens made of clay. Scarcity of wood or any ordinary fuel caused the gathering of sticks, weeds, and grass, which were stuffed into the oven and set on fire. When the roaring fire died out, the ashes were scraped out and the bread placed inside and the oven closed up tightly for the long, slow process of baking. “Seek not ye what ye shall eat” (Luke 12:29). This prohibition is condemning anxiety, not thrift. They were not to make the gaining of material things the first object of their stay in this world. Jesus explained in Luke 12:31 that He was admonishing them not to make the gaining of food, drink, and other material necessities the chief object of their efforts; they were to seek first the kingdom of God with the assurance that God would provide all the necessities of life for those who make the doing of His will their objective in life. Even if they meet a martyr’s fate, there is a heaven. Central in this entire discussion is Jesus’ exhortation, “neither be ye of doubtful mind” (Luke 12:29). It is a sermon on trust in God and matches in a marvelous way the sermon on the fear of men and the parable of the rich fool. How anxious the rich man had been to extend his life amid all conceivable abundance! How swiftly God brought an end to his selfish program! The Kingdom

“Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). Jesus Intertwines thoughts He had presented in the Sermon on the Mount with this tender reference to recent sermons on the Good Shepherd. Recorded only by John, the teaching about the Good Shepherd and the fold finds incidental confirmation in Luke’s account of the preaching in this Peraean period. The Good Shepherd will not only feed His flock, He will welcome them into His kingdom (the fold). Again we turn to the Book of Acts to see how much there was to cause the first Christians to be fearful of men who sought to destroy them and how God’s good pleasure gave the headership of the church into the hands of men who were scorned by the scholars as ignorant and unlearned. Verily, a little Hock, but how mightily their power by the Holy Spirit and how prodigious the spread of the kingdom!

Sharing with Others

“Sell that which ye have, and give alms” (Luke 12:33). Like so many of the declarations of the Sermon on the Mount this is a declaration of a principle of life. Jesus did not condemn earthly possessions, but we should be ready to sell and give to the poor. The Book of Acts is the inspired

interpreter of the Gospel narratives. The inspired apostles led the early church in carrying out the teaching of Jesus. There was no denial of the right to private property. Even in the first enthusiasm of the Jerusalem church, Peter made it very clear that anyone who sold his possessions and gave the money into the common treasury acted in a completely voluntary manner. It was stewardship which was emphasized (Acts 5:4).

Matthew 5:40-42 is comparable to this passage in Luke. Christ and His apostles had a treasury out of which they bought food for themselves and gave alms to others. Christians are not to abandon what is necessary to maintain their own lives, but they are not to allow fear of poverty to keep them from giving alms. Mohammedan writers attribute some interesting sayings to Jesus on the subject of covetousness. They are evidently inventions developed from this passage and similar ones in the New Testament. “He that seeks after this world is like one that drinks sea-water. The more he drinks the thirstier he becomes, until it slay him.” “There are three dangers in wealth. First, it may be taken from an unlawful source. And what if it be taken from a lawful source? they asked. He answered: It may be given to an unworthy person. They asked, And what if it be given to a worthy person? He answered, “The handling of it may divert its owner from God” (see Plummer, Commentary on Luke, p. 329).

Heavenly Treasures

“Purses that wax not old.” Pocketbooks that grow too old may no honker keep the precious contents within. Thieves break through and steal with particular abandon in these modern times. Moths still destroy the costly raiment. Only heaven affords a secure treasury. The earthly possessions cannot purchase for us entrance into heaven, but they may help us on to glory if we use them for God’s good purposes. We are justified in spending some of our money for maintaining our own health and strength if first we have prayed, “Thy kingdom come,” and if we bring our conduct into harmony with our prayer. By giving generously to those in need, we store up in heaven the high favor of God upon our lives.

097. Chapter 38 - Warnings Concerning the Judgment Day

Chapter 38 - Warnings Concerning the Judgment Day Luke 12:35-59;Luke 13:1-21 The Second Coming

Luke presents at this time in Jesus' ministry teaching concerning the second coming. A discourse on repentance points also to the final judgment. A controversy over healing on the sabbath follows with only a general connection to the idea of the final judgment. The scenes and discussions which follow through chapter 14 carry forward this same solemn consideration of the judgment, but the fitting together of John's account with the Synoptics generally brings forth the conclusion that John's account of Jesus at the Feast of Dedication is to be placed immediately after Luke 13:21. Such conclusions, however, are tentative, and there is a strong unity in Luke chapters 12 through 14.

Watchfulness

Watchfulness for the second coming is the theme which Jesus pursues as He introduces parables of waiting servants and wise stewards. It is a natural development of thought from preceding sermons on trust in God and disregard for earthly luxuries. "Let your loins be girded about" (Luke 12:35). The long flowing garments characteristic of the East impeded swift movement. In running a race or going into battle, the belt was tightened with the long robe tucked up to kilt length. The disciples were to arrange their lives for swift, determined action. "And your lamps burning" because they did not know at what time the Lord would come again. "And be ye yourselves like unto men looking for their lord, when he shall return." The master of the household is about to return from the marriage feast of a friend, and these his servants were to be watching constantly for his return and keeping themselves ready to do his instant bidding. The wedding was not his own else we should expect it to have been here or at least his servants to have been invited.

One wonders how much the multitudes or even the apostles understood about these references to His coming again. It was being dinned into the minds of the apostles that He was about to die at the hands of His enemies. Further than this terrifying realization it was very hard for them to go. They were being taught what was expected of them as the gradual revelation of the gospel of redemption was unfolded to them. It must have been quite ordinary for puzzled hearers to have questioned one another as to what the deep hidden meanings had been in the sermon. Be Ye Ready

"Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching" (Luke 12:37). And what could these servants have hoped to accomplish by watching for His coining? He would come in His own good time whether they were watching or not. They would be able to give a good account of how they had used their time and opportunities according to their obedience to His commands. Their instant readiness would demonstrate the fidelity they had shown throughout His absence. "He shall gird himself...and serve them" (Luke 12:37). The same energy and enthusiasm urged upon the servants in doing His will was shown by the Master in honoring the faithful

servants. They had been watching to be ready to serve Him. Their reward was that He served them. Next Jesus gave the little parable of the master whose house was sacked by robbers because He did not know when the robbery would take place and did not take care to be ready for such violence at all times. The parable led to a sharp warning, “Be ye also ready: for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Luke 12:40). This is a clear prediction of His coming again after a considerable absence. How much they understood would depend on how much teaching they had received and how keenly they discerned the trend of events. Jesus followed these revelations with severe commands to discern the signs of the times (Luke 12:54-59).

Peter’s Perplexity

“And Peter said, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even unto all?” (Luke 12:41). This shows how puzzled Peter was and how difficult the sermon must have been for less-informed hearers. The promise of future glory given at Caesarea Philippi had indicated special honor to Peter. The apostles had since quarreled as to who should he greatest. Now Peter asked how many were included in the promise of reward at the return of Christ. Jesus gave him to understand that all the faithful, great and small, would be honored. Every man would be held responsible for his opportunities. Peter may have had in mind a subdued protest as to how Jesus could expect the multitude to understand this obscure teaching about His second coming. Even the apostles were still under prohibition to tell of the revelations at Caesarea Philippi and on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Delay of Second Coming

Observe the subtle intimations that the second coming was not to be so soon as some would expect. The reference to “the second watch”and “the third watch” (Luke 12:38) and “my lord delayeth his coming” (Luke 12:45) point to a long delay. Instead of declarations that the second coming was to be immediate, exactly the opposite is implied. They were commanded to be watching no matter how long the delay. Jesus was teaching His close disciples. Those who were farther off could learn according to their desire and effort. Jesus gradually passed from His preceding revelations about His death and resurrection to the second coming. Humiliation would be succeeded by exaltation, and exaltation by His return to reward.

Basis of Judgment

“And that servant, who knew his lord’s will, and made not ready...shall be beaten with many stripes” (Luke 12:47). This passage clearly teaches degrees of punishment in hell. The few stripes are also eternal punishment, but the doom of the greater sinner will be more terrible. “Shall cut him asunder” means to kill (Luke 12:46), but hell is itself a living death so that the figurative declarations of the parable must represent degrees of punishment in hell. This is also plainly the teaching of Matthew 11:21-24. The basis of judgment is the conduct of life in light of opportunities to know God’s will. In the beginning God made Himself and His will known to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The amount of knowledge of His will their descendants have had has been relative with the successive revelations God has given. “To whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required” (Luke 12:48). This somber paragraph has its joyous note, for it speaks of “the wise and faithful steward” and his reward: “Blessed is that servant.” The Conflict

“I came to cast fire upon the earth; and what do I desire, if it is already kindled?” (Luke 12:49). Jesus seems to revert to the opening thought of the sermon — the bitter opposition of the Pharisees In fact He may have had them particularly in mind since He had warned that those with the greatest opportunities would be held responsible for these divine privileges. Jesus declared that such opposition was to be expected. The fire of division and strife against the devil is cast upon the earth by Christ’s coming; the good and the evil join battle to the death. It may mean the fire of holiness, which incites the devil and his followers to more deadly opposition. His Death The predictions of His second coming and the judgment day are joined to further references to His death. Since the Greek uncials carry no punctuation marks, there are various opinions as to the rendering of “What do I desire...?” (1) If the punctuation of the a.v. and the a.s.v. are followed, then the meaning seems to be, “What more could I desire, if it be already accomplished?” The conflagration was already kindled in the deadly hatred of God’s enemies and their plots to destroy His Son. He had come for the very purpose of revealing the dreadful character of sin and to cause man to hate it and to redeem man from it. The resulting intensification of the conflict was an unavoidable feature of His coming. Even though it meant the cross for Him, what more could He desire than that He had already joined battle with the devil and his helpers?

(2) DeWette, Weiss, etc. hold that an exclamation point should follow: How I wish it were already kindled!” This rendering does violence to the Greek in translating what as how, and ignores the conditional construction: If it is (3) Origen, Meyer, etc. insert a question mark thus: “What will I? Would that it were already kindled!” This translation is also a harsh treatment of the Greek, and the fire has already been kindled in the fierce opposition He is meeting.

Suffering Awaited

“But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it he accomplished!” (Luke 12:50). This is obviously an advance in thought from the present persecution to His approaching death. It will he noted that interpretations (2) and (3) above would make this statement parallel to the preceding one instead of an advance upon it.

Having used the metaphor of fire, Christ now uses the metaphor of water. The one sets forth the result of His coming as it affects the world, the other as it affects Himself. The world is lit up with flames, and Christ is bathed in blood: Mark 10:38. His passion is a flood in which He must he plunged (Plummer, Commentary on Luke, p. 334). The meaning of baptidzo as immerse is very clear in this passage, even when used in this figurative sense. He is to he overwhelmed in the suffering which culminates in His death. The word straitened means limited. Here it signifies “oppressed, afflicted until it be accomplished.” The sojourn in the flesh was full of suffering and caused Him to look up to the peace and blessedness of heaven, which He had surrendered in order to come to earth to redeem man. A touch of homesickness for heaven seems to sweep over Christ occasionally. At the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration, immediately after He had been talking with Moses and Elijah of His approaching death, He had cried out, “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I bear with you” (Matthew 17:17). Jesus yearns for the time of waiting to be over and for the actual accomplishment of His mission to die for a lost world. The burden of waiting until the divine time for Him to die was heavy upon Him.

Jesus First

“Think ye that I am come to give peace in the earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division” (Luke 12:51). Instead of the worldly glory and luxury which the Jews had pictured for the Messiah, Jesus was enduring suffering and death. He predicted that those who followed Him must expect the same. The devil, who was leading the fierce opposition against Him, would also bring this same suffering upon them. The devil saves his hardest opposition for those who go forth to battle against him. Since Jesus had descended to earth to inaugurate God’s final campaign to redeem man from Satan, His coming would inevitably draw the lines of division clear and strong. “They shall be divided, father against son, and son against father; mother against daughter...” (Luke 12:53). In the same home some would stand for God; others would line up with the devil. It is most important that this verse be kept in mind as Jesus expands this thought in Luke 14:26 with the declaration: “If any man come to me, and hateth not his father Christ must rank first no matter how difficult human relations may become. The Sign of Jonah

“When ye see a cloud rising in the west, straightway ye say...” (Luke 12:54). The Mediterranean lies to the west; the Arabian desert lies to the east and south. The south wind brings dry, parching heat; the rains come from the west. This paragraph represent the final appeal of the discourse. Jesus cries out for the multitude to discern the signs of the times and turn to God before it is too late. The judgment day is again in view: “Ye hypocrites, ye know how to interpret the face of the earth and the heaven; but how is it that ye know not how to interpret this time?” (Luke 12:56). Jesus does not say that their weather predictions were infallible, but in general they were able to tell the direction of the wind and the possible weather. They should have been able to comprehend the teaching of Jesus and the inevitable conclusions from His miracles. “And why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?” (Luke 12:57). Even without the patient reiteration and heaping up of the miraculous evidence which Jesus offered, they should have been able to discern from the very beginning of His ministry that He was the Christ and the kingdom of God was at hand, even as John the Baptist had predicted. Their own hearts should have convinced them.

Purgatory? The brief parable of making peace with an adversary before being cast into prison as a punishment for the wrongdoing is also found in the Sermon on the Mount. Here in Luke it fits into a general discussion of the day of judgment. The parable implies that the man had wronged his adversary and should have made amends rather than allow the situation to grow more critical until it finally resulted in his imprisonment. “Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou have paid the very last mite” (Luke 12:59). This declaration implies that the offender has been guilty of defrauding his adversary. Since a man in prison cannot earn money to pay off debts, this statement is a very emphatic manner of saying that there is to be no escape from the prison of hell. There is no implication of purgatory in Luke 12:59. “Coming out thence” is mere scenery in the parable. If may come out thence means “may come out from hell,” then all may come Out. Universalism results. This contradicts the manifold passages of Scripture that clearly predict eternal punishment for the wicked. If anyone attempts to use this verse to prove purgatory, then it proves too much. But the points of the parable are not to be identified as in an allegory. The fundamental principle is the certainty of final punishment if a person does not repent in this life.

Repentance A discourse on repentance follows in Luke’s account. Again we see the concentration on the final day of judgment. “Now there were some present at that very season who told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices” (Luke 13:1). The reference is probably to some incipient political revolution such as was common in this turbulent period.

Examples are the insurrection under Judas in Galilee about a.d. 6, and that of the Samaritans in a.d. 36. The rebellion to which these hearers would refer was doubtless a less important outbreak. That the men slain were Galileans was typical of the seething political plots of the Zealots, who were concentrated in Galilee. No extant historical works mention this event. It was doubtless such an incident as was frequent and expected during the later Roman occupation. Some speculate that this outrage was the cause of the estrangement between Pilate and Herod (Luke 23:12). Keim supposes that Barabbas was imprisoned at the time of this bloody outbreak. It might have occurred at the preceding Feast of Tabernacles. But these are mere guesses. There is no necessity that it was a recent event because these who questioned Jesus brought up a historical event. Pilate brought troops up to Jerusalem at the great feasts to keep order, and from the Tower of Antonia, over-looking the temple area, he kept guard. When Captain Lysias and the Roman soldiers rescued Paul from being murdered in the temple area, we see the Roman preservation of law and order at its best. These Galileans who were killed as they were offering sacrifice in the temple probably represented a particularly cruel, bloody suppression. The Tower of Siloam

Siloam was a village located across the brook Kedron southeast from Jerusalem on the lower slope of the Mount of Olives. The Pool of Siloam to which the man born blind had been sent by Jesus was on Ophel west of the village. “The tower in Siloam” means “the well-known tower” surrounded by the buildings of the town. The people who brought up this matter do not seem to have desired Jesus to condemn the cruelty of Pilate or to urge another such revolt against Rome; they rather condemn as particularly wicked the men who were slain and want Jesus to confirm their view that their tragic fate proved that they were great sinners. Perhaps there was something of the element seen in the Middle Ages when the early crusaders were believed to have failed because of the sinfulness of the crusaders; hence the Children’s Crusade was organized. They certainly had the sort of view which the apostles brought up concerning the man born blind, i.e., suffering is the immediate result of the personal sin of the sufferer.

Sin and Calamity In His response instead of joining in their condemnation of the men slain by Pilate as especially great sinners, Jesus added the further illustration of eighteen men on whom the tower (which they were building?) in Siloam fell. In both cases Jesus specifically denied that the tragedies showed that the men killed were sinners “above all the men that dwell in Jerusalem.” Ewald supposes that the eighteen men killed in Siloam may have been working on Pilate’s aqueduct, which over bitter Jewish protests was being financed by money Pilate had taken from the temple treasury. He holds that the word offenders (debtors) in Luke 13:4 refers to the public feeling that these workmen should have paid their wages back into the temple treasury. But it is hard to see how a tower fits into an aqueduct system. Moreover, Ewald is merely offering a conjecture. As in His discussion of the man born blind, Jesus refused to confirm the popular view that such calamities proved the exceeding sinfulness of the victims. Many other elements and circumstances may have entered in. Instead of offering a philosophical discussion of sin and suffering, Jesus turned the discussion into a most practical, urgent warning for those present to repent. Instead of speculating as to whether these calamities were the specific results of divine wrath, they should remember that all men must repent or perish.

Repent or Perish

“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:5).This implies, “If ye repent, ye shall be saved.” Not one word is spoken in this discussion about faith. Would it be reasonable to conclude therefore that faith has nothing to do with salvation? At Pentecost and following, after the church was established, the divine requirements were delivered by the inspired messengers of God: faith, repentance, confession, baptism. “Faith cometh by hearing” and requires that the person believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God with all that the Scripture reveals and implies. But faith sometimes is used in the wide, all-inclusive sense of personal trust, as well as intellectual belief — the entire committal of life. When used in this sense, faith is all that is necessary for a person to have because it includes everything that is possible for him to do. The same uses of repentance are seen. When placed alongside faith, confession, and baptism, repentance is a change of mind arising from sorrow for sin and leading to a reformation of life. Repentance is the change of mind; it is not the sorrow or the reformation, but it cannot be separated from them. But repentance, like faith, can be used in the all-inclusive sense of the complete turning of the person to God. In such case, all that is required for man’s salvation is repentance, for it includes everything he can do. The Barren Fig Tree

Jesus closes the discussion with a touching appeal for man to respond to the patient, seeking love of God and to repent. The basis of His appeal is the parable of the fruitless fig tree which was spared for one more year while every possible means was used to bring it out of its barren state. “A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard” (Luke 13:6). This seems like a curious mixture of agriculture, but tillable space in Palestine was limited, and every small spot that could be occupied in such fashion was used. “The vinedresser,” who seems to have had a greater love for the tree and more mercy than the owner, is not to be identified in any analysis of the parable. He is simply part of the setting.

“These three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree” (Luke 13:7). Three years was the usual length of time required for a fig tree to begin to bear. It is not clear whether he counted the three years from the time that the tree was supposed to begin to bear or whether his eagerness to see the tree bear fruit had led him to examine it carefully each of the first two years to see whether he could see any signs of fruit. The tree seems to represent the Jewish nation as well as any individual. The fig tree which Jesus cursed during the final week became a type of the Jewish nation, barren and deserving to be destroyed. Some try to suggest that the three years of Jesus’ ministry is meant, but Plummer points out that the tree had been fruitless long before Jesus began to preach and that Jerusalem was not destroyed until forty years later.

“Why doth it also cumber the ground?” (Luke 13:7). In addition to its failure to bring forth fruit, the barren tree was occupying valuable space, which might have been used for some fruitful tree. Cut it down is the command of the owner. The Galileans murdered in the temple and the eighteen on whom the tower fell were not necessarily the most sinful men of their time. The hearers are not encouraged, however, to think that Jesus lessens the weight of God’s wrath against the wicked or the certainty of the final judgment. The need for repentance was present in every heart and life. Jesus was addressing the people who had made the remark concerning the Galileans murdered in the temple, but all those in the multitude were exhorted to repent: “Ye shall all likewise perish.” Many exceedingly wicked and godless persons may have been present in the multitude who would have felt the most direct challenge in these words of Jesus. But many devout disciples also heard this sermon. Repentance, like faith, is a continuously growing experience. There is the initial

faith which we declare as we confess Christ as Lord and Savior and give our lives to His command and direction. But it is also proper to pray as the apostles did, “Lord, increase our faith.” In the same manner the faithful followers in this assembly could well have prayed, “Lord, increase our repentance.” As our intellectual comprehension of the gospel increases, our lives should immediately be brought into harmony with the increase of faith as we climb up to higher ground. The Outcome

“Lord, let it alone this year also.” Patience and still further forbearance is urged by the vinedresser, who evidently has had a keen interest in this fig tree in the vineyard. Mercy is urged, but not unlimited mercy. Notice again how the final judgment permeates these discussions. The use of cultivation and fertilization in the first century is set forth in such fashion as might be found in a modern manual in horticulture. “If it bear fruit thenceforth, well; but if not, thou shalt cut it down” (Luke 13:9). The brevity of the teaching of Jesus again shows unique power. What did happen? We naturally are ready to cry out, “Tell us the outcome. Did the owner give heed to the appeal of the vinedresser? Did the barren fig tree become fruitful?” The invitation is extended to all present. They are left to write their own conclusion to the parable.

Boldness in the Synagogue

“And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath day” (Luke 13:10). Jesus is pictured for the last time as teaching or preaching in a synagogue. The hostility of the Pharisees is becoming so bitter that speaking in their synagogues is no longer profitable; the open-air assemblies offer more freedom. The final week was spent in the environs of the temple, where the utmost of hostility obtained; but the end of His ministry was at hand and the widest possible outreach to the nation required the temple sessions. The campaign of Jesus still seems to have been in Judaea or Peraea. There is great boldness in Jesus’ entering a synagogue to continue His teaching and healing after the hierarchy in Jerusalem had issued their edict to all synagogue rulers in Palestine that if any man should confess Jesus to be the Christ he should be put out of the synagogue. Instead of facing the problem of making effective the excommunication of such a person, here is Jesus Himself in the synagogue. How can they proceed in putting Him out? It is evident in the account that the ruler of the synagogue is frustrated and hostile. “And he was teaching in one of their synagogues on the sabbath day” (Luke 13:10). This day on which the most worshipers could be expected in the synagogue was the natural time for such periods of instruction in the earlier part of His ministry. The fact that it was the sabbath became a key fact in the controversy that followed. The Afflicted Woman

“A woman that had a spirit infirmity, and she was bowed together, and could in no wise lift herself up” (Luke 13:11). The woman was possessed by a demon that caused this infirmity. Just as in the preceding account Luke had spoken of a dumb demon that caused dumbness, so now he speaks of a “spirit of infirmity”; the affliction the demon caused furnished a ready description of the demon. Weiss says Luke implies that the woman’s infirmity had been caused by her sinful life and hence by Satan, that exorcism is never called healing, and that Jesus never laid His hands on those from whom He was casting out demons. But both the common Greek words to heal are used in casting out demons (Luke 8:2; Luke 17:15; Luke 9:42). Jesus sometimes healed with a word without touching the person and sometimes with a touch. We do not have sufficient information to affirm that Jesus never used a touch in healing demoniacs. Jesus does not suggest that the woman’s

infirmity had resulted directly from her sin. In the miraculous healings Jesus performed, the person or some relative or friend usually made a request. The healing of this woman has been called one of the “unasked miracles” of the New Testament. The Syro-Phoenician woman had urgently and persistently appealed for her demon-possessed daughter, as had the father at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration, but there was no request from the Gadarene demoniac. The demons had possession and the man could not speak for himself. The demons protested in fear. We cannot be sure that this woman, bowed over in her humiliating condition, was not asking in her heart, but lacked the courage to come up before the crowd and seek His help while confronted with the hostility of the ruler. She must have heard of Jesus’ great fame and His power to heal. She demonstrated great faith in obeying Jesus’ command to come up to the front of the synagogue before them all (Luke 13:12). To have required her to come forward in her pitiful condition severely tested her faith. It was the sabbath; the ruler was hostile; the crowd must have been dense. Jesus’ compassion was great; and, as He healed the woman, the touch of His hand seems to have been a demonstration of His gentle sympathy. The gratitude and courage of the woman were manifest as “she glorified God” before them all. The Hostile Ruler

“And the ruler of the synagogue...said to the multitude, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the day of the sabbath” (Luke 13:14). The ruler did not dare attack Jesus directly, but he undertook to strike at Him over the heads of his congregation. If the people had done wrong in coming to be healed on the sabbath, then Jesus had done wrong in healing them. “The ruler...answered and said to the multitude.” No one addressed him; he answered the direct challenge to the Pharisees’ tradition about sabbath labor and about the hierarchy’s edict of excommunication of all who believed on Him. The ruler cleverly cited the Old Testament commandment covering up the fact that his objection rested not on the commandment, but on the Pharisees’ tradition as to what constituted work. Jesus quickly uncovered this stratagem. The rebuke of the ruler implies that the woman had come in the hope that she might be healed. Her bold glorification of God for the miracle would have led him to this conclusion. The Adversaries

“Ye hypocrites, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?” (Luke 13:15). Jesus probably made it evident that He was not calling everyone present a hypocrite. He was answering the ruler and doubtless turned and addressed the ruler and the entire group of Pharisees and their followers who were present, seated as usual in “the chief seats.” The ruler had not possessed the courage to address Jesus directly, but in His response Jesus confronted the ruler in the most direct manner. There must have been a strong aggregation of hostile hearers; Luke calls them “all his adversaries” in Luke 13:17. They were hypocrites; they did not live up to their own traditional interpretation of the law in their daily lives. They pretended great devotion to God’s law in this protest, while their real motive was hatred of Jesus. Zeal for their own traditions and their own honor was now in the background. Jesus’ act of mercy toward the woman in her infirmity was placed alongside their course in caring for their animals on the farm. If one was work, the other was; if one broke the law, the other did. As a matter of fact, neither did. The sabbath-day law did not prohibit mercy, but the entire Old Testament gave the distinct obligation to have compassion. Jesus said, “She ought to have been loosed.” “There is no prescription against doing good; and a religion which would honor God by forbidding virtue is self-condemned.”

Keeping the Lord’s Day The question is frequently asked whether any specific instruction is found in the New Testament to refrain from work on the Lord’s Day. Such a question overlooks the fact that the gospel is based on fundamental principles which are applied by the individual rather than upon detailed regulations. Even the Old Testament law left every man to determine for himself what was “work” and what was appropriate on the sabbath. We conclude that if the day dedicated to the worship of God in the Old Testament should be kept free from pursuit of money and pleasure, then the day made holy in the New Testament by the resurrection of Jesus should be dedicated to the worship of God and to the carrying forth of the gospel to the world in the same wholehearted devotion. The situation is parallel in regard to tithing. The Old Testament is very specific as to giving a tithe to God and in addition free-will offerings. The New Testament sets forth the general principle that we should give as the Lord has prospered us. The specific application of the principle is left to each Christian, but we naturally conclude that a Christian certainly should not give less out of his gratitude for redemption in Christ than the Jewish worshiper was required to do. The tithe becomes a working minimum for a Christian in his application of the principle to give to God as God has given to him. The same general rule applies to our conduct of life on the Lord’s Day. The example of Jesus is continually before us leading us to make the Lord’s Day a day of work for God instead of a day of rest for ourselves. And every Christian is left to decide for himself how he can best spend the seven days of each week for God. The Lord’s day offers special opportunities by reason of our release from secular tasks on this day. The call to worship on the Lord’s Day is also a call to serve.

Sin and Afflictions

“This woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound, lo, these eighteen years...” (Luke 13:16). Jesus does not affirm that all afflictions are from Satan. Such an affirmation would have been closely akin to saying all suffering is the direct result of the personal sin of the sufferer. This particular case had been caused by a demon. The Scripture records the history of the race from the beginning and shows that all suffering, sickness, and death came upon the race as the inheritance of man’s disobedience of God, but it does not affirm that each individual affliction is the immediate result of the sin of the individual. The Book of Job is a profound protest against such a view.

Reaction of the People

“All the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him” (Luke 13:17). The people had been misled by the Pharisees They were wandering aimlessly like sheep without a shepherd; but, when they heard and saw Jesus, they realized “all the glorious things that were done by him,” and they “rejoiced.” The response of the multitude shows the inability of the system of religion which the Pharisees had developed to satisfy the hearts of the people; it shows the extent of the popular revolt against the hierarchy. This revolt hastened the desperate determination of the leaders to destroy Jesus; they saw their leadership slipping from their hands. But the rejoicing of the people was not merely negative in turning from a religion which was barren; it was a positive response to the glory of the Son of God.

Two brief parables are repeated now which had been given in the great sermon in parables some two years before in Galilee. The one is the parable of the grain of mustard, growing up to such great proportions from such a tiny beginning. The other is the parable about leaven, ceaselessly

working in the dough until it all was leavened. The two parables are particularly fitting for the instruction of this audience concerning the great things which can be expected from the establishment of the kingdom.

098. Chapter 39 - Jesus at the Feast of Dedication

Chapter 39 - Jesus at the Feast of Dedication

John 10:22-39 The Feast of Dedication

“And it was the feast of the dedication at Jerusalem: it was winter; and Jesus was walking in the temple in Solomon’s porch” (John 10:22, John 10:23). The Feast of Dedication was one of two feasts which the Jews had added to the three commanded in the law. The other extra feast was the Feast of Purim in February, which celebrated the victory of the Jews in Persia through the leadership of Esther and Mordecai. The Feast of Dedication was instituted by Judas Maccabaeus to commemorate the recapture of Jerusalem from the Syrians and the renovation and rededication of the temple after all the defilement which Antiochus Epiphanes had perpetrated. His worst insult was the offering of a pig on the pagan altar he had established. This feast came on the twenty-fifth of Chisleu; in other words it was about the time of our Christmas. A little more than two months had passed since Jesus’ last visit to the capital, as recorded by John. The Feast of Dedication was also called “The Feast of Light” because of the impressive manner in which lights were used in the solemn processions. Illuminations, the carrying of palms (the symbol of victory), and the singing of psalms marked this feast.

Solomon’s Porch

Solomon’s temple had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. The temple had been rebuilt and the city made secure under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Herod the Great proposed to the Jews that if they would permit him to tear down this modest structure, lie would erect one of the great wonders of the world in its place — a temple comparable to the grand temple Solomon had built. The Jews at first feared to give permission because they suspected Herod wanted to destroy their temple and leave them with no place to worship. The great temple which Herod built had a long colonnade, or covered cloister, forming its eastern boundary. This structure was called Solomon’s porch. John’s mention of the season and the place fit perfectly. It was winter; the elevation of Jerusalem was high and cold, and rain or snow could be expected at this season; hence Jesus met the cold, inclement weather by teaching in this great covered cloister where many could assemble and yet find protection from rain and could meet the chill of winter by walking with Jesus as He taught.

Three Visits to Jerusalem

“The Jews therefore came round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou hold us in suspense? If thou art the Christ, tell us plainly” (John 10:24). John gives three distinct visits to Jerusalem during the period between the close of the Galilean ministry and the final week: (1) the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2); (2) the Feast of Dedication (John 10:22); (3) the final Passover (John 12:1). Luke speaks three times of Jesus’ going up to Jerusalem during this period (Luke 9:51; Luke 13:22; Luke 17:11). Some hold that these are merely occasional reminders by Luke that Jesus was going His way in a leisurely journey toward Jerusalem, gradually approaching as

the final Passover drew near. But since we know from John's account the length of time involved and the three definite journeys to the capital, it seems more probable that Luke is noting briefly the three journeys to Jerusalem, which he does not attempt to describe in detail. John concentrates on the campaigns of Jesus in Jerusalem and fills in many gaps left in the Synoptics. There is an evident change in time indicated in John 10:22-24 from the discussions recorded immediately preceding. The manner in which the location of this scene in Jerusalem is noted, the time of the feast, and the season of the year all indicate the passage of time from the Feast of Tabernacles in the fall to midwinter and a return of Jesus to Jerusalem after campaigning outside the city. The insertion of this account into the record of Luke at just this point is conjectural. We cannot be sure how the two accounts are to be fitted together. They both give a great amount of material which Matthew and Mark do not record. The Controversy The Jews renewed the controversy as Jesus returned to the capital. They came round about him seems to mean that they encircled Him as He was walking and teaching in Solomon's porch. They pressed in about Him and apparently separated Him from His disciples, who were thrust into the background as Jesus was left alone to face His enemies. They then demanded that He no longer leave them in suspense, but tell them plainly whether He was the Christ. We cannot tell whether all this group was hostile or how far a division of opinion still existed among them as to the identity of Christ and the proper attitude toward Him.

They made a threefold attempt to force Jesus to make such a clear declaration of His deity as would enable them to execute Him on the spot for blasphemy (John 10:24, John 10:31, John 10:33). Jesus made a threefold answer to their question, to their attempt to stone Him, and to their accusation. Each time Jesus reminded them of His great miracles which they themselves had seen, which they could not deny, and which gave them heaven's answer to their question about His being the Son of God. The question they asked was whether He was the Christ, but they really wanted to know what kind of Christ — a supernatural Christ, the Son of God? Recent efforts have been made to show that the Jews considered it blasphemy for any person to claim to be the Christ. This is part of an attempt to deny that Jesus ever claimed to be the Son of God. But this whole argument is without foundation. How could the Christ ever have appeared and identified Himself if automatically a claim to be the Christ brought the death penalty for blasphemy? There is nothing in the Old or New Testaments to substantiate such a theory. Every time the Jews assailed Jesus as guilty of blasphemy it was because He claimed to be the Son of God. Observe how it stands out in this passage: "Thou, being a man, makest thyself God" (John 10:33).

Why "in Suspense"? The Jews claimed to be in suspense because Jesus had not made His claims clear. But they were not in suspense in the sense of being willing to believe or of being tossed between doubt and faith, except so far as there were some in the midst who disagreed with the chief priests and the leading Pharisees, who had tight control of the Sanhedrin. Having closed their minds to Jesus' teaching and miracles they were merely seeking evidence upon which to destroy Him. Jesus had repeatedly affirmed that He was infinitely more than the worldly messiah they anticipated. He had affirmed His universal authority over all things (Matthew 11:27). He had declared that whatsoever God did, He did (John 5:17); that He would be the Judge of all mankind in the final day by the authority of the Father (John 5:27); that He was the Light of the world (John 8:12); that if they did not believe on Him they would die in their sins (John 8:24); that He had the power on earth to forgive sins (Matthew 9:5, Matthew 9:6; Mark 2:5-9); that if a man would keep

His saying he would never see death (John 3:35, John 3:36; John 5:24, John 5:25; John 6:44); that He had come down from heaven to earth and was to be honored as God is honored (John 3:31; John 5:23). On a great number of occasions Jesus had declared His deity so plainly that they had declared they had the evidence they sought and attempted to kill Him. Yet now they claimed they had been held in suspense. Jesus' declarations had been so profound and so intertwined with miracles which had confirmed the truth of His claims, that they could not use them in a trial. In the final trials before the Jewish high priest they asked a direct affirmation from Jesus and received a categorical answer from Him.

Declarations and Proof The declarations of Messiahship which Jesus had given in the simplest language had been to the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:26) and to the man born blind (John 9:37). On numerous occasions He had accepted the title when conferred by others, as in the case of Nathaniel (John 1:49) and Peter (Matthew 16:16). But these cases had been more or less private. Jesus had avoided more definite public declarations of His Messiahship because of general misunderstanding about the nature of the Messiah. The people had to be instructed first as to what sort of Messiah the Old Testament had predicted. Jesus responded to their request on this occasion by the plain assertion that He had told them many times, but they had refused to believe. He joined this assertion to a citation of His many miracles which proved His claims. His Sheep

"Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep" (John 10:26). They had not chosen to be of His flock and to accept His guiding care. So long as they stubbornly refused to hear and see, nothing more could be done for them. This same illustration of His relationship to His followers Jesus had used in sermons here at the capital on two preceding visits. They were in the dark because of their own deliberate refusal to believe, to hear, and to see. If they had listened with an open heart, they would have believed and would have been His sheep. The Shepherd

"I give unto them eternal life" (John 10:28). They had requested this very sort of affirmation of His deity; yet it was so profoundly impressive that they could not use it against Him. "My Father, who hath given them unto me, is greater than all." Here is a further declaration of deity. Those who believe in the doctrine of "once in grace always in grace" like to cite this passage as proof. "No one shall snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:28). But Jesus is affirming the supreme, invincible power of both the Father and the Son. The devil constantly seeks to snatch the sheep from the hands of the Shepherd. But the devil cannot overcome God or His Son. Jesus does not affirm that the person cannot of his own will turn back into the world and be lost. Instead He gives the promise that with every temptation there will be a way of escape. Observe how Jesus placed the responsibility on the sheep: "They follow me." Those who continue to follow Him find comfort in this verse, but it offers none to those who turn back from following Him. No one can take away from Jesus those who cling to Him. Each man is the arbiter of his own fate; he always has the promise of Jesus' presence and help if he will avail himself of the promised aid. The greatness of God is introduced into this argument, not to contrast the power of God with His own, but to show that the Son is not alone in giving His protecting care to the sheep. Man, while he can kill the body, cannot kill the soul ("snatch them out of the Father's hand"), for God is almighty and guards His own. John 10:29 is parallel to John 10:28, and the final assertion of deity in John 10:30 unites them.

Assertion of Deity

“I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). They had asked for a clear declaration of His deity. This is one of the most tremendous assertion of deity Jesus ever gave. Jesus had repeatedly affirmed that He was one with the Father in will, in action, in knowledge, in love, in judging the world. Here the primary reference is to the unity of the Father and the Son in the exercise of almighty power to protect His followers. Modernists attempt to make this statement of unity merely a figurative one, such as might be made by any godly man; they offer the same dilution to the assertion, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). Their efforts meet complete refutation when Jesus affirms His eternality: “Before Abraham was born, I am” (John 8:58). The affirmation in John 10:30 is very precise. Jesus did not use the terms Son of Man or my Father. He made an unambiguous reference to Himself and to God. The word one is neuter, implying essence.

Attempt to Stone Jesus

“The Jews took up stones again to stone him” (John 10:31). Here is concrete proof of the fact that Jesus claimed deity. The Jews saw it clearly. They felt they now had proof for their charge of blasphemy and could proceed to kill Jesus immediately. The verb used, took up stones, means to bear or to carry; the stones may not have been immediately available, but repair work on the temple may have caused them not to be too far distant. The scene was dramatic in the extreme; the disciples huddled in a group; the multitude was awe-stricken; the furious mob of Jewish leaders rushed about to secure stones with which to kill Him; and the Son of God stood calmly in the midst compelling them to halt and listen to His further questions. The Miracles

“Many good works...for which of these works do ye stone me?” (John 10:32). This was a very skillful question. Jesus brought into the foreground the miraculous evidence which substantiated the truth of His claims. He demanded that they name the miracle for which they were going to kill Him. Instead of naming a claim to deity, they were asked to name one of the miracles they had seen. Many good works is a telling phrase; it suggests the goodness and love of Jesus, as well as His power. It inserts inimitable pathos into the question. In a moment of time He could turn on them and destroy them all by a miracle in such fashion as prophets of God had destroyed wicked men in the Old Testament. But His heart is full of mercy; He will not bring judgment upon them until the final day. His power has been used solely for “good works” ; thus the patience of God seeks to save a lost world. Jesus’ deity is shown not merely by what He said and did, but by what He refrained from saying and doing. The Incarnation The fundamental problem of the Jews was the incarnation. How could Jesus be God when they could see that He was a man in their midst? Combined with this intellectual difficulty were their own evil passions which caused them to seize this claim as an excuse for destroying Him. Before the virgin birth was proclaimed and the resurrection and ascension took place and were made known, the difficulty in understanding the incarnation caused Jesus to be the more patient with them in their unbelief so that He cried out as He died, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” They understood clearly enough that Jesus was claiming to be God, but they took the fact that they could see He was a man in their midst as ground for blindly shutting their eyes to His life, and their ears to His teaching. Their own sinful lives magnified the problem.

God and Man

Jesus discussed this problem with them. He showed them that they did not understand either the nature of God or of man They could not explain how man had been made in the image of God in the beginning; they could not explain how the Old Testament could apply the title gods to judges whom God had inspired to be His messengers. “Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came (and the scripture cannot be broken), say ye of him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?” (John 10:34-36). The passage Jesus quotes is Psalms 82:6. The statement in full is: “I said, Ye are gods, and all of you sons of the Most High. Nevertheless ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes” (John 10:6, John 10:7).

Isaiah 9:6

One of the surprises in the New Testament is that the tremendous declaration of Isaiah 9:6 is not quoted — the declaration that the Messiah is to be God as well as man, that the Child which is to be born, the Son who is to be given, will be called “Mighty God, Everlasting Father,” and will be an eternal Person who will reign forever. The Dead Sea Scrolls have added their confirmation to the integrity of this text. Matthew makes a powerful citation of Isaiah 7:14 in confirmation of the historical facts he records concerning the virgin birth; by a stupendous miracle of being born of a virgin the Messiah will enter the world, and God will be with us in the Person of Immanuel. But he does not cite this companion passage of Isaiah 9:6. In the final week, when on trial for His life, Jesus witnessed the good confession; in addition to His categorical answer to the high priest that He was the Son of God, He quoted Daniel 7:13, which predicted that the Messiah would be a supernatural Being “coming on the clouds of heaven.” A similar surprise is seen in the citation which Jesus selected from the Old Testament to confound the Sadducees when they confronted Him with their seven-husbands-and-one-wife refutation of the existence of heaven. One might have expected Jesus to cite actual cases of resurrection in the Old Testament which utterly destroyed their contention. But the passage Jesus did cite was one completely overlooked in the discussions — God’s declaration to Moses that He was still the God of Abraham centuries after Abraham’s death.

Man’s Kinship to God

Jesus did not cite any passage from the prophets which predicted the Messiah would be God as well as man. He discussed tile problem which the Jews had raised as to how He could be both man and God. He quoted the declaration of Psalms 82:6, in which the judges to whom God had committed His revelation were called “gods.” Elohim is plural; the pronoun ye shows it must be translated gods in this verse. Jesus pointed out that their difficulty arose from a lack in their understanding of the nature of God and “Ian. Westcott remarks, “It was therefore enough to shew in answer to the accusation of the Jews that there lay already in the Law the germ of the truth which Christ announced, the union of God and man” (Com. on John, p. 160).

Eternality of Christ

It is not possible to use this passage to support the radical view that Jesus is only the Son of God in the sense that we all are, and that the difference between Him and other men is only one of degree. In the remainder of the argument Jesus clearly distinguished between His divine Person and that of the judges who were called “gods” by reason of their being called of God to deliver His

message. The central proposition which makes indubitable this distinction is His pre-existence and eternality. Just as Jesus' most unassailable declaration of deity is the proposition of His eternality ("Before Abraham was, I am"), so here He emphasizes His pre-existence: "...whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world" (John 10:36). Before the Son left heaven to come to earth to redeem mankind, before He humbled Himself to be born of a virgin, God sanctified and dedicated Him for the divine task of man's redemption. The Father then sent the Son into the world to carry out His purpose and plan.

Although the Gospel of John does not contain a definite, historical record of the virgin birth, this statement Jesus made to the Pharisees offers a powerful confirmation of this miracle just as was seen in the fifth and sixth chapters of John (cf. John 6:41). In His reply to the Pharisees Jesus makes the sharpest sort of contrast between the manner in which the Son of God entered into the world and the process by which every other human being has entered into it. After the creation of Adam and Eve every human being has come into existence by the natural process of generation. But this is not true of the Son of God. He always existed. He was with God in the beginning and yet God was the Word (John 1:1). He was in Heaven (John 6:41). God "sent" His Son into the world by a prodigious miracle after He had "ordained" Him or set Him apart to the grand task of saving lost humanity from sin and death. The independent, harmonious testimony of the Gospel writers is like the intricately interwoven links of a multiple-chain.

One of the most impressive declarations of the infallible character of the Scripture is this assertion of Jesus that "the Scripture cannot be broken." This fact is true both of the Old Testament and the New. It cannot be broken into fragments which are then made to contradict one another. What the inspired writer had said in the Old Testament is in harmony with the fuller revelation which Jesus was now making. The Scripture cannot be broken in the sense that it cannot be made to contradict the truth. In the presence of His disciples Jesus offered the moving prayer recorded in John 17:1-26 : "Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). It should be observed here that Jesus uses the term the law to mean the entire Old Testament (John 10:34). But the same usage of Elohim to mean powerful One, or Ones, referring to those beings who were in power greater than men, is found also in the Pentateuch (Genesis 3:5) and in 1 Samuel 28:13. "It seems given to all supernatural beings, reserving, of course, its full application to the one supreme Jehovah" (Sadler). When the titles Mighty God and Everlasting Father were applied to the Messiah in Isaiah 9:6, the emphasis was again on the eternality of the Messiah: "Everlasting Father" ; "there shall be no end, upon the throne of David...henceforth even for ever." The Jews argued that it was impossible for Him to be both man and God; therefore, He was a blasphemer in claiming for Himself the divine nature and prerogatives. The answer of Jesus to the Jews on this occasion is similar to His answer to the Sadducees: "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matthew 22:29). They presumed to judge the possibility of God's appearing in the flesh when they were not fitted so to judge because of their human limitations. How dare they limit the power of God to reveal Himself in the Person of His Son when "gods" had been applied to mere sinful men to whom God gave His word and authority to act as judges?

Jesus followed this argument with a clear restatement of His deity: "I said, I am the Son of God." This was the sort of clear affirmation which they had requested in the beginning of this controversy. The Jews recognized that this is the very declaration they had sought, and they again sought to kill Him for blasphemy. In closing His argument, Jesus cited again the proof which His

miracles offered: that God was verifying the claims of His Son. As the Jews sought to take Jesus and slay Him, He passed through their midst in the same fashion that He went forth from the mob that sought to cast Him from the precipice at Nazareth. He was in their midst; they could see Him departing; they tried to lay hold upon Him, but they could not because he suddenly revealed His divine majesty in a way which overwhelmed them and left them without power of speech or action. Thus the discussion ended with this miraculous revelation of His deity.

099. Chapter 40 - Discussions in Peraea

Chapter 40 - Discussions in Peraea John 10:40-42;Luke 13:22-35;Luke 14:1-35

Bethabara

John states clearly that after the Feast of Dedication Jesus left Jerusalem to carry on a ministry in Peraea. “And he went away again beyond the Jordan into the place where John was at the first baptizing.” This location can be either the section across from Jericho or that near Bethabara about seven miles south of the Sea of Galilee. John had labored in both these sections during the early part of his ministry. The attempted interference of Herod Antipas with the ministry of Jesus shortly after this time suggests that Jesus was preaching in northern Peraea close to Tiberias, the capital of Herod’s domain. The vicious hostility of the Jerusalem Pharisees which Jesus had just faced also argues for a withdrawal farther into the provinces than near Jericho.

John’s Ministry

“And many came unto him; and they said, John indeed did no sign: but all things whatsoever John spake of this man were true” (John 10:41). The following facts concerning John’s ministry are brought out: (1) John had worked no miracles. The nature of his ministry in this respect is in striking contrast with the Old Testament prophets. It also throws into the bolder relief the tremendous, miraculous ministry of Jesus. The descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove at the baptism of Jesus was miraculous and was cited by John as offering strong confirmation of Jesus’ Messiahship. The predictions John had made were by miraculous inspiration and were subject to immediate testing.

(2) John had spoken many things about Jesus. Note the contrast between I am not and I am in John’s preaching. The constant, central point of emphasis in John’s preaching was the Christ who was in the midst about to reveal Himself. He kept himself in the background; and, when questioned as to his identity, he presented himself in relation to the Christ (“the voice of one crying” ; “the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy….”)

(3) He had publicly predicted and declared many things about Jesus which still were powerfully impressed on the hearts of the people. The fulfillment of his predictions had great weight with these people; they could see now that although John had not worked any miracles, the fulfillment of his predictions proved his miraculous insight.

(4) The influence of John was still very strong, especially in this region where he had carried on his ministry.

John’s Predictions

Some of the predictions John had made were these: (1) One mightier than he would come who would bring judgment upon the wicked and would cleanse the nation, saving the righteous and destroying the sinful (Matthew 3:11, Matthew 3:12). This prediction had not been fulfilled in the

manner the people had expected or as John himself had anticipated. But Jesus' gracious ministry to the oppressed and His blazing condemnation of the nation's corrupt leaders had been most effective, although He had not used the violence they had expected. Cleansing the temple before all the nation and revealing the wickedness of both Pharisees and Sadducees, Jesus had given startling fulfillment of John's predictions. (2) His ministry would be so far-reaching in its influence that "all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Luke 3:6). The growing influence of Jesus' ministry gave promise of the fulfillment of this prediction.

(3) Jesus would baptize in the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16). This mysterious promise would be remembered, but not yet understood. All the majesty and mystery of Jesus' miraculous ministry would fill them with expectancy of its fulfillment.(4) He would baptize in fire the wicked who despised and defied God. The people would wait in keen expectation of any such campaign of destruction. Jesus Himself explained at the time of His ascension the meaning of the baptism in the Holy Spirit as He commanded the apostles to remain in Jerusalem until its fulfillment in the descent of the Holy Spirit upon them not many days hence. Jesus carefully separated the baptism in the Holy Spirit from the baptism in fire in this explanation; He did not say that the baptism in fire was to take place "not many days hence" (Acts 1:5).

(5) One was in the midst who would shortly make Himself known and who would be far greater than John (John 1:26, John 1:27). (6) Jesus was the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. Like the Old Testament prophets John had failed to understand the content of such predictions as these, but had declared what God had revealed to him (1 Peter 1:10, 1 Peter 1:11; Matthew 11:2, Matthew 11:3). The people who heard these predictions would be the more mystified and thrilled by the ones they did not understand. They now saw the plain fulfillment of so many events John had predicted that they felt sure the rest would come to pass according to the will of God.

Luke's Account

Luke describes this Peraean ministry in the following language: "And he went on his way through cities and villages, teaching, and journeying on unto Jerusalem" (Luke 13:22). Whether this casual mention of going up to Jerusalem is Luke's manner of referring to the visit at the Feast of Dedication or whether he means that Jesus was gradually approaching the capital in this evangelistic campaign through Peraea, his account fits perfectly with that of John, especially if northern Peraea is the territory into which Jesus has now come. This section had not been evangelized, and Jesus seems to have been systematically visiting all the cities and villages. The campaign which ended with the feeding of the four thousand had been in the section east and immediately southeast of the Sea of Galilee. He was evidently farther south in Peraea at this later time. The Narrow Gate

"And one said unto him, Lord, are they few that are saved?" (Luke 13:23). We cannot be sure of the identity of the questioner, whether this is friend or foe, disciple or mere listener. Nor can we tell the motive of the questioner. The exclusiveness of the Pharisees may be back of the question, but the question is one which has always stirred certain people to speculation. The verb is a present passive participle: "Are those who are being saved, few?" The fact that Jesus refused to answer the question directly may mean that it had been asked out of curiosity; if so, the request was an invasion of the realm where God rules and man is not supposed to enter. Perhaps He chose rather

to discuss the question in such a way as to suggest the answer to all His hearers and at the same time stimulate the solemn sense of obligation as to the outcome. The answer which Jesus intimated is really, “Yes, many; no, few.” In light of all the billions of people who have lived in the world, only a few will attain to eternal blessedness, but there will be a vast multitude who will be saved so that in this sense there will be many. The immediate implication of His answer is that many will be disappointed; many will expect to enter, but will find themselves denied access to life. “Strive to enter in by the narrow door: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able” (Luke 13:24). The narrow door emphasizes difficulty of entrance, definite manner of entrance, and few exercising the wisdom, persistence, and faith to attain life. This very sort of statement Jesus had made in the Sermon on the Mount. His declaration then had been quite definite: “Few are they that find it” (Matthew 7:14). He had described the way as “straitened” (limited, narrow) and the gate as narrow; and the way to destruction was broad and entered by a wide gate: “And many are they that enter thereby.” The verb strive to enter in is present tense — keep on striving to enter; strain every nerve in trying to enter. This does not mean that many are trying now to find the way, but are not able to succeed and secure God’s favor. Rather, those who are earnestly seeking are succeeding, but those who put off the day of salvation until it is too late shall in eternity plead for admission, but will be denied. Shall not be able speaks of an attempt to force a closed door — “will not have strength to.” The Closed Door

“When once the master of the house is risen up [decisive nature of the second coming], and hath shut to the door [awesome finality], and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, open to us” (Luke 13:25). This little parable pictures the dreadful dilemma of those who find themselves excluded. it suggests the insolence of those who try to enter by forcing open a closed door without asking permission or even so much as giving warning to the owner. Then, when they find themselves frustrated in their attempt, they begin to knock and call out for the door to be opened.

“When once the master of the house is risen” may refer to the second coming or to the death of an individual, ending his probation on earth. The judgment abruptly ends the delusion of something for nothing, the birthright sold for a mess of pottage by one who yet hopes to slip into heaven unawares. “I know not whence ye are” is the same rejection pictured in the Sermon on the Mount: “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:23). “We did eat and drink in thy presence, and thou didst teach in our streets” (Luke 13:26). The basis of their claim to entrance is social fellowship with Christ and listening to His preaching. In the Sermon on the Mount the claim is made of having prophesied in His name, cast out demons, and done many mighty works. The claim may be true; Judas worked miracles, as did the other apostles, and he then became a traitor. The claim may he false; regardless, the judgment is based upon the personal character which each one has achieved. One does not gain entrance to life by good works, but by good character achieved through Christ. The basis of rejection in both passages is the failure to obey.

“There shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and yourselves cast forth without” (Luke 13:28). The day of judgment will set apart the wicked from the righteous; as the former are cast forth, they will see the righteous entering into the kingdom of God. The account of the rich man and Lazarus shows that this vision by those who have deprived themselves of its joys is still seen

in Tartarus. Whether this is true of the final blessedness of heaven we are not told. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the progenitors of the race who are usually named among its most famous representatives, are here mentioned along with all the prophets, implying that all faithful Jews will be saved. It was most important to name these famous Jews and make evident the salvation of all righteous Jews since in the next sentence Jesus sets forth that many obedient Gentiles will be saved, while disobedient Jews will be rejected. The Open Door

“They shall come from the east and the west, and from the north and south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God” (Luke 13:29). Gentiles are not specified; but, although many Jews were scattered over all the civilized world, the implication is that these from the north, east, south, and west are Gentiles. Critics charge that Luke, being a Greek, invented this statement and introduced it from his imagination in order to give a universal coloring to the teaching of Jesus. They find to their dismay that Matthew, a Jew by birth, writing to the Jews, makes even clearer this prediction of the salvation of obedient Gentiles and the rejection of disobedient Jews (Matthew 8:11, Matthew 8:12).

“There are last who shall be first, and there are first who shall be last” (Luke 13:30). This is one of the favorite sayings of Jesus (Matthew 19:30; Matthew 20:16; Mark 10:31). Jesus does not affirm that everyone who is first shall be last and last, first; but that there will be some in whom this reversal of position will be seen. Mark 10:31 makes this limitation very clear: “Many that are first shall be last.” Some of those who had been first in their opportunities of hearing and obeying shall become last by virtue of their failure to make the most of their opportunities. Many Gentiles with meager opportunities will win higher favor with God than Jews with greater opportunities which they did not sufficiently appreciate.

Herod’s Threat

“In that very hour there came certain Pharisees, saying to him, Get thee out, and go hence: for Herod would fain kill thee” (Luke 13:31). Commentators disagree as to who was the author of this threat — Herod or the Pharisees. If in collusion, what was the purpose of each? Some suppose that the Pharisees were not sent by Herod, but reported his words without consulting him, or that they reported a rumor they had heard from Herod’s court. Others think that the Pharisees invented the entire threat and that Herod had not made any hostile move toward Jesus. They would interpret that fox as referring to the inventor of the report, or the Pharisees as a group. But the Pharisees did not invent the report, for Jesus would have denounced them as liars and hypocrites. Moreover, the report fits precisely with the character and attitude of Herod, as does the epithet applied to him. Whether he had sent these Pharisees (sycophants of his court) or whether they reported of their own accord, they wanted to drive Jesus back into Judaea where He would be more directly under the authority of the Jerusalem hierarchy. It seems more likely that it was a definite effort of Herod to rid himself of another troublesome spiritual leader and to avoid committing another such murder as he had perpetrated in the case of John. The Pharisees would have been glad to join him in making public the threat of death, for it gave promise of disturbing Jesus’ ministry and of frightening His followers. It reminds one of the efforts to frighten Amos from his trenchant ministry at Bethel (Amos 7:10-17).

Defy to Herod

“Go and say to that fox, Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I am perfected” (Luke 13:32). That Jesus should have sent such a message directly to Herod is proof that the threat was from Herod and not invented by the Pharisees The epithet fox describes Herod’s character precisely — a sly, treacherous, slinking animal living by robbing and destroying others. His dealings with his own wife, the daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia, with Herod Philip of Rome, his half brother whose wife, Herodias, he persuaded to come and be his consort, and with Vitellius the Roman proconsul are all illustrations of his contemptible character. The fox is very common in Palestine and its habits are well known; hence the multitude would catch instantly the boldness and penetrating character of the comparison. The Greek word fox is used here in the feminine gender. Some suppose that this gender was used to give a peculiarly contemptuous meaning to the epithet. This conclusion is uncertain since the word is more frequently feminine than masculine in its common usage. Herod was displaying the craftiness of a fox by attempting to make use of a bluff — to make a threat of death which he would not dare to execute. He had arrested John, but had feared to kill him until he was trapped by Herodias and forced to murder him. The murder of Jesus would have required much more daring. The Divine King The message Jesus sent to Herod contained the following elements: (1) Jesus cited His miraculous ministry as He had when John had sent from prison to question His ministry. “I cast out demons and perform cures — ” His ministry was wholly good and noble; Herod had no just reason for driving Him out. He would find no cause to justify the threat of death he had sent. Jesus’ miraculous ministry revealed divine power which was invincible; Herod would be unable to drive Him out. By contrast He could in an instant turn this divine power against Herod and destroy him. His miraculous ministry proved Him to be the Messiah: Herod would be unable to drive Him out or divert His followers.

(2) Jesus unfolded a definite, divine program which could not be halted or changed by such hostile threats. As sure and as invincible as God Himself is the ministry of Jesus in its nature, its time, and its results. “Today and tomorrow and the third day” have been held to mean: (a) the three years of Christ’s ministry; (b) three actual days; (c) a long time (d) a short time; (e) a definite time. The last interpretation is probably correct. The three years of Christ’s ministry are in the past, and Jesus spoke of that which was ahead. A reference to three actual days is not possible because some two months elapsed before the crucifixion, and miraculous cures were performed by Jesus during this period. A reference to the three days in the tomb could not be meant, for it would not fit with the prediction of casting out demons and performing cures. It probably means that Christ’s program is definitely laid out by God and a mere Herod cannot change it.

(3) Jesus predicted the ultimate triumph of His mission: “I am perfected.” Jesus was always morally perfect, but He became perfect in the sense of completing the work of man’s redemption, to which God had committed Him. The word made perfect is used three times in the Epistle of Hebrews in this sense of “made complete.” “For it became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Hebrews 2:10). “Though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation (Hebrews 5:8, Hebrews 5:9). By His death and resurrection Jesus became perfectly, or completely, our Savior.

(4) Jesus declared His intention of leaving Herod's domain, but not at the present time and not because of Herod's threats: "Nevertheless I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem" (Luke 13:33). Jesus was following a definite course and no human interference can influence Him; in the one-two-three of God's plan and time He would go up to Jerusalem to die.

(5) In foretelling His death in Jerusalem, Jesus expressed unfathomable pathos in the sarcasm that it would not be fitting for the Messiah to die outside of Jerusalem, since the death of the Old Testament prophets had occurred there at the hands of the unbelieving, rebellious nation. The word nevertheless is arresting. Trench holds that the meaning is "Although I must die on the third day, yet threats will not interfere with my work until then." Plummer interprets: "Although I must go to Jerusalem, yet it is not threats that send me thither." Nevertheless is connected with I must go on my way, and can refer either to the departure from Herod's domain and the trip to the capital, or to the way of the cross.

Jerusalem the Murderess The stubborn and rebellious character of the Jewish nation had been shown in the slaying of one prophet after another in the holy city itself. Hence the precedent established by the Jews made it peculiarly fitting that the Messiah should face final rejection and death in the capital. "Jerusalem is the customary place for the Jews to flaunt their defiance of God and to commit the murder of His messengers, so I must die there." Not all the prophets had been killed at Jerusalem, but almost all; John the Baptist is an example of a prophet who was not murdered in Jerusalem. This reply was a slashing attack on the hypocrisy of the Pharisees who were pretending to be alarmed for the safety of Jesus lest Herod kill Him as he had killed John. "Do not be alarmed. I am in no danger here, nor from him. But I must go to your capital: and it is there, and at your hands, that I shall die" (Plummer, Commentary on Luke, p. 351).

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not!" (Luke 13:34). This outcry is one of the most heartrending appeals that ever came from the lips of the Son of God. It is no more surprising that Jesus should have repeated this appeal in Jerusalem in the midst of the final day of His public ministry than that His love should have been so steadfast and unfailing (Matthew 23:37). Plummer holds that it is entirely improbable that Jesus should have uttered this lament twice because the words are so similar and so very striking; but Alford, Andrews, Ellicott, and Stier hold that the lament was spoken twice. Plummer admits that the settings both here and in Matthew 23:37 are so fitting that he is unable to determine on which occasion it was actually uttered, but he favors the latter. There is clear evidence, however, in the Gospel accounts that Jesus frequently repeated instruction and sayings to different audiences. This procedure is a logical and intelligent method of instruction. The manner in which this outcry arises on both occasions is strong proof of the authenticity of both accounts.

Those familiar with farm life have seen many times in the midst of a wild storm the pathetic scene of a hen desperately clucking to her brood, trying to bring them under the shelter of her wings. One or two stubborn chicks can be seen strutting around in the downpour determined to find out what the world is really like, only to fall dead amid their disobedience. That the chosen nation, set apart by God for His divine purposes, should thus defy Him seems beyond comprehension. That killeth

is a feminine, present participle — she who is continually a murderess, the slayer of prophets.

Campaigning in Jerusalem

One of the central attacks of Strauss and the Tübingen school and all who have followed them has been that John falsely represents Jesus as being in Jerusalem a number of times at different feasts, and that the Synoptics show this to be false by presenting the campaigns of Jesus as concentrated in Galilee until the final Passover. But this passage in Luke, as well as Matthew 23:37, confirms the picture of Jesus' ministry given by John. They represent Jesus as having been frequently in Jerusalem and as having repeatedly sought to win the capital back to God. Neander pointed out that thy children could not possibly refer to others than the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Strauss admitted this as the passage stands, but arbitrarily denied that it had been spoken by Jesus, and drew on his imagination to suggest that it had been copied in later from apocryphal sources. The manuscript evidence for both of these passages is so strong that Strauss merely exposes his own desperate prejudice when he tries to remove this lament from the text.

Desolate

"Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Luke 13:35). The word desolate is italicized in the a.s.v. showing that the translators followed manuscripts which omitted the word. But they felt it had to be supplied to make the meaning clear. They did not italicize desolate in Matthew 23:38. The a.v. accepts the word as genuine in both passages and does not italicize them. Without the word desolate the meaning would be, "Your house is left unto you. It is no longer mine. Defend it the best way you can.' With the word in the text the entire picture of Jerusalem, falling in blood and flames before the final attack of the Romans, rises to view. The Second Coming

"Ye shall not see me, until ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." It is implied that they should not see Him until they should become repentant and rejoice at His coming, but it is not necessarily implied that all would repent and rejoice. Since such praises were heard at the triumphal entry, some refer this prediction to the enthusiastic entrance into the capital. Jesus went up to Bethany in the intervening period for the resurrection of Lazarus, but made no appearance in the capital. But this interpretation would reduce this solemn assertion of Jesus to the assurance that the Jews in Jerusalem would not see Him for some weeks. Does this prediction suggest that their house was to be left desolate for only such a brief period? This same prediction made by Jesus on the final day of His ministry certainly refers to the second coming, for the triumphal entry had already occurred. It seems that the reference here in Luke also has the second coming in the background. There is to be a future conversion of Jews. Moreover, there will be no final defiance of Christ at His second coming. Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess, but it will be too late for unbelievers when they face the judgment. A Pharisee Banquet This encounter with hostile Pharisees is followed in Luke's account with a scene in the home of a Pharisee where Jesus was being entertained on a sabbath day. We cannot tell how hostile the intent of the host had been, but Luke's statement they were watching him gives room for suspecting an attack upon Him was being sought. The furious controversy which ensued reflects the atmosphere. We naturally wonder at the frequent presence of Jesus in the homes of Pharisees, but He was probably much more often in homes of the poor. The Gospel writers are telling about events of special importance. We never read of Jesus' refusing an invitation to share the hospitality of a home. The Pharisees were people of wealth and influence in each community.

They had the largest homes where the most people could see and hear. They would have been the best situated to entertain such a group as Jesus and His apostles. But it is a question as to whether the apostles would have been included in such invitations. The Pharisees were scholarly and especially interested to hear what Jesus had to say. They were also so hostile that they either did not want Jesus in their homes or were afraid to invite Him for fear of ostracism, so that the invitations seem always to have come from Pharisees who were plotting to entrap Him. The Afflicted Man

“And behold, there was before him a certain man that had the dropsy” (Luke 14:2). The man might have been brought in as a part of a trap or have been present by chance, but the narrative indicates that he came in the hope of being healed, and his presence may have been a surprise to the Pharisees. The Pharisees delighted to show off their wealth, splendor, and learning so they permitted the banquet room to be entered by those who wanted to stand around the wall, watching and listening to the display of luxury and wisdom. That this was a sabbath day makes us wonder whether another unrecorded visit to a synagogue had occurred, with this banquet as the aftermath.

There are seven miracles of healing on the sabbath recorded, of which Luke reports four: (1) Peter’s mother-in-law (Matthew 8:14, Matthew 8:15; Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38, Luke 4:39); (2) the withered hand (Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11); (3) the woman bowed down eighteen years (Luke 13:10-17); (4) the dropsied man (Luke 14:1-4); (5) the demoniac at Capernaum (Mark 1:21-28); (6) the paralytic at Bethesda (John 5:2-10); (7) the man born blind (John 9:1-14). These healings were the subject of fierce controversy. In some cases Jesus seems deliberately to have healed a person on the sabbath in order to correct the false teaching of the Pharisees as to the meaning of the law (John 5:10; John 9:14). In the home of this Pharisee the issue arises naturally out of the presence of a man with dropsy. The Issue

“Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath, or not?” (Luke 14:3). Jesus was answering the critical thoughts of the lawyers and the Pharisees. This question had been discussed in Galilee on a number of occasions, but Jesus is now evangelizing a new territory. The arguments He uses proved just as effective here as on the former occasions. The Pharisees were “watching” for an opening to accuse Him, and the presence of this sick man gave a specific turn to their thoughts. The man certainly was not an invited guest, received in honor at the banquet table, for Jesus criticized them for their failure to invite such (Luke 14:13). Jesus raised the question about healing on the sabbath in order to silence their criticism after He had performed the miracle. The Pharisees claimed to be the specialists of the day at answering just such questions, but they were afraid to answer this one. They did not want to give an affirmative answer, and they were afraid to give a negative one. “But they held their peace. The Miracle

“And he took him, and healed him, and let him go” (Luke 14:4). Took him indicates that he called the man out into the center of the scene so that the miracle could be seen by all. Let him go shows clearly that the man had not been an invited guest at the banquet. it does not mean that Jesus took His hands off the man, but rather that he dismissed him from the presence so that he would not have to endure further hostility and persecution. Some suppose that took him means that Jesus used touch in healing the man; if so, it was an additional help to the man’s faith. It is more probable that Jesus brought the man forth from those standing around the wall of the room and

made a direct challenge to the Pharisees by His action. Jesus appealed to the conduct of the Pharisees themselves in His argument. If for selfish reasons or moved by sympathy they aided helpless animals on the sabbath, why should they criticize Him for healing this poor man when no selfish motives were involved and the immense importance of a human being over a dumb animal was self-evident? Some manuscripts have son instead of ass; the incongruity is manifest to put together son and ox, and the entire argument which Jesus at other times made upon the relative importance of a man over an animal would he destroyed. The manuscript evidence for son is weak. The Chief Seats This miracle appears to have been performed after all the guests had been seated at the banquet table and the feast was in progress. The next paragraph is based on the fact that Jesus had been observing the unseemly scramble among the guests to secure the highest place of honor. The parable was directed at “those that were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief seats” (Luke 14:7). His rebuke was direct: “When thou art bidden of any man to a marriage feast, sit not down in the chief seat” (Luke 14:8). This is called a parable, even though it is direct instruction as to the virtue of humility, because there is hidden meaning in the instruction given. He is not merely teaching rules of etiquette and polite behavior, but a deeper lesson in humility. Jewish custom, according to the Talmud, declares that on a couch holding three, the middle place is considered the place of greatest honor; the left, next in honor; the right, third. The Greeks were accustomed to having couches for dining to seat two, but both the Greeks and the Romans sometimes had couches seating four. It is uncertain whether there was any uniformity in Palestine at this time or what sort of arrangement prevailed. Jesus cited a marriage feast; sabbath banquets were always sumptuous, but a marriage feast was much more formal and a time when the places of honor would be sought out more eagerly. Thus it furnished the most dramatic illustration for the principle He taught. The Lowest Seat

“And then thou shalt begin with shame to take the lowest place” (Luke 14:9). The wording begin to take shows a strong contrast between the momentary exaltation which the interloper had achieved and the permanent humiliation which resulted from his presumption. The self-seeker goes from the highest to the lowest seat like a person who has tried to force his way in at the head of the line already waiting to be served in turn. Upon being ejected, he is forced to go to the foot of the line because all intermediate places are filled. The shame of his humiliation prevents him from attempting to displace any of these lesser guests seated in more modest places of honor.

Humility

“But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest place; that when lie that hath bidden thee cometh, he may say to thee, Friend, go up higher” (Luke 14:10). That he may say to thee is a purpose clause in the Greek construction, but purpose clauses are frequently used in the New Testament to express result rather than purpose. The result of the man’s humble action will be an invitation to go up higher. The man should not go to the lowest seat as a scheme to secure a higher one and to get special attention when the promotion takes place. Such effrontery would be the acme of selfish glorification and the very opposite of humility. Jesus closes this parable with a principle of life which He was fond of stating: “For every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled Jesus did not deliver the parable to teach mere social etiquette, but to illustrate a profound principle of life. When a person does push himself forward in the manner described, it is a revelation of his character. “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted” by those who are noble, and finally in the day of judgment by God Himself.

Hospitality

“And he said to him also that had bidden him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends...bid the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind” (Luke 14:12, Luke 14:13). The conduct of the guests had stirred the wrath of Jesus as He had observed their unseemly scramble for the chief seats. Jesus continually built His instruction on events that occurred from day to day. Having delivered a parable on humility to denounce the selfish guests, He added a rebuke to the host. Jesus’ criticism may have been elicited by a contemptuous attitude shown by the host and his aristocratic friends toward the man afflicted with dropsy. We cannot be sure of the motive for this second condemnation. Poor people may have been present as guests. The apostles were not wealthy, but it is highly improbable that they were invited. The motive for hospitality is the key to its genuineness. Modern salesmanship uses an elaborate dinner as the means of inveigling a customer. Inviting poor people becomes an acid test of motives. Most probably the exclusive character of all the guests led to Jesus’ attack.

Organized Approach This pointed rebuke strikes hard at the average Christian today. Who of us ever had a banquet in our home which was dedicated to the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind? We suddenly draw back in shame, realizing we fall so far short of the matchless example of Jesus that we live in a different world. Jesus is not condemning or forbidding the joyous fellowship of relatives and friends, but the pride and exclusiveness, which shuts the doors of our homes to all but a select few. With amazing generosity the American people have taxed themselves and given of their public funds to build schools, hospitals, nursing homes, old people’s homes, and similar institutions. Their response has been continuous to appeals over the radio or in door-to-door canvass for all sorts of funds to fight various diseases and rescue those afflicted with these ailments. Appalled at the enormity of the task, we have retreated into organizations of all kinds. These organized campaigns have been highly intelligent, highly effective, and highly commendable. But the need of the world continues to mount.

If our only approach to the problem is at second hand, we lose the blessings that come from personal contact. The church and the home, when they surrender such tasks completely to the general public, begin to lose their God-given opportunities of service and sources of power. We still face the instruction Jesus has given us in this passage. Occasionally we may invite some blind person or one maimed into our home, but an entire banquet in our home dedicated to the unfortunate — !? Too often the difficulty is that our hearts are hardened. We are like the priest and the Levite on the Jericho road; we are afraid we might become involved. The Home in Heaven

“And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God” (Luke 14:16). This remark may have arisen from the closing promise with which Jesus had ended the preceding discussion: “For thou shalt be recompensed in the resurrection of the just.” Plummer notes that the people Jesus urged them to invite into their homes are of two classes: those wanting in means — the poor; and those wanting in strength — the maimed, the lame, the blind. It is noteworthy that these are the very words Jesus uses to describe those who are called in from the streets and the lanes in the following parable when those first invited refused to come. These helpless people were unable to return the favor to their generous host so that the motive of the host was unselfish.

Jesus assures them that God does not overlook and will not forget. The words the resurrection of the just seem to refer to the double resurrection of the just to eternal life, and the wicked to eternal punishment (1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 20:5, Revelation 20:6). It may be that the phrase suggests those alone to whom the resurrection will be a blessing. Since this next parable on the rejected invitation offers a third rebuke, it may be that the person who made this remark about the coming glory of the kingdom of God was anxious to change the subject from their present faults and failures. This parable offers a third shocking rebuke to the complacent Pharisees Not everyone talking about heaven will finally enter in. The Pharisees have shut the poor out of their fellowship; they have also shut God out by rejecting His supreme invitation sent through the Messiah Himself.

Similar Parables When the Parable of the Rejected Invitation is compared to that of the wedding feast in Matthew 22:1-14, both the similarities and the differences are striking. God's gracious invitation to men is scorned in both parables by those most indebted to Him and accepted by less fortunate ones. But the differences are great: (1) The excuses of those who rejected are emphasized in this parable, but are implied in Matthew 22:1-46. (2) The later parable carries special warning on the eve of His death in the shameful treatment of the messengers who bring the invitation, and the swift and terrible punishment which is meted out to these evildoers. (3) The incident of the man without the wedding garment adds a striking detail to the parable of the last week. The custom in the East of sending out two invitations is seen in this parable; an early invitation was given, and then a reminder when the feast was ready: "And he sent forth his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready" (Luke 14:17). This second invitation was not sent to urge people who had rejected the first invitation, but simply to remind them as was the custom. It seems implied that they had given a casual acceptance to the first invitation; but, when it came to the point of actually coming, they rejected. They added a broken promise to their ungrateful rejection.

Excuses

Since they all acted in unison and offered such shallow excuses, a conspiracy may have arisen. Their excuses were only pretenses to hide their unwillingness to come. The first man was not under any compulsion to examine the farm immediately. He must have inspected it before he purchased it; at any rate, he could make detailed inspection at his leisure. The second man did not plead any necessity, but answered with insolence that he was on his way to prove his newly-acquired oxen. They had already been purchased; there was no need to test them at this particular time. If these two men suggested that perhaps they would come later, if it happened to please them, the third man made it quite evident he did not plan to come. These were not wicked things which intervened and led them to reject; they represent the lure of business, profit, and social pleasures. Their replies declared earthly things first, the heavenly later, perhaps, if at all. Jesus shows the fatal results of their concentration on earthly things by the swift revocation of the invitation and God's final rejection of the ungrateful.

Unity of the Instruction

There is no contradiction between this parable and the immediately preceding instruction to invite the poor and unfortunate to their feasts. Parables are directed at limited objectives, and the effort is to teach a single, definite principle rather than cover all truth in a single parable. The poor

people from the highways and lanes were not invited simply because the selected guests had rejected the invitation. The entire ministry of Jesus shows that the invitation of God was being extended to all. The first group seems to represent the religious leaders of the nation who claimed to be keeping the law and seeking after God; the second, the publicans and sinners who had not kept the law. Both groups appear to have lived in the city and seem to represent both the Jews who claimed to he religious and those who made no such claim. Both the generous attitude of Jesus toward Gentiles when they approached Him and His repeated declarations that the gospel would be for them, prevent us from drawing any contradictory conclusions from this parable. The Joyous Assembly

After the first campaign in the streets and lanes of the city, the servant in charge reported eminent success, but there were still vacant places at the grand banquet table. A second campaign sent the servants out into “the highways and hedges.” The two Greek words mean broad places and lanes, or streams (originally “the rush and flow of that which is in motion,” as we speak today of “the flow of traffic”). The third group invited from the highways and hedges pictures a campaign outside the town. Some think this represents the message of salvation offered to the heathen. “Constrain them to come in” ; the a.v. says “compel.” The messenger was not sent to use physical violence and bring them as prisoners rather than guests. The messenger was to feel the strong responsibility to persuade with all logic and love. That my house may be filled implies that this grand objective was finally accomplished.

“None of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper (Luke 14:24). This is not revenge, but divine justice. In Luke 14:23 the Lord, speaking to the servant, uses the singular number, you; in Luke 14:24, where he is still speaking to the servant, he uses the plural. Perhaps all the servants who had carried on his campaign were now assembled. Jesus may have used the plural because He was stating His conclusion to the assembly before Him. A solemn warning was issued to all present that it was a mistake to speak of the blessedness of enjoying the kingdom of God if they were rejecting God’s final invitation through His Son. The Vast Multitude

Luke observes for the second time the enormous multitudes that surrounded Jesus: “Now there went with him great multitudes” (Luke 14:25). Jesus had used obscure and difficult teaching in the Sermon in Parables during the Galilean ministry when He found vast multitudes thronging Him. The sermon had sifted the crowd so that the devout and eager who remained in spite of the difficulty of His teaching could be effectively instructed. Jesus used the same method at this juncture of His campaign in Peraea. He challenged the people present to dedicate themselves completely and without reserve to God and to the Lord’s Messiah who summoned them. The shocking manner of His challenge must have caused many to turn back to the world. The Shocking Challenge

If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26). The key to this difficult verse is the clause yea, and his own life also. A true disciple must hate his own life in that he puts the kingdom of God and the blessed fellowship with God above anything that this world can offer — above even his own earthly life. He must hate his father and mother in the sense that God must come first. If it comes to a choice between continued fellowship with his father and mother and his answering the summons of God to eternal blessedness with Him, then

the choice must be God. In a preceding discourse Jesus warned His followers that He had come to send a sword and to cause father and son to he parted asunder in conflict, and mother and daughter likewise. If the father and mother are godless, the young man, when he finally comes of age, may have to stand up and say to his own parents, “I am sorry it has come to this. I appreciate all you have done for me, but God is calling me and I must give Him my life, even though it forces us to part.”

Jesus issued His challenge to a mixed crowd in which many may have been curiosity seekers and others imbued with shallow ideas of halfhearted discipleship. Unless they were prepared to give up anyone or anything that separated them from God, they were not ready to follow Christ. They were being warned to count the cost of discipleship and not to imagine they could follow Him without cost. Three little parables enforce this challenge: (1) the rash builder; (2) the rash king; (3) the savorless salt. Plummer suggests the general heading “The Conditions of Discipleship,” and the following divisions: (1) the cross to be borne (Luke 14:25-27; Matthew 10:37, Matthew 10:38); (2) the cost to be counted (Luke 14:28-32); (3) all possessions to be renounced (Luke 14:33); (4) the spirit of sacrifice to be maintained (Luke 14:34, Luke 14:35; Matthew 5:13; Mark 9:49). Our Love for God This is another of the dramatic, extreme declarations with which Jesus liked to stir the crowd from their complacency and self-satisfaction, and to spur them to deeper thought and heroic action. This startling hyperbole summons all to hate father and mother and all those people with whom fellowship has been most intimate and precious. Our love for God must be in a different class from our love for any human being. Our love for God must be so great that any other love will be as different as ordinary love is from hate. In Matthew 15:4 Jesus solemnly repeats the Old Testament commandment to honor one’s father and mother. Love for every human being is repeatedly urged by Jesus, even love for our enemies. When this verse in Luke 14:1-35 is placed alongside these other passages, it is the more apparent that it is figurative language. There is a very striking contrast between the casual indifference of the bridegroom in the preceding parable and the challenge which Jesus now issues: “I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come” vs. “If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not...his wife.”

Tragic Reflections

We are continually commanded by Christ to hate the evil in this world and to realize the exceeding preciousness of life. We are about to study three parables which underscore the exceeding great value of human life. Yet in this hyperbole Christ commands to “hate life also.” Not only must a person dedicate his life so completely to God that the service he can render to God outweighs even the continuance of his life in this world; he must also be prepared to meet death in the most horrible manner for Christ’s sake. “Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27). It is a question how well the hearers understood such deep, perplexing declarations. To Peter and to the other apostles this declaration must have brought fearsome recollections of the predictions Jesus had made of His approaching crucifixion. To those in the crowd who were spiritually-minded and discerning, it would bring sorrowful reflection on the rising tide of fierce opposition and the ominous intimations of tragedy. Apparently Jesus let the crowd fathom for themselves the deeper meanings of these difficult sayings. From beyond the cross and the preaching of the full gospel at Pentecost they would look back upon these hard sayings and find confirmation for their faith and constant challenge for their living. To hate his own life, the true disciple must become “a living sacrifice.” Paul gives magnificent expression to such

supreme devotion: “Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse” (Php 3:8).

Renounce All Possessions The third challenge which Jesus issued is also difficult and perplexing: “So therefore whosoever there be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33). If we knew exactly how much real estate, bank deposits, and similar worldly treasures Paul had found swept away from him by his persecutors when he became a Christian, we would have a vivid illustration of what Jesus was demanding. Paul does not give us any account of how much he lost in his sudden change to Christian faith; he thrusts the entire experience aside with scorn: “I do count them but refuse.” He still counted the money he earned from slow, patient labor at tent-making to be valuable, but only because it enabled him to remain alive and active in the service of Christ. After Peter became a disciple he left all and followed Jesus, but he still had a home where his wife and her mother lived and where Jesus and the apostles constantly met. Peter still had a boat, but it was no longer used by him to secure worldly gain; it belonged to Christ, even as his house and all that he had. The word renounce is a good translation; we no longer claim to be the owner of aught that we have; it all belongs to God. We will use what is necessary to keep fit for the service of Christ, but we will constantly remind ourselves that we are stewards handling what belongs to God, and one day we must give account. Men may follow Christ in some sense, but they really cannot be His disciples without complete and absolute consecration. The emphasis here is on both my and disciples; so also in Luke 14:27. Other leaders may be followed without such supreme devotion; but because of the divine character of the Son of God and His service, only when we surrender all do we become true disciples. What we do with our worldly possessions is the test of our devotion to Christ. “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

“For which of you, desiring to build a tower, doth not first sit down and count the cost, whether lie have wherewith to complete it” (Luke 14:28). Jesus promised His disciples that the most impossible things would become possible by the power of God if they had faith. But Jesus also strongly emphasized that they must have common sense. Christian faith is not blind faith; it is an intelligent faith which carefully surveys the task and the difficulties. As was so often true in the parables of Jesus, the people probably knew concrete examples of such folly in actual life. The age was characterized by extravagance and recklessness. Actual incidents would have made his parables the more telling. If in the ordinary procedure of life the man of wisdom counts the cost before he begins to build, how much more in life’s highest venture? Observe the blunt language, this man, the fool! Jesus is not saying that it is better not to try at all, than to try and fail; but He points out the folly of beginning without considering the cost. One must have a shallow disregard for the divine invitation to accept it without serious consideration. Jesus set these two parables amid demands to hate one’s father and mother and his own life, and to accept calmly the prospect of crucifixion as a result of the choice to renounce all earthly possessions and become a disciple of Christ. The impact upon the casual hearers must have been terrific. The impact upon the ages has not been different.

Counting the Cost

Knowing the hearts of all He met, Jesus was able to give encouragement to the timid and hesitating, and to warn the rash and thoughtless. Here Jesus faced a crowd that needed to hear a solemn warning to the shallow and overconfident, who were taking too much for granted and failing to consider the real significance of becoming a follower of Christ. The meaning of the parable of the rash king is parallel to that of the rash builder. We are immediately in trouble if we try to allegorize the parables and are not satisfied with the fundamental principles taught. The parable of the rash king does not consider profound moral issues which might lead the king with only ten thousand men to go forth gladly to death rather than surrender the exceeding precious and noble things of life. The implication is that the issues are petty and may easily be compromised. Jesus has just urged the true disciple to hate his own life also; He is not now contradicting this challenge by urging compromise of ultimate virtue in order to preserve physical life. Those who try to allegorize the parable get into difficulty trying to identify the tower or the opposing king. If the latter is the devil, then are we to compromise and make terms with the devil? If the other king is God, then is there no more difference between the power of man and that of God than between ten and twenty thousand soldiers? These are illustrations that teach fundamental principles; we must be content with the general lesson.

Worthless Salt

“If even the salt hath lost its savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned?” (Luke 14:34). Jesus has just stated the undivided love which should lead His followers to disregard everything else that threatened their discipleship. This last comparison is a solemn warning that halfhearted discipleship is absolutely worthless. “Salt therefore is good,” but the real test as to whether it is good is not the outer appearance, but the inner power. A church which has lost its faith and its missionary passion is the most helpless and hopeless institution in the world. How many churches today have become social clubs. This is a favorite saying of Jesus (Matthew 5:13; Mark 9:49, Mark 9:50; Luke 14:34, Luke 14:35). There is a terrible emphasis in “nor for the dunghill.” Many things, having lost their original merit and becoming decayed, are still valuable as fertilizer for the soil; but savorless salt has not even this value.

100. Chapter 41 - The Parable of the Prodigal Son

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Luke 15:1-32 The Title The titles which have been placed over the parables are of such ancient origin, such universal acceptance, and so appropriate that we seldom pause to consider other titles which might be used. Since the prodigal son is the chief actor in the parable, his name is naturally placed in the title. But in light of the occasion, the circumstances which produced these three parables, and the purpose Jesus had in mind, it might be called “The Parable of the Elder Brother.” He remains the question mark at the end of the parable. Jesus was being criticized by the Pharisees because He moved freely among the multitude regardless of their state or character. The Pharisees sought to prove their own righteous character by keeping apart from “the publicans and sinners” and by keeping them apart from the select circles. They made a double charge against Jesus: (1) He permitted sinful people to come into His company. (2) He went into their midst and ate with them. In the parable of the prodigal son Jesus sought to demonstrate to the Pharisees what sort of people they themselves were.

“A certain man had two sons, and both of them were sinners. The prodigal was lost in the far country; the elder brother was lost in his Father’s house. Since Jesus was seeking above all else to portray the love of God and to get the Pharisees to understand the divine purpose and result in His association with sinners, the last parable might be called “The Parable of the Loving Father.” Because of the central theme in all three parables, they might be called “Parables of the Lost.” The Three Parables The differences in the three parables illustrate again the warning that the details of a parable must not be pushed to extreme identification. It is immediately apparent that the first two parables are not completely parallel to the third. The sheep willfully goes astray, but is carried back helpless by the faithful shepherd. What a chasm separates this from the resolute decision: “I will arise and go to my father.” The coin is completely without any sort of intelligence and choice and is swept out of its hiding place by violence. Even the parable of the prodigal son gives no full presentation of the gospel. There is no Son who dies for the redemption of the two sinful sons; there is no message or appeal sent to the far country to represent the gospel invitation. The limitation of parables to simple objectives is the very secret of their power. Vision is concentrated on a central principle. To have introduced a Son to die for the redemption of the other two sons might have illustrated the atonement, but it would have blurred the incarnation. How could the divine character of the only begotten Son of God have been set forth? The principle which is constant in all three parables is the unfailing effort of the one who seeks the lost. The importance of a human soul and the joy manifest when the lost is found are seen throughout the three parables The Lost Sheep

“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?” (Luke 15:4). This parable is an appeal to their universal experience. It may seem like great folly to leave ninety-nine sheep in the wilderness exposed to all its dangers and to go in search of one lost sheep. But the

implication is that there is a secure fold here in the wilderness where the ninety and nine will be safe. Until he find it emphasizes the determination and persistence of the shepherd. In a similar parable delivered on a different occasion Jesus said of this loving shepherd: “And if so be that he find it” (Matthew 18:13). Ultimate tragedy instead of supreme joy may be the outcome. The desert is pictured as the customary pasturage in the spring. It also is the appropriate setting for the sheep that is lost amid all its perils, and that is found at such great cost. The great love of the shepherd is shown by: (1) his great anxiety; (2) his long journey; (3) his persistent search; (4) his carrying back the lost sheep on his shoulders; (5) his call to his friends to rejoice with him “when he cometh home” (Luke 15:6). Since the scene is laid in the wilderness, it is not clear whether this is a fold where other shepherds can rejoice with him or a delayed rejoicing at home as he recounts his harrowing experience in the desert. Friends and neighbors suggests the return from the desert to the home village. “Joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons, who need no repentance” (Luke 15:7). But who is there that is so righteous he needs no repentance? Is not this the very error Jesus is seeking to correct in the thinking of the Pharisees? Perhaps this is an ironical thrust at the Pharisees self-complacency. The Pharisees were far from righteous and were but few in number so that the one-hundred-to-one percentage is not in evidence.

Cyril, Alexander, and Ambrose attempted to identify the ninety-nine as the angels and the one which was lost as the human race. But the text says, “one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons, who need no repentance.” The reference is to men in a state of probation, where they can repent. It is better to take the principles taught and not seek to identify each detail. The principles are the dreadful condition of the lost, the unfailing love and persistent effort of the shepherd, and the great joy that attends the final rescue. The general difference between the ninety and nine sheep safe in the fold and the one lost in the deadly peril pictures the contrast between the man who is without God and without hope and the Christian who zealously follows Christ. Who need no repentance no more denies that all men need daily to pray for forgiveness than the shepherd’s carrying the sheep back bodily denies the freedom of the will. The Lost Coin

It is plain that an inanimate piece of money is bound to fall short of detailed representation of the moral nature of man. The coin was not responsible for its being lost, nor did it have any part in its recovery. But here are two familiar illustrations out of everyday life, the principles of which are plain. Attempting to press the details of any parable into exact parallels is sure to bring difficulty. In these first two parables, a man is the actor in the first; a woman, in the second. Both were seeking valuable lost property, but the sheep had gone astray because of its own stubborn folly; the coin was lost through neglect or misfortune of the woman. The sheep could suffer the evil results of going astray; the coin could not. Plummer holds that “...while the man might be moved by pity rather than by self-interest to bring back the sheep, the woman must he moved by self-interest alone to recover the coin.” Kindness to animals and the shepherd’s love for each of his sheep do enter into the first parable, but Plummer forgets that this coin may have been dedicated to the service of God, or to some noble cause of helping the poor. The woman’s main grief may have been frustration of a good purpose. It does not follow that her motive is purely selfish. As a result of the above discrimination Plummer makes, he says that “...the woman represents the Church rather than Divine Wisdom, if she represents anything at all.” But is the church moved by

self-interest and not by pity in its search for lost souls? It is better not to attempt to identify such details. The principles are the same in both parables The coin was a Greek drachma worth about 16 cents. Some suggest that this was one of the silver pieces of her bridal headdress and hence of inestimable value, as its loss would mar the whole, but the parable does not imply this in any way. The Search The details of the search are true to the background. The streets were dark and narrow; the houses were built against one another; windows were rare; hence it was necessary to light a lamp, even if the search was carried on during the day. Some suggest a lesson from the sheep straying from the fold and the coin being lost in the house; men and women may be lost in the church as well as out of it. It is doubtful whether this is meant, although it appears clearly in the parable of the lost sons. For the woman to have invited in her friends to rejoice with her is as natural as for the shepherd to call in his comrades. The persistence both of the shepherd and the woman is of primary importance. Ira Sankey's grand hymn "The Ninety and Nine" deserves to be read and sting frequently. The woman moved everything in the house rather than give up her search for the coin. Trench remarks, "The charge against the Gospel is still the same, that it turns the world upside down." The angels rejoicing in heaven while men and women rejoice over the recovery on earth is a very touching picture. Great joy as well as great sorrow seeks sympathetic companionship. The keen interest of the angels in the even transpiring on earth is noteworthy. The Prodigal Son The Parable of the Prodigal Son has a separate introduction — "And he said" (Luke 15:11). This does not mean that the parable was spoken on a different occasion; but emphasis is given to the supreme character of the more direct reply which Jesus gave to the criticism of the Pharisees The three parables have the same objective. God's part in saving lost men and His great love in seeking and saving are shown forth in the first two parables Since human beings are the lost in the third parable, it is possible for the details to fit more closely. The freedom of the will, man's responsibility for his lost condition, his deliberate choice of repentance and return to God, and God's great love for lost mankind are clearly set forth in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The Inheritance

"Father, give me the portion of thy substance that falleth to me" (Luke 15:12). This seems to propose that the father abdicate and divide up the estate, but at the close of the parable the father is still in charge of the home and farm. We are not told that the father divided his entire estate, but "he divided unto them his living." The elder son was given his proper share of whatever was distributed. The Jewish law granted to the younger son half of what the eldest son received (i.e., one-third of the total; cf. Deuteronomy 21:17). The older son evidently did not tell the truth in his complaints at the close of the parable, "Thou never gavest me…." The Far Country

"And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country" (Luke 15:13). If the portion bestowed by his father included real estate, it would have to be disposed of to have all his possessions in ready cash. His reason for going into a far country is evident; he wanted to get out of his father's presence and away from all who knew him. He had definite plans for seeing the world and sharing all it could offer. The sharp contrast between gathered all together and wasted his substance is impressive. What had been given to him he scattered quickly and at random. The word with riotous living means "living like a prodigal or a spendthrift." The word can have a passive meaning: "living like one who cannot be saved," i.e., abandoned, hell-bent. The grass usually looks greener on the other side of the fence, but the prodigal soon found that the far country was no paradise. At the very time that his funds were

exhausted and his need desperate, the country came into the grip of a dreadful famine. It is to the young man's credit and proof that his character and will power were not utterly corrupted that he did not turn to crime or to begging. Highway robbers and hobos are made of this sort of background. He sought work and found the lowest type of work which a Jew could undertake — feeding swine. His high living had gained him no permanent friends. When the juice had been squeezed from the lemon, his fair-weather friends threw away the rind. Evidently he secured employment from a heathen. The second best gift to a man in need is a job. The first gift is the gospel of Christ to bring him to God. The Husks With the husks that the swine did eat is a curious mistranslation. The pods of the carob tree are shaped something like a lima bean. These were shaken off the tree by the prodigal so the pigs could eat them. This tree abounds in Palestine today, and its pods are still used as forage. Evidently the lad was securing some food by his labor, but he was close enough to the starvation level that he longed to get down among the swine and eat these dry pods. "No man gave unto him." This was a great blessing which helped to bring him to his senses. The change from a self-respecting, honest man to a hobo is frequently made by the process of "something for nothing." Suffering as the result of his misdeeds was the necessary prelude to his repentance.

Recollections and Reflections

"But when he came to himself." This eloquent phrase implies that he had been out of his mind. He had fallen so desperately in love with the mad pleasures of the world that his better judgment had deserted him. He would not have behaved in such an outrageous manner if he had had all his faculties. When his nobler self began to assert itself, he began to think of the high estate from which he had fallen: his home, his father, his former blessed life, which he had scorned and trampled into the mire. He found the recollections of his youth inviting. He contrasted the abundance which the servants enjoyed at home with the starvation that faced him in this far country where he had anticipated such unending pleasure. "I perish here with hunger!" The emphasis is strong on here — this land of bright lights and dark shadows had promised so much and provided so little.

Repentance

"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight" (Luke 15:18). Freedom of the will and the necessity for every person to accept the full responsibility for his own life together with frank confession of sin are underscored. It is to the young man's credit that he did not try to blame his downfall on evil companions. Who had chosen these companions? Had he not come all the way to this far country for just such companionship? The responsibility was his own, and he did not seek to evade it. Sin fundamentally is disobedience to God, and in this sense all sin is against heaven. God is the great Giver of every good gift; and, when we waste His good gifts, our sin of ingratitude is first of all against Him. God is the great King of the universe, and our sin of disobedience is first against Him. God is the great Judge of the world, and our sins are first of all to be judged by Him The preposition here is eis, which ordinarily means into. but here it is translated against. If it were translated with tile primary meaning it would mean "unto heaven": "crying unto heaven for punishment."

Reformation The young man had rushed away into a far country to avoid his father's presence, but his folly is manifest now, and he feels that none of the evil things he has done have really been

hidden from his father. His father's love and kindness were not limited by space. His resolution is entirely appropriate. He had left his father's home: now he must return. He had scorned his father's goodness; now he must ask for mercy. He had wasted his father's substance; now he must undertake to make this good even by the most menial service. He had become a slave to sin and sullied the very name he wore; now he must rise out of the mire and prove himself a man. The supreme effort of shaking off the shackles of evil habits, lethargy, and despair is suggested by the decisive "I will arise." He plans to make a full and frank confession to his father of his sinful life. What other people may say or do does not deter him; it is between his father and himself. He shows a clear appreciation of the real value of the inheritance he had scorned and of the depths to which he had fallen. He is not worthy to be called a son by his father; he will be happy to become a hired servant in his father's house; it will be a promotion from his present degradation. The Father's Welcome

"But while he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him" (Luke 15:20). Up to this point the prodigal has been the leading actor in the drama, but from this point forward the father is the center of interest. The desires, motives, conduct, and experiences of the young man had engrossed the attention, but now the parable begins to parallel the first two parables in its revelation of the great love of God for lost humanity. The shepherd had risked unknown perils and endured unrecorded hardships in going forth into the wilds in search of his lost sheep. The woman who had lost the precious coin had labored and searched without ceasing. There is no word in this third parable of the father's going into the far country in search of his lost son. Nor is there any mention of his seeking information about the son or sending word to him. The very conduct of Jesus which had given rise to the criticism of the Pharisees was that He "receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." This is the heart of the gospel and is most strongly emphasized in the first two parables The explosion of the pent-up love and agonized yearning of the father during all this time, as he beheld the son afar off and rushed out to welcome him, reveals how great had been the desire of the father for the salvation of his son. The wording is unusual: "his father saw him"; in spite of the distance and the terrible change in his son's appearance, the father recognized him. The verb is emphatic, "he kissed him tenderly." The son had not as yet spoken; there is a language of the eyes which is not limited to romance. The fact that his son had returned in such shameful condition, the light in his eyes, the falling tears, and his entire demeanor needed no interpretation. The Father's Love

Manuscripts differ as to whether the son spoke as he had planned and actually proposed that he be made a hired servant. It is contained in) B D U X (a combination which the a.s.v. almost always follows), but is omitted by practically all other manuscripts and most versions. Both the a.v. and the a.s.v. omit the statement "make me as one of thy hired servants. His father's gracious love overwhelmed him, and he was overcome by his emotions and could go no further than confess his unworthiness. In the far country he had realized that his father loved him and was forgiving; he felt sure his father would receive him back home. But he saw now that he had not really understood the depth of his father's suffering and great love. The suggestion that he be made a hired servant did not harmonize with such a loving reception as this.

It is not made clear whether the servants were present at this reunion. But they were at hand as the father commanded the ragged clothes of the son to be changed for "the best robe" (the finest in the house). Worn-out shoes or none at all must have excited attention and pity; shoes were to

be supplied for his feet. The father addressed the servants rather than the son because his actions would express more decisively his overflowing joy and furnish the best answer to the son's confession. As the son had made known his repentance before he had spoken a word, so the father made clear his forgiveness by his actions in recognizing the prodigal while he was yet a great way off and in rushing out to meet him, embracing him, and kissing him. Now these commands to the servants revealed how great was his joy and how complete his forgiveness.

Details

Attempting to identify the details of the gifts to the son as having hidden meaning would be a mistake. This is scenery of the parable which gives colorful vividness to the drama. The father makes plain that the son is restored to his former state of honor in the home. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Plummer lessens the force of the entire parable when he attempts to argue that "dead" and "lost" mean "dead to me" and "lost to me"; the son had gone away apparently forever and hence was practically dead to his father. It is manifest in the entire parable that the natural moral content of these fateful words is implied. The father represents God and the geographical separation of the father and son is nothing compared to the moral separation with its eternal implications, which is pictured by the conduct of the son. The Elder Brother At this point the elder brother advances to the center of the stage. He is the sort of sour individual who is able to put a chill on any occasion of rejoicing. He has a keen, personal interest in this unexpected turn of events. Presumably he would be the sole heir, with the permanent disappearance of his younger brother from the home. The first part of the parable has depicted an account which glorifies the course of Jesus in seeking and saving the lost. The latter part represents in its true light the exclusive claim to the favor of God and the entire churlish attitude of the Pharisees It is full of gentle appeals to the Pharisees to win them back to loving obedience to God. All the tenderness with which the father appeals to the elder son, reminding him that he also is his son and that all the gifts and blessings of the home are his, if he will accept them, is directed toward the Pharisees

Dancing

"Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing" (Luke 15:25). The two words music and dancing occur only here in the New Testament. The Greek word symphonias means, as does its English equivalent, a harmony of musical instruments. This ensemble was probably a band of players or singers, or both. These were probably flute players as is shown by Matthew 11:17 where "We piped unto you, and ye did not dance." The verb for playing the flute is used, and the verb for dancing is orcheo from which our word orchestra comes. The dancing was rhythmical movement in groups, the men and the women dancing in separate groups. No mixed dancing was known in the ancient world and is only found today in the East where they have adopted western customs.

"And he called to him one of the servants, and inquired what these things might be" (Luke 15:26). We are not told whether the elder son had been at work in the field or was merely inspecting the farm. Up to this point there is no hint as to his character or attitude. His inquiry was perfectly natural; he did not understand the great commotion at the house and sought to learn the cause from the first servant he met. "Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound" (Luke 15:27). Some suggest that the servant had only the literal meaning of the words safe and sound in mind, that the young man was still alive

and in good health, back home after so many months in a far country. It seems more probable that he gave the deeper moral meaning to his words indicating the return of the son to a repentant change of life. The repentance of the prodigal would have been as evident to the servants as it was to the father, even if they had not been present when he made his humble confession of sin. The ringing words of the father to the servants would have spread quickly through the household: “dead, alive, lost, found.” The attitude of the son in repenting and the father in forgiving would have given the entire household deeper cause for rejoicing than the mere physical welfare of the lad. The servants reflected the joyous attitude of the father and repeated his words.

Anger

“But he was angry, and would not go in.” The real character of the elder son is now revealed. The selfish spirit that controlled him leaps forth from the narrative. The things which stir our wrath are as significant a revelation of character as those which bring us joy. The tenses of the Greek verbs are precise and significant: “He was enraged” (aorist, definite decisive action); and he also “continued to be unwilling to go in” (imperfect, continued action in past time). Jealousy, lack of love for his brother, false, selfish motives for serving his father, egotism, ingratitude, false pride in himself, overestimation of his own virtue and blindness to his sins — the very things which cursed the Pharisees — are accurately depicted in the elder brother. His rage at his brother’s return reveals all this like a flashlight photograph taken when he was off guard and his mask of hypocrisy had fallen.

Hypocrisy

“Lo, these many years do I serve thee, and I never transgressed a commandment of thine; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends; but when this thy son came, who hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou killedst for him the fatted calf” (Luke 15:29, Luke 15:30). This flood of accusations against both his brother and his father reach a climax in his absolute refusal to pronounce the word brother. Observe the searing sarcasm of this thy son — “this low creature whom I refuse to recognize, even though you still consider him your son. His accusations are full of untruths. He declared his own absolute obedience to his father in the very moment he was flagrantly disobedient. He asserted his absolute perfection when his imperfections were appearing at their worst. It is not possible to determine how far he was self-deceived and how much he was deliberately lying. Who but God can judge the shades of hypocrisy? When he charged his father with favoritism and injustice, he revealed ingratitude as the great sin of his own life. When he attempted to describe in detail the most heinous sins of the younger son, we do not know how much he knew and how much he was surmising. Drinking, gambling, and sexual crimes abound among those who waste their substance in riotous living. The prodigal could probably have scattered more money to the four winds faster at gambling than any other excess. The elder brother attempted to sum up in one single charge the prodigal’s downfall of character: harlots. This word is thrown in sharp contrast with my friends. These were doubtless very respectable, but the elder son may have been unconsciously uncovering his own evil thoughts and intents showing that this is what he would have done if once he could have left his father and gone to the far country.

Part of the marvelous skill of the parable is its brevity. It does not enter into lurid details of the prodigal’s sinful life; the boy has returned home repentant; therefore, the elder brother should forgive him and give him a fair chance to live a new life. The bitterness of the elder brother came

not so much from his hatred of sin as from his jealousy and hatred of his brother. An interesting variation in interpretation is seen in the alternate emphasis: “Thou never gavest me a kid,” or “Thou never gavest me a kid [not even a kid].” The elder son referred to his younger brother with scorn that was scorching, and he talked to his father with insolence as if a master were addressing a slave. The ingratitude, blindness, and scorn for his birthright which the prodigal had shown at the beginning was now repeated in the conduct and words of the elder son. Here is the heart of the parable; all men are sinners — some of the publican type; some, the Pharisaical; many, with a modicum of both.

Love Divine

Crowning this unveiling of the sinfulness of man is the unsearchable love of God so patient, so unfailing, so completely past our understanding. How patient and loving the father was with both his unworthy sons! We are not told all he had said to the younger son, trying to dissuade him from his determination to go away into a far country. From what he says to the elder son, we can readily fill in the gap. Hear his gentle rebuke of the older son: “Son, thou art ever with me In his act of rebellion the elder son had sacrificed his right to that title son, but the father had infinite patience. The father offered two replies: (1) The reproach of his having failed to reward the elder son is met with the reminder that the son is blind to the blessings he had received, because they had been so abundant and so constant. (2) The reproach of unfitting reward of the vices of the prodigal is answered by the declaration that this was not a reward to a son for wicked living, but a joyous reception to him, since he had changed his life and returned repentant to begin anew.

Dramatic Close

One of the most remarkable things about this greatest of parables is the abrupt manner in which it ends and leaves the readers in suspense. What happened further? Did the elder son also repent, ask forgiveness of his father for all his selfish, sinful attitude and for these harsh words, and then go in to throw his arms about his younger brother in joyous welcome and pledge of good fellowship for the future? Did the younger brother now prove true to the new life he had vowed? Jesus had just been warning the multitudes that they must count the cost and give daily battle to the devil, if they would prove true. Here is further challenge. His most direct appeal is to the Pharisees Their carping criticism of His campaigning among the publicans had brought forth the parable. The close is deeply moving: “Son, thou art ever with me, and all that is mine is thine,” if they will but repent of their exclusive, hypocritical, unforgiving attitude. With such a close Jesus offers the invitation hymn to the Pharisees Will they give heed and repent? Lost and found, and dead and alive are the dramatic words of the close. The younger son was dead, but he came to realize it and returned to life. The older son is dead and does not know it. Will he “come to himself” in time for eternal life?

101. Chapter 42 - The Parable of the Unjust Steward

Chapter 42 - The Parable of the Unjust Steward

Luke 16:1-13

Background

It is not certain that this parable was spoken on the same occasion as the Parable of the Prodigal Son, but they seem to have a direct connection in thought. It fits perfectly with the method of Jesus for Him to have gone on and pointed out some of the Pharisees sins. The grosser sins of the publicans were public and apparent to all. The sins of the Pharisees were more respectable and hence apt to be hidden from general view. The three parables Jesus had just delivered struck at their selfishness and lack of sympathy and love for their fellowmen. They give answer to the typical insolence, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” The two accounts that follow indict the Pharisees for their self-indulgence and their lack of responsibility toward God.

Difficulties

“And he said also unto the disciples” (Luke 15:1), but the Pharisees were much in evidence in the crowd, and their scoffing at the close is most revealing of Jesus’ purpose and result. This is one of the most difficult parables to interpret. This is not merely because the main actor is wicked. In a number of other parables wicked persons and wicked conduct are depicted, as in the cases of the unjust judge and the wicked husbandmen who kill the messengers and finally slay the Son. But in this parable the master, who is a good man, commends the steward who is wicked. The parable would not be so difficult if we knew exactly what the wicked steward had done to be commended, and if we knew just what sort of commendation was given.

Here is a parable which illustrates the fact that we must not be disturbed by details which may only be scenery of the account, and be content with the fundamental principles. All sorts of weird speculation has been indulged in attempting to identify details. The steward has been identified as the Jewish hierarchy, the tax collectors, Pilate, Judas, Satan, penitents, Paul, Christ. All this confusion results from the allegorical method of interpreting parables The steward evidently represents no one. He is simply the main actor in this parable. There is the same sort of confused effort to identify the rich owner as representing God, the Romans, mammon, Satan. It is part of the superb character of these parables that the hearer and reader are left to work long and hard on the jigsaw puzzle to understand the principles.

Two Principles

There are two main principles in this parable. Jesus states both these principles, and the Pharisees give a dramatic underscoring to the second one. The first principle urges wise foresight to use with all diligence all the opportunities of life. The fact that the foresight of a wicked man and his shrewd use of his opportunities to achieve his objective is the example which is used makes the parable similar to the exhortation which a preacher gives to a sleepy, lethargic congregation

when he cites the exuberant enthusiasm the world shows at a baseball or football game, or the driving energy people in the world show in their determined search for profit or pleasure. The second principle is not so clearly evident; it protrudes from the surrounding shadows, but explodes into living reality in the scoffing of the Pharisees at the close. This principle sets forth that a person cannot show foresight for the future unless he takes heaven into account. Foresight limited to this world is false sight. There is an undercurrent in this parable which keeps saying, “Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.” This comes out in Luke 16:9, where Jesus urges the bold use of earthly treasures so that we may enter into heaven at last. The reaction of the Pharisees shows clearly this objective of Jesus: “And the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things; and they scoffed at him” (Luke 16:14). Luke does not define just what caused their scoffing, but he declares it was the result of their love of money.

Appeal to Pharisees

What is there in this parable which pinched the Pharisees so sharply? Although the parable was spoken to the disciples, the Pharisees accepted it as spoken against them because: (1) Jesus had just been rebuking them in the preceding parables (2) The disciples were poor, and the Pharisees were rich; this made the parable especially applicable to them. (3) Their conscience condemned them as they listened to the crooked manner in which the steward stole his master’s substance, the manner in which he wasted it, and became engulfed in the love of money. The element which makes the parable so difficult is the gentle manner of the master with the steward at the chose, when we should expect stern orders to throw the wicked man into prison. This very thing joins with the earnest appeal to the Pharisees to repent. When they only scoff and jeer at this appeal, Jesus follows with more severe warnings; He gives the fearsome account of the rich man and Lazarus, which opens to view paradise and Tartarus. The Contrasts

It is of the utmost importance to see that this parable is a study in contrasts; it proceeds by citation of opposites. This is seen throughout the parable and in the comments of Jesus at the chose. The parable teaches foresight in the right use of opportunities, but see how the steward continually stands out in contrast. (1) He did not use foresight in the whole pattern of his life. The most charitable judgment which can be made of the steward is that through the parable he is under the shadow of suspicion of being dishonest. Anyone who finds himself in this predicament certainly has not shown foresight in the right use of his opportunities.

(2) When he suddenly is deprived of the position and authority he has exercised for so long, he is penniless and in despair. His foresight did not even reach beyond his daily high living. How true to life this is! Look at the Hollywood stars with their enormous salaries and the famous gamblers who win incredible fortunes at a single turn of the dice. See how many of them run through their money with utter abandon and end up in abject, helpless poverty.

(3) His sudden, desperate burst of activity when he had been fired and must now face an accounting of his stewardship is the climax of the account, but Jesus points out that even then his foresight did not reach beyond mere earthly things.

(4) His foresight to provide a sort of hiding for the few years left to him (he is an old man) faced up to the accounting he now had to make to the owner, but it did not take into account the final accounting when he must meet God. When death comes, what then? At every turn this steward

who gives at the crisis of his life a solitary example of foresight in the use of opportunities is a startling warning to a Christian. He is “the unrighteous steward” (Luke 16:8); he is one of “the sons of this world” rather than one of “the sons of light” ; he has not been “faithful in the unrighteous mammon”; the Christian must seek “the true riches” and gain entrance “into the eternal tabernacles.” But the difficulty is that the owner at the last commends the steward. If he had condemned him and had him thrown into prison, this difficulty would not confront one, but in that case the steward would not offer any sort of foresight.

Dishonesty

“There was a certain rich man, who had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he was wasting his goods” (Luke 16:1). The a.v. has “had wasted his goods.” The Greek verb was accused means to give hostile information and probably accusing secretly. The steward in Luke 12:42-48 may have been a slave or a freedman in charge of other slaves or servants but in this parable the steward has a place of larger trust and is placed in charge of the entire estate. The rich owner evidently had such confidence in the steward that he had given him a free hand in the management. The owner may have lived in town as an absentee landlord. It is not clear what is meant by “was wasting his goods.” Does this mean merely clumsy mismanagement by an inept steward without the financial ability to manage so large an estate? Does. it charge the steward with deliberately stealing his master’s money? The steward in Luke 12:45, Luke 12:46 became drunk and beat the other servants. There is no such charge against this steward. Whether he was wasting his master’s goods by extravagance or by riotous living and what the evidence was which was reported against him is not stated. If he had been deliberately stealing from his master, he certainly had not been depositing his ill-gotten gains in the First National Bank of Joppa. Extravaganza of some sort evidently had consumed his gains. The Accounting

“And he called him, and said unto him, What is this that I hear of thee? render the account of thy stewardship; for thou canst be no longer steward” (Luke 16:2). The owner quite frankly takes up the charges against the steward. Since the uncial manuscripts had no punctuation and the Greek pronoun Ti can mean either “what” or “why”, the question can be rendered in the following ways: (1) “What? Do I hear this of thee?” (2) “What is this that I hear of thee?” (a.s.v.) (3) “Why do I hear this of thee?” This last alternative is the one chosen by the a.v. : “How is it that I hear this of thee?” The owner does not seem to order him to balance his books and give an account of his stewardship in order to determine whether he can remain as steward, but he is summarily dismissed on the basis of overwhelming evidence which the steward does not deny. The accounting as the owner will go over the steward’s records of his transactions will give final proof of his incompetence or dishonesty. The Bright Idea

“And the steward said within himself, What shall I do, seeing that my lord taketh away the stewardship from me? I have not strength to dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses” (Luke 16:3, Luke 16:4). The steward sits at his desk in despair. He cannot picture himself digging in the ground as a day laborer on a farm; he is too old or not rugged enough to survive such hard labor. Nor can he picture himself begging from door to door after all his extravagant life. Then comes the sudden idea. This is an extraordinary use of the aorist tense. The present tense expresses continued action in present time: “I am going home.” The imperfect expresses continued action in

past time: “I was going home.” The aorist gives definite, historical statement of action in past time: “I went home.” This aorist in Luke 16:4 cannot be so translated: “I knew what I will do.” There are certain extraordinary uses of the aorist where it does not carry this historical statement of past action. It is a dramatic aorist called “aoristus tragicus,” and is translated like a present tense. It carries a sudden explosive quality which the present tense would not express. Here is the steward seated at his desk in despairing meditation. Suddenly in jubilation he says within himself, “I know what I will do.” Like a stroke of lightning the idea has occurred to him. This is aoristus tragicus. He does not show a penitent spirit, but only shrewd plotting as he twists and turns and attempts to escape the toils he has wound around himself. He will make further and speedy use of his waning opportunities.

Undercover Transaction

“And calling unto him each one of his lord’s debtors, he said to the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, A hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bond, and sit down quickly and write fifty” (Luke 16:5, Luke 16:6). Who are these debtors? Are they tenants on the farm who have been unable to meet quotas and found themselves sinking into debt? or has the steward been running a loan-shark business in his master’s name? We do not know the nature of the estate, but “oil” and “wheat” implies that the estate is a farm. Quickly suggests some more crooked work is being plotted with a hasty look over the shoulder to see that no one is looking. But quickly may only mean that the steward awaits momentarily a second stern summons to come now and bring his books. That the debtor was told to put the changed amount in the bond in his own handwriting suggests more fast foot-work to cover up crookedness. But if the indebtedness were increased it would have been important to have the acknowledgment in the debtor’s own hand-writing. Since the amount is being decreased, why would not the notation of the steward have been sufficient? Perhaps the steward was merely attempting to keep the appearance of the original bonds. The conference and the mutual understanding with each of the debtors were essential. The Debts

“Measures of oil” are “baths,” a Hebrew liquid measure of about 8¾ gallons. One hundred baths of olive oil are estimated at $50 “Measures of wheat” are “Cors,” about ten bushels; one thousand bushels of wheat would be worth something like $500 or $600. But the difference in the purchasing power of money is so great that this suggests to us only a fraction of the actual value. The fact that the two debtors, described as examples of all the others, had their debts reduced on a different scale (the one, from one hundred down to fifty: the other, from one hundred to eighty) suggests that this was not a mechanical procedure, but a correction of fraudulent entries formerly made. The steward may have formerly demanded more than was proper and may have pocketed the difference. He now seems to be correcting former injustice. This is not done to impress his master or in the hope of being restored to his lost position, but for the effect upon these debtors who will now take a more friendly attitude toward him. To suppose that this is further robbery being perpetrated at the last minute would make all the debtors join in the robbery and would leave unexplained the master’s commendation. The Master’s Commendation

“And his lord commended the unrighteous steward because he had done wisely” (Luke 16:8). The master condemns the former steward as unrighteous, but admits he has acted shrewdly in these last hours before he turned in his books. The master sits at his desk pouring over the records of

the steward. He fastens a keen glance on the steward and says, “You certainly are a clever rascal. I will admit you have made good use of your final opportunities. You have straightened up your books with the correction of all these false entries. You have given belated justice to these debtors. You have gained their friendship for the future.” If the steward had only been incompetent, then the commendation would have been greater without imputation of dishonesty. It seems he had been dishonest, and the commendation is merely that the steward had acted shrewdly under the circumstances. The steward certainly did not show repentance. He changed his mind, but it was not because of sorrow for sin. He was merely planning selfish advantage in a tight spot. The master did not praise him as repentant. He merely said he had acted “wisely.” This was the wisdom which is of the earth, not that from above. It was not the wisdom which enables a man to govern his life so as to win God’s favor, but the shrewdness that enables a man to get ahead of his fellows. The Sons of Light The sons of the world means worldly people who by fair means or foul advance their own selfish interests by skillful use of their opportunities. The sons of light are the disciples who strive to win God’s favor. The sharp contrast between the attitude, objectives, and conduct of the steward and those of faithful disciples is underscored by these titles. The sons of light should be as diligent and swift to use their opportunities nobly as the sons of the world are to make dishonest use of their advantages.

Mammon

“Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when it shall fail, they may receive you into eternal tabernacles” (Luke 16:9). This is what the steward had done by reducing the indebtedness. He hoped they would receive him into their homes now that he was without position or home. Mammon is an Aramaic word for worldly riches. It seems to mean literally “that which is trusted in.” The phrasing is different in Luke 16:9 and Luke 16:11, but the meaning is the same, i.e., the riches of this world that entangle men and lead them to sin. In Luke 16:13 the word is personified as the object of worship and obedience; “it shall fail.” There is a manuscript difference here. Most manuscripts carry the singular, “it shall fail” ; some, the plural, “ye shall fail.” The former means “when it [the mammon] shall fail [as it had with the steward and will ultimately come to an end for all]”; the latter, “when ye shall die.” A tabernacle is a temporary habitation. “Eternal tabernacles” seems to be a plain contradiction. Jesus uses this striking phrase to sum up the study in contrasts. The man has secured for himself a home with the debtors for the few fleeting years that remain for him in this world, but it is purely temporary and uncertain. But by a noble use of his opportunities a man may secure an eternal home with God.

Some see in this admonition the use of humor. They would make it bitter irony as Jesus advised His disciples to imitate the unjust steward and use their earthly possessions to gain the friendship of the worldly who would then receive into eternal tabernacles at death (which, of course, they could not do, so the very opposite is meant). But there is no evident humor in the passage. The natural interpretation is to make friends and they refer to the same persons, but there is nothing that compels it Since death is pictured, and immediately after this Jesus describes in Luke 16:22 the angels as carrying the soul of Lazarus to Paradise, then in Luke 16:9they may refer to angels. The command would be to use earthly possessions to win the lost as He has commanded, and the angels will then at death welcome them. If friends and they are held to refer to the same persons, then the natural reference would be to the great commission as we use our earthly possessions and opportunities to win the lost, who will express their gratitude in heaven: “We are here in

heaven because of your loving persistence. All others gave up, but you kept on praying, preaching, pleading, and we finally accepted Christ. Because of your compassion we are in heaven!" "They may receive you." What great joy! The Principle

"He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much: and he that is unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much" (Luke 16:10). This is the rule; any exceptions would merely underscore the rule. One of the most common deceits of the devil is that "this will only be a little sin and will not really amount to anything." "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" (Luke 16:11). The word riches is supplied. The mammon could not have been supplied since it is used in a derogatory sense in the passage, and in this verse, heavenly treasures could not be called mammon "And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?" (Luke 16:12). These brief enigmatic statements have so many possible applications, they are difficult to define. The very little in Luke 16:10 is parallel to the unrighteous mammon in Luke 16:11; the much corresponds to the true riches (heaven). The steward had been unfaithful in handling what was another's, but what did he have for his own in the final crisis? He was penniless, without friends, and in rebellion against God. Evidently that which is our own is parallel to the true riches. The destiny which God desires for man and has provided for him is heaven. In this sense it is his own. But notice the verb give. Heaven cannot be earned by man, even though it is his natural destiny. It is the gift of God. It is "the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).

Reaction of the Pharisees This instruction had been directed to the disciples, but the Pharisees accepted it as a direct attack upon them and responded with scoffing. The Greek verb is vivid: "turned up the nose at." Jesus replied, "Ye are they that justify yourselves in the sight of men; but God knoweth your hearts" (Luke 16:15). The Pharisees justified their great wealth and luxury by claiming it was the special blessing of God upon them for their meticulous keeping of the law. But they could not justify their wicked hearts before God. "God knoweth your hearts" does not condemn every Pharisee, but leaves room for judgment according to the heart and life of each. The general principle prevails that men exalt that which is disgusting to God because the majority of men are traveling the broad way that leads to destruction. Earthly treasures and pleasures are desired by most men rather than the favor and the company of God. Some men exalt the things which God exalts, but the majority do not. The word abomination has the root meaning of "that which greatly offends the nostrils." The keeping of the law by the Pharisees had been the basis for their justification before men. Jesus proceeded to discuss further the keeping of the law and the manner in which they were seeking violently to enter into the kingdom of God by trying to turn the campaign of Jesus to their own ideas and purposes. The Zealots were especially violent and determined to take Jesus by force and make Him their kind of king. All who opposed Jesus and sought His death were seeking to seize the kingdom violently. They would not succeed in perverting His movement. They could not succeed in overturning and destroying even the smallest part of the law, for it found its fulfillment in the Messiah's death.

Further Teaching

Jesus pointed out that the manner in which they had interpreted the law on divorce violated its spirit. He made clear that God intended for marriage to be holy and lifelong. Luke's condensation of the topics of discussion at this point is such that we cannot regain the background, but wealth

usually causes divorce to abound. The Pharisees were flagrant violators of God’s original divine plan of one man and one woman. Matthew 19:1-12 and Mark 10:1-12 confirm this brief record of Luke that divorce was under discussion in this Peraean ministry.

102. Chapter 43 - The Rich Man and Lazarus

Chapter 43 - The Rich Man and Lazarus

Luke 16:14-31 The Pharisees' Philosophy

Jesus' warnings against the perils of riches had been an attack upon the entire philosophy of life which the Pharisees held. They maintained that their wealth was their concrete proof of God's favor upon them. When Jesus called it "the mammon of unrighteousness," it stirred their conscience as to the ways they had secured their wealth and were using it. Jesus now follows with the account of the rich man and Lazarus. This is usually called a parable, but Jesus does not state it is a parable. In no parable is a person named, as Lazarus is. Discussion as to whether it is a parable is not necessary. The pictures Jesus gives of life beyond the grave cannot be tested by us because of our lack of information. They are true to the facts or else Jesus deceived us. The Contrasts The account opens with an extraordinary series of contrasts in which the ordinary elements of life are described: rich man vs. beggar; purple and clothed in fine linen vs. the beggar laid at his gate (rags, dogs, sores); faring sumptuously every day vs. desiring to be fed with the crumbs. Jesus had been giving instruction on the right use of wealth so that we might gain entrance into "the eternal tabernacles." He now showed the disastrous results of a false use of wealth. In the account of the rich man and Lazarus we see "that which is exalted among men" becoming "an abomination in the sight of God." Jesus is not delivering a diatribe against the possession of wealth, but a warning against the perils of wealth and fatal results of its misuse. The rich man had a mansion on earth, but none in heaven. He might have used his mammon to help Lazarus and others like him and thus have gained the "eternal tabernacles." Earthly treasures are not evil; they are called "good things." But when men worship mammon instead of God, their misuse becomes the basis for their condemnation.

High Living

"Now there was a certain rich man, and he was clothed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day" (Luke 16:19). Purple and fine linen describe the outer and the under garments. The Greek words mean: (1) the murex secured from the sea (small shell fish); then the dye made from it, and finally the costly fabric dyed with it; (2) the Egyptian flax; then the fine linen made from the flax. The marginal reading for faring sumptuously every day is revealing: "living in mirth and splendor."

"And a certain beggar named Lazarus was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table; yea, even the dogs came and licked his sores." That the name of one of the persons in the account is given was used by Tertullian to prove that the account is history and not parable. Some modernists try to claim that the name was added later to connect the account with Lazarus of Bethany. Other unbelievers hold that the account of the resurrection of Lazarus is an invention suggested by this account of the rich man and Lazarus. There is not the slightest basis for either position. Tradition gives the name Nineuis to the rich

man. He is often referred to as Dives, the Latin word for rich man.

Starvation Rations The Greek word at his gate means a large gateway or portico; it is uncertain whether this was the entrance to the estate or to the mansion itself. The word suggests what a magnificent palace the home of the rich man was. Lazarus may have had no home. Friends brought him daily to the most promising place where he might expect to get food or attract the attention of someone who would have pity on him and help him. The rich man did not drive the beggar away; he simply ignored the unpleasant sight at his gate. Since the friends kept bringing him from day to day, he must have received some food or was constantly in hope that he might find help. The phrase desiring to be fed certainly suggests that what he got did not satisfy his hunger. He may have been given occasionally some scraps from the table. The dogs were wild scavengers of the camp which Lazarus was unable to drive away. While the nature of his sores is not indicated, the dogs must have added greatly to his misery. Some think that the mention of the dogs is to show that even the vicious dogs were kinder to him than the rich man, but it may only be introduced as the climax of his suffering.

Paradise The godly character of Lazarus is both revealed and implied. His faith in God caused him to accept without complaining the miserable existence he had on earth. His continued effort to improve his condition and make the best of what opportunity he had shows that he maintained his courage in spite of his helpless condition. The impressive silence of Lazarus throughout the account has been pointed out. He does not

“murmur against God’s distribution of wealth, nor against the rich man’s abuse of it, in this world. And in Hades he neither exults over the change of relations between himself and Dives, nor protests against being asked to wait upon him in the place of torment, or to go errands for him to the visible world” (Plummer, Commentary on Luke, p. 392).

Those who suffer long and much often develop great patience. The beautiful picture of the angels coming to take his soul to Paradise is a sort of divine epitaph expressing his righteous character and noble life. It is nowhere suggested that poverty is a virtue or that he was saved because he was poor or had suffered much. The attitude that a person takes toward such suffering is what reveals his character. That the death of Lazarus occurred first probably reflects the actual history of the case. The rich man’s opportunity to help Lazarus ended before the rich man died, but there is no indication that he had any regrets or even noticed it.

“He was carried away by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.” We are not to suppose that his body was not buried. The preservation of the living would have procured the burial of even the poorest. The poor were buried in a “potter’s field.” Any account of the burial is passed over as a matter of no moment to make the sharpest contrast to the burial of the body of the rich man, which must have been with mighty pomp and circumstance. The glorious reception of Lazarus into Paradise is in contrast. That Paradise should be called “Abraham’s bosom” is indicative of the great place which this messenger of God had in the Old Testament. Paradise is the part of Hades (Greek), or Sheol (Hebrew), where the righteous in a state of blessedness await their final reception into heaven. Abraham welcomed Lazarus into Paradise and later responded to the pleas and complaints of the rich man. The earthly luxury and extravagance of the rich man was matched now by the depths of suffering in Hades. He was punished, not for having been rich, but for having refused to use his riches nobly. Abraham was a rich man who had remained faithful to God and

helpful to his fellowmen in spite of his riches. Formerly the rich man had looked with scorn at Lazarus suffering in silence at his gate. Now he looks with anguish and unspeakable longing upon him as he is comforted in Abraham's bosom.

Principles The principles taught in this account are as follows. (1) The use or abuse of earthly opportunities determines the eternal state. In this respect it has a strong kinship to the preceding discussion of the unjust steward. The refusal to use earthly possessions as a divinely bestowed trust was the basis for the rich man's condemnation. (2) The state of probation ends at death. There can be no change from the place of punishment to that of blessedness after death. (3) God's mercy is all-inclusive; His justice, perfect; His revelation of the way of life is completely adequate; therefore, the wicked man is solely responsible for final condemnation. To appeal for further signs and evidence is unwarranted. The Rich Man's Appeal

"Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame" (Luke 16:24). The major contention of the Pharisees was that they were Abraham's children and hence had the sole approval of God. The rich man appeals for help on the basis that he, too, is a son of Abraham. He could not appeal on the basis of righteous character or loving service, for he had scorned his earthly opportunities. Here is a strong presentation of the folly of the Pharisees' position. Lange thinks this is a master stroke in having the rich man still arrogantly request that Lazarus be assigned to wait on him. But there is no evidence that the rich man, while on earth, had ordered Lazarus about or tried to compel him to be his servant. He had simply neglected the beggar at his gate. His suffering in Hades is too great for him to have been arrogant in this request. He is humble in his request and asks for the help of Lazarus because he sees and knows him.

Purgatory The following facts concerning the fate of the wicked in Hades emerge from this account: (1) Their state will be that of untold anguish and suffering. If the flame is figurative, then it must represent something worse than anything we know in this world. (2) The suffering will be unending; it will be impossible to change from a state of suffering to one of blessedness in eternity. The doctrine of purgatory receives a deathblow in this account. It is useless for anyone to argue that this is a parable and therefore the teaching is uncertain; this is either a historic case that happened or it could have happened, for Jesus is teaching the fundamental lesson as to the use of earthly opportunities and the absolute finality of death. Everything else said on the subject in the Old Testament and the New Testament confirms this elemental proposition.

(3) The lost will not be able to return to this world or to send messages back. Spiritualism is disproved by this account. Samuel returned and talked to Saul, and Moses and Elijah met with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration because God so willed these revelations; but the proposition of messages coming from the dead to warn and guide the living, which is the whole basis of Spiritualism, is absolutely denied as any divine program.

Heavenly Bodies

Tertullian used this passage to argue that "tip of his finger" and "tongue" prove corporal bodies in Paradise and Hades, but the Scripture does not reveal clearly to us whether we are to have bodies in Paradise or whether we are to be disembodied spirits until the judgment day, when the earthly body shall be resurrected and transformed into a heavenly body, as the spirit and body are

reunited. Paul says that he did not know what sort of body a spiritual body will be. To us with our limited vision “a spiritual body” seems a contradiction in terms. But we cannot even explain precisely how the spirit is at present united with our earthly body. Paul states in 1 Corinthians fifteen that God has not revealed to us what the heavenly body is to be like, but that He will provide a glorious eternal body fit for heaven, even as He provided in the beginning a body fit for earth. The difference is obvious between insisting on a literal interpretation of such details as “finger,” “tongue,” “flame,” concerning which the Scripture does not give us further information, and accepting a fundamental principle such as the finality of death which is everywhere affirmed in the Scripture.

Memory and Hell

“Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art in anguish” (Luke 16:25). Remember indicates the survival of personality, for it required the retention of memory. If we could not remember or recognize ourselves, there would no longer be personality. Heaven and hell would no longer have significance. This is strongly supported by the other passages, such as the appearance of Samuel to Saul and the appearance of Moses and Elijah to Christ and the three apostles on the Mount of Transfiguration. This raises the most difficult problem which eternity presents to us; how will it he possible for those in heaven to be happy when they discover that some whom they have loved dearly in this world are not in heaven? That this should he a problem to us shows how slight is our comprehension of the blessedness of being received by God into His eternal presence. Our earthly families have been very precious, but the family of God in heaven will be so glorious we cannot even comprehend it. God is able to wipe every tear from our eyes and will provide eternal comfort.

Son is used in Abraham’s reply to the rich man. He had appealed to “Father Abraham,” and the answer is gentle though firm. Abraham did not deny that the rich man was a descendant, but he had not lived in harmony with his heritage. Having admitted the relationship, Abraham at once stated the facts as to his ignoble life which the rich man must admit and which established the justice of his punishment. He demanded that the rich man recall all the wealth and the misused opportunities of earth. The Greek religion taught that the river Lethe rendered the blessed entirely oblivious to all that had occurred in life and thus assured their happiness. They did not seem to see that this contradicted the moral issues of the judgment day and blotted out the personality. The Christian gospel teaches the essential responsibility of the individual for his earthly opportunities and the absolute preservation of identity, to which memory is essential. The promise of Christ is that “earth has no sorrows which heaven cannot heal.” Lazarus in spite of all his terrible suffering on earth was now comforted. God is able to preserve the identity of the individual, but have us begin a new life in which all sorrow will he assuaged. We cannot understand how this will be; we can only trust to God’s love and power. The Impassable Gulf

Abraham’s reply did not imply that the rich man received his earthly riches as a reward for good deeds and that this was a sufficient reward. Nor did he imply that Lazarus suffered earthly misery because of his sins and that having thus suffered sufficiently he had now been received into Paradise. Neither is it taught that each man receives so much suffering or pleasure at one time or another and that those receiving a full allowance on earth will have none hereafter. The rich man

was not lost because he had been rich; he was not condemned to suffer in eternity because he had had enjoyment on earth. Lazarus was not saved because he had been poor; he was not enjoying blessedness because he had suffered on earth. The basis of eternal judgment is the use and abuse of opportunities to do the will of God. In Luke 16:25 Abraham shows that no alleviation of the rich man's suffering was permissible on the grounds of justice. In Luke 16:26 he declared that the alleviation asked was impossible because of God's irrevocable law concerning eternity. "And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, that they that would pass from hence to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from thence to us." Conversation across this vast gulf should offer no difficulty to our faith in a space age which affords mechanical communication with the moon by means of puny man's invention. Besides all this has the marginal reading in all these things (things is supplied). Plummer suggests, "in all these regions, from end to end." It is most remarkable that in all the teaching of Jesus and the entire Bible there is no description of the location of heaven and hell. Jesus has gone to prepare a place. God will provide. This is sufficient. The Gospel Alone

"I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment" (Luke 16:27, Luke 16:28). Did these five brethren also share the banquets in the palace of the rich man as they all lived in mirth and splendor? The rich man's request carries an undercurrent of argument that he had not had a fair chance, a reasonable amount of warning, evidence, and persuasion to cause him to devote himself to God's will and to prepare for eternity. This petition, "if less selfish than the first, is also less humble." Abraham sets forth in reply that Moses and the prophets were adequate for leading men to God in their dispensation, if men were willing to be saved, that the gospel is sufficient for all men, that men continually seek without justification for a further sign as did the Pharisees vainly claiming that with more evidence they would believe. "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." That which causes their doubt and disobedience is not lack of evidence or earnest appeal, but the unwillingness to believe. God's revelation is complete and adequate, but men may and will reject it, if they so determine, regardless of what evidence is offered or what appeals are made.

"Nay, father Abraham: but if one go to them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither Will they be persuaded, if one rise from the dead" (Luke 16:30, Luke 16:31). This answers the persistent demand of the Pharisees for a sign from heaven. The Book of Acts shows that not even the resurrection of Jesus was able to bring the stubborn unbelievers to repentance. The resurrection of Lazarus of Bethany did not bring the Pharisees to repentance, but stirred them to plot his assassination, as they plotted to kill Jesus. The account closes with this profound emphasis upon the freedom of the will and man's moral responsibility for his eternal fate.

103. Chapter 44 - The Parable of the Unprofitable Servants

Chapter 44 - The Parable of the Unprofitable Servants

Luke 17:1-10

Setting The seventeenth chapter of Luke opens with instruction on the solemn responsibility of the disciples for the influence of their lives upon others. There is no indication that this scene was immediately connected with what preceded. The account of the eternal condemnation of the rich man may have led to a general discussion of sin, forgiveness, faith, and works. But the discussion may have arisen on a different occasion. It contains subject matter which Matthew and Mark show Jesus discussed on other occasions, but they are the sort of topics that He would be discussing continually. The four topics are. (1) warning against causing others to stumble (Luke 17:1, Luke 17:2); (2) the duty of forgiveness (Luke 17:3, Luke 17:4); (3) the need and the power of faith (Luke 17:5, Luke 17:6); (4) the parable of the unprofitable servants — salvation by grace rather than by works (Luke 17:7, Luke 17:10).

Stumbling Blocks

“It is impossible but that occasions of stumbling should come; but woe unto him through whom they come” (Luke 17:11). The Greek word for stumbling here means “the bait-stick on a trap and combines the ideas of ensnaring and tripping up.” Since the preceding connection of context is not evident, it seems to mean any sinful act or habit which consciously or unconsciously lures others into sin. The little ones of the next verse are children or those young in the faith. It is impossible that this world shall be free of temptation because God has arranged that we shall have opportunity to develop character and prove ourselves worthy in a world that offers temptation and freedom of choice. This freedom makes certain that some will choose the wrong. Human experience confirms these expectations. The millstone is not the relatively small stone operated by hand, but a huge stone which was turned by an animal. The dramatic character of the figure is increased by the picture of this immense stone being fastened about the neck of a man who then is cast into the sea. The account of the agonized experience of the rich man in Hades would undoubtedly come to mind as they reflected upon this new warning. The verse divisions in the Scripture were made in the Middle Ages. They are usually excellent. At this point Plummer argues that take heed to yourselves belongs with Luke 17:2 as a warning similar to He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. But it fits with either verse.

Forgiveness and Reconciliation

“If thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him” (Luke 17:3). This is the general rule, but the fulfillment of the command to rebuke a brother for his sin will require discrimination as to the nature of the sin and the opportunity to offer an effective exhortation. Petty things should not be magnified by major condemnation. To brush the small things aside with a forgiving spirit is often best. Jesus implies here that He is speaking about a matter of considerable import. He follows it with the idea that it is a continuing sin which must be cleared up if there is to be improved

fellowship. “And if he sin against thee seven times in a day, and seven times turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him” (Luke 17:4). Seven times in a single day! And if this were continued through seventy days, we would have the seventy times seven of which Jesus spoke to Peter (Matthew 18:21). The unlimited nature of our forgiveness is thus vividly portrayed by Jesus. How many times in a day do we sin against God either by transgression or by failing to achieve? In the first verses of this chapter Jesus speaks of the sins which a person commits for which he must be dependent upon the mercy of God. He follows with this instruction concerning the sins others commit against us.

Increase Our Faith

“And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith” (Luke 17:5). This has enough of the setting of a new beginning of discussion that we cannot be sure whether it is a continuation of the preceding instruction about the influence of one’s life and the duty of constant forgiveness. The warnings just recorded were shocking enough to cause this request for more faith with which to meet such high demands. On the other hand, the request for more faith is the sort of appeal which would be fitting and probable at any time. The same sort of appeal is recorded in Matthew 17:19, Matthew 17:20 and Mark 11:23. The apostles are the ones who make this request in the record of Luke. It would be natural for them to speak out in a discussion of a larger group and to express the longing which was shared by all. The forgiving spirit requires faith as well as a loving heart. This was a hard saying, and they may have asked for faith to follow its leading.

It is most interesting to observe that Jesus does not give them any sort of mechanical rule by which they can increase their faith. “Belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17). “How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard: and how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Romans 10:14). The apostles themselves have been in the presence of Christ hearing and seeing, and still they ask for help in acquiring more faith. The account of the rich man and Lazarus would bring to their minds that they must face the final judgment. The reason is manifest why Jesus does not now give them instruction as to the methods by which faith can be increased; they were already pursuing the right methods. (1) They were in the presence of Jesus constantly. (2) They were hearing His instruction and seeking to follow it. (3) They were observing His conduct of life and trying to follow His example. (4) They recognized their need for more faith. (5) They sought help from Christ. (6) They had enjoyed the thrilling experience of sharing their faith with others in their evangelistic campaigns.

Increase Your Own Faith The answer of Jesus was a strong rebuke which underscored the fact of their own personal responsibility for the increase of their faith. Out of the actual experience of living with Christ they must gain an increasing faith as a personal achievement. One person cannot have faith for another any more than he can repent for someone else. “If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye would say unto this sycamore tree, Be thou rooted up, and be thou planted in the sea; and it would obey you” (Luke 17:6.) Had faith implies they do not have such faith. A grain of mustard seed would recall to their minds the parable they had heard Him deliver by the Sea of Galilee and the fascinating picture of the growth of the kingdom from an insignificant beginning to mighty world-encompassing proportions. Be thou rooted up, and be thou planted in the sea is a hyperbole, a figure of speech suggesting the most impossible things are possible with God and may be achieved by godly men of sufficient faith. The apostles were left to wrestle with their own

problems of life and were challenged to gain the victory.

Faith and Doubt A preacher once delivered a sermon in praise of doubt which was given flaring headlines in the daily newspapers: “Preacher Glorifies Doubt As Open Door To Faith.” One might as well glorify temptation as the open door to virtue. But he should keep on praying, “Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.” The Christian can “rejoice as a strong man to run a race.” When the competition is keen, records are broken and new heights achieved. There is a sense in which a Christian can rejoice that God has placed him in a world where he can give proof on the battlefield of his faith and fidelity. James says, “Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations; knowing that the proving of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have its perfect work” (James 1:2, James 1:3). One could well write over the opening chapters of James’ Epistle, “Lord, increase our faith.” He urges (1) studying the “word of truth,” which God has revealed; (2) praying in faith for more faith; (3) keeping one’s self unspotted from the world; (4) putting faith into practice by helping the unfortunate in the name of Christ; (5) keeping the faith in the assembly of the saints. In the actual experience of life as a Christian we gain more faith by doing.

Tragic Overtones

There was a deep need in the hearts of the apostles that caused them to appeal to Jesus for an increase of faith. It was deeper than the petty annoyances of having to forgive one another constantly amid the wear and tear of daily living. Their faith was reeling under the impact of the ominous, repeated predictions of Jesus concerning His approaching death at the hands of His enemies. They needed more faith desperately. They wanted to believe with more assurance, but how could they? Jesus challenged them to fight the battle out in their own hearts and lives. The death and the resurrection of Jesus became the solid foundation for the faith which overcomes the world.

Unprofitable Servants

Having given the apostles a rebuke which set forth that they must achieve faith for themselves, Jesus then braced them against the false assumption that they could earn salvation. Thy faith hath saved thee is a refrain in the ministry of Jesus. Even when they achieve faith, they must understand that salvation is still a gift from God. Faith is a gift in the sense that God gives the revelation and the intelligence with which to receive it. Man must act in accepting and committing his life. But he can never earn salvation. He is at best an unprofitable servant who is not worth his own salt. If we doubt this estimate, we need to look again at Jesus as He was dying for our redemption on the cross.

“Doth he thank the servant because he did the things that were commanded?” (Luke 17:9). The elemental obligation of man is to obey and serve his Creator. He must not entertain the idea that he is conferring a favor upon God by obeying Him. “Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do” (Luke 17:10). This does not imply that any man ever does all the things that God has commanded. It poses the extreme proposition: even if a man had obeyed in every particular. How much more then since we continually fail to obey? Unprofitable does not mean vile or useless, but not profitable in light of all that the servant has cost the master. This does not deny

that God needs man's services, nor that God will reward his service, and, in fact, praise him in the day of judgment for his fidelity ("Well done, thou good and faithful servant"), but it affirms that man cannot by his utmost efforts ever actually repay God for the countless blessings He bestows. If man should fully do his part (which he never does), he still would fall short of repaying God for life here or the blessed life hereafter.

Jesus here utterly destroys the doctrine of works of supererogation. The Roman Catholic doctrine of supererogation holds that the apostles and "saints" have done so many more good works than were necessary for their salvation, these good works are collected in a treasury of good works from which it is possible to borrow for those who fail to do enough. This intertwines with their doctrines of purgatory, prayers for the dead, and similar teachings. The basic fallacy is the idea that salvation is by works, instead of by faith. Jesus shows that salvation is a gift of God. The acceptance of the gift requires the utmost on our part to obey His commands. But it still remains a gift. We can never earn salvation by our works. It is impossible for a person to do enough to deserve salvation, not to mention doing more than is necessary and being able to lend some of his excess merit to others.

104. Chapter 45 - The Raising of Lazarus

Chapter 45 - The Raising of Lazarus

John 11:1-54

Lazarus

“Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, of the village of Mary and her sister Martha” (John 11:1). The name Lazarus (the Hebrew is Eleazar) means “God has helped.” All that is known of Lazarus must be learned from this chapter and the few brief references to the family. (1) He was a resident of Bethany and a man of considerable position and influence, judged by the nature of the grave in which he was buried and the emphasis on the number of the Jews who came to comfort Mary and Martha. (2) He was a very dear friend of Jesus which bespeaks his faith and righteous life. Besides this account of his resurrection, there is the note that he was present at the banquet in the home of Simon the Leper on the eve of the triumphal entry, the mention that people came from afar to see Lazarus after his resurrection, the plots of the Jews to assassinate Lazarus as well as Christ, and the testimony borne to the miracle of his resurrection at the time of the triumphal entry. (3) Our lack of information as to anything which Lazarus said or did is in contrast to the clear portrait which is given of Mary and Martha. This may indicate merely the fragmentary character of the Gospel accounts or that the women were much more interesting and forceful.

Mary and Martha

John seems to offer explanation in John 11:2 as to why he names Mary first in opening the narrative. Martha was evidently the older sister and in charge of the home. But Mary became famous over all the world and for all time by her act of devotion in anointing Jesus just before His death. The name of Martha is placed first in John 11:5 and John 11:19. Luke 10:38 calls the house hers and plainly represents her as in charge of the house. This would make it natural to put her name first in the later references, after having mentioned Mary first in reminding the readers of the anointing. Martha also met Jesus first as He approached Bethany. Sadler takes the view that Martha holds the more prominent place in the narrative, but this would be as hard to prove here as in Luke 10:1-42. The place occupied by the two instead shows the differences in the character and disposition of the two sisters. The aggressive, forceful character of Martha led her to act and speak with decision when she met Jesus. Mary’s quiet disposition and profound faith stand out in the narrative. Bernard argues that John 11:2 is a later addition by an editor, but the evidence he offers is fanciful. It is true that the anointing had not yet taken place, but this same document now in the hands of the reader will make plain the event. It is as natural for john to refer to the gracious act for which Mary became world-famous before it transpired as it was for him to refer to Judas as the traitor before the event occurred. Bernard argues that John (or the imaginary editor) confused Mary of Bethany with the sinful woman of Luke 7:38, but this is gratuitous. john did not record the anointing by the sinful woman in Galilee, hence this reference in his narrative is perfectly clear.

Any attempt by john to differentiate between the two anointings would have been out of place. The Message

“The sisters therefore sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick” (John 11:3). The strong friendship is evidenced by the fact that the sisters did not feel it was necessary to mention the name of Lazarus nor to invite nor urge Jesus to come. They might have wondered that Jesus had not used His miraculous insight to know of the desperate illness of Lazarus and to have come immediately. At least they felt now that all they needed to do was to let Jesus know that His dear friend was sick. Furthermore, they did not know the circumstances of Jesus’ ministry in Peraea at the moment and so did not presume to ask Him to leave His work and come. They left His course of action to His own judgment. In addition, they understood clearly the deadly plots against the life of Jesus by the national leaders in the capital. To have asked Him to come again into the midst of death might have seemed presumptuous. The respectful address the sisters use, Lord) is seen throughout the chapter. Martha calls Him “the Teacher” when telling Mary of His presence. The disciples call Jesus “Rabbi” in John 11:8. Not Unto Death

“But when Jesus heard it, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby” (John 11:4). This revelation of the future would have been an instant rejoinder to any inner doubts the apostles might have entertained at the moment as to why Jesus had not known of the sickness of Lazarus before He was notified. Later on Jesus made clear that He was not affirming that Lazarus would not die, but that the death of Lazarus would be nothing more than a brief sleep from which Jesus would call him back. Jesus liked to give enigmatical statements such as this to cause the hearers to ponder and study the meaning. His further declarations and the actual raising of Lazarus make clear His meaning. Jesus’ reference to Himself as the Son of God and the place of the miracles He wrought in proving His claims to deity are powerfully affirmed in this verse. The Delay

“Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus” (John 11:5). This statement seems to have been written by John to prepare the reader for the shocking news in the next verse that Jesus did not go instantly to answer the call for help (as He did in every other call recorded for us), but that He tarried “two days in the place where he was.” How the apostles must have wondered and discussed among themselves this delay. Remembering their own grave perplexity at Jesus’ course, John may have felt the need to assure his readers that His delay was not caused by any lack of love for these three friends.

Fear

“Let us go into Judaea again” (John 11:7). This was the sort of summons the apostles had been expecting and dreading. Bernard and others argue that the apostles were moved by fear for themselves as well as for Christ. The statement of Thomas indicated a clear-sighted vision of the danger to themselves. It indicated no fear, but rather the desperate determination to follow Him to death if necessary. They did not, however understand the divine purpose of Jesus’ relentless determination to go to His death. They were drawn in opposite directions by their desire to protect and defend Jesus, and their obligation to obey Him and permit Him to go voluntarily to His death. They would not desert Him; they could but follow blindly and in despair. Since they were human beings, they naturally knew what fear was, but their bold determination to go to their death with Him was the very opposite of fear. The Protest

“Rabbi, the Jews were but now seeking to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?” (John 11:8). Here is very clear testimony that the apostles had witnessed many attempts to slay Jesus and that they understood the charge of blasphemy upon which the Jewish leaders had rested in making these attempts. They were very respectful in their address to Jesus and their protest against the course He proposed. In their reflections and discussions among themselves they had evidently concluded that the reason Jesus had not gone immediately to help His friends was the deadly peril, and that He was avoiding the peril by remaining here in the provinces. They did not seek to dictate the course of Jesus, but they offered a gentle, heartbreaking protest.

Jesus replied with one of His profound sayings so difficult to unravel, “Are there not twelve hours in the day?” There is the day for work and the night for rest. The man who follows the wise procedure of walking in the day has no fear, for he can see his path. Jesus was walking in the light of the day that God had given Him. He could see His path. He knew that the time allotted to Him was definite and certain; it had not yet expired. His former teaching that He is the Light of the world suggested that they too might walk with confidence if they followed His leading. In John 9:4 He had declared that the night would soon come, but here He declared that it had not yet come and that He could proceed with freedom. In doing God’s will, Jesus walked in the light of God’s day. If He had refused or hesitated to do as God directed, He would have been walking in the night. He must not yield to their entreaties, but go on as God directed, otherwise He might expect to stumble in proceeding contrary to the will of God. Notice the clause the light is not in him with its emphasis upon the inner light of God’s guidance. Jesus did not walk in the night, nor did He stumble when death came.

Sleep

“Our friend Lazarus is fallen asleep; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep” (John 11:11). Jesus referred to death as a sleep just as He had done in the case of the daughter of Jairus. He was misunderstood on both occasions. The Greek verb is used both in classical and Biblical literature in the sense of ordinary sleep and in the metaphorical sense of death. In the New Testament it means the former three times; the latter, thirteen times. The gracious reference our friend Lazarus declared their common love for this noble disciple. The veiled terms Jesus used were misunderstood, in spite of their having heard Him use this same figure of speech in the home of Jairus. Their hearts were so overwrought with heartbreaking fear for their Master, they could not think very clearly. “Lord, if he is fallen asleep, he will recover” (John 11:12). Their statement should have been the basis for understanding that Jesus’ reference was figurative since He would not necessarily awaken one asleep in such a crisis. But they were trying to find some means of persuading Jesus to remain out of the deadly peril of the capital.

Death

“Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe” (John 11:14). First Jesus had told them that the sickness of Lazarus was not unto death. Then He informed them that Lazarus was asleep, but He was going now to awaken him out of his sleep. Finally He had to make His meaning very clear by stating that Lazarus was dead and He was glad for the sake of the apostles that He had not been present. Thus gradually He made clear to them the course He had followed and would follow and the motives behind the delay. The tears which Jesus shed as He met His dear friends in the roadway outside Bethany testify to the fact that He

would fain have been present during the illness of Lazarus and saved them all the grief and misunderstanding. But for the sake of these stalwart messengers who were to carry the gospel to the world, Jesus rejoiced that He was able to give them and us the indubitable proof of this prodigious miracle. When asked to name a miracle of supreme power, the Christian usually names the stilling of the tempest, the walking on the water, the feeding of the five thousand, or the resurrection of Lazarus. The Glory of God In John 11:4 Jesus had declared that the sickness of Lazarus had been “for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby.” This was also promised to Martha (John 11:40). Westcott holds that it would be for the glory of God in that the great miracle would so infuriate the opposition it would precipitate the crucifixion and thus would bring about the glory of God in the offering of His Son. This may be implied as the necessary corollary (cf. John 8:34; John 9:3; John 10:25; John 14:13; John 17:1; and John 12:28, John 12:32; John 13:31, John 13:32; John 14:14). The glory of the Father and the Son are identical (John 11:4); the repeated reference to the death of Christ being for the glory of God and of Christ may indicate such a meaning here. But the entire account of the miracle indicates that Jesus had delayed because He was acting according to God’s orders and that it was God’s will that the miracle might be performed in such a way as to give the more powerful evidence to the world. Jesus had restrained His natural desire to go to them immediately in their distress because it was God’s will. He had said to them, “Let us go into Judaea again” (John 11:7); he had said this in order for them to realize the peril and decide for themselves: “Let us go into the den of lions.” Now He says, “Nevertheless let us go unto him.” In spite of the fact of His delay He is now to go to Lazarus to bring him forth from the dead.

Thomas

“Let us also go, that we may die with him” (John 11:16). This word of boldness and despair was voiced by Thomas. Peter was not always the spokesman for the group. John informs the readers that Thomas had another name, Didymus. Thomas is the Hebrew word. Didymus is the Greek rendering and means twin or one of twins. On three occasions when his name is mentioned this explanation of its meaning is given. it may have been that Thomas was generally called Didymus in Greek circles, hence this explanatory note in this Gospel sent out to the Greek-speaking world. Many have supposed the name had a mystical meaning — one of twins — Thomas was a combination of two: the believer and the unbeliever, but this is uncertain inasmuch as the name does not seem to have been bestowed by Jesus. Thomas is usually called “the doubter” because of his stubborn refusal to believe in the resurrection upon the testimony of the other apostles. He seems to have been of a pessimistic turn of mind. But here he clearly saw that the death of Jesus was approaching. With desperate courage he proposed to the group that they all go prepared to die with Him.

Bernard supposes that Peter could not have been present. But the fact that Thomas spoke up for the entire group does not prove the absence of Peter, for he was present in the scenes described in John 14:5 and John 20:24. Bernard argues on this slender supposition that Peter and others were doubtless at home for a rest since the Gospel of Mark knows nothing of this Jerusalem ministry. As if Peter, even though absent, would never have learned of this prodigious miracle of the raising of Lazarus! This is the same sort of folly which leads the modernists to say that Mark and John knew nothing of the virgin birth simply because they followed a plan of writing which did not record it. Later on we find that Thomas shows the same stubborn spirit of inquiry and demands

that all the facts be known and thoroughly proved and understood (John 14:5; John 20:24, John 20:25). The Time Element The exact time of this journey and the place of starting are uncertain. The last feast Jesus attended was about December 25. Considerable time seems to have elapsed between the resurrection of Lazarus and the final Passover so that this may have been some time late in January or early in February. Jesus was in Peraea, and the indications are that He was in the northern section of Peraea. The effort of Herod to drive Him out of the kingdom would suggest this. The four days that had elapsed between the death of Lazarus and the arrival of Jesus would seem to be counted as the day on which the messenger arrived, the two days of tarrying in Peraea, and the day of journeying to Bethany. But if Jesus was in northern Peraea, it may have taken the messenger more than a day to reach Him and also for His return. Lazarus was probably dead by the time the messenger reached Jesus, or shortly afterward. The burial was usually immediate. The words of Martha seem to suggest that if Jesus had come at once He might have arrived before Lazarus died (John 11:21). She does not say, however, “If thou hadst come,” but, “If thou hadst been here,” which may imply that He could have known by miraculous insight the illness of Lazarus and have been present. The delay of Jesus evidently caused them great misunderstanding and distress, but Martha did not ask Jesus directly concerning it.

Bethany is described as “nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off” (John 11:18). A stadion, or furlong, is about one-eighth of a mile, and fifteen furlongs would be almost two miles. Yet Bethany is described as a sabbath day’s journey from Jerusalem, which is seven-eighths of a mile. This was evidently by the most direct route, the steep descent into the capital down the Mount of Olives. The count of two miles is the longer route used for the slower ascent of the mountain. The Mourners

“Many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning their brother” (John 11:19). This seems to indicate the prominence and prestige of the family. Even after the funeral has been over for two days, guests are still in the home. The reminder of the close proximity of Bethany to Jerusalem and the presence of all these guests may also be introduced by John to show the deadly peril of Jesus. Perhaps the guests were moved not merely by sympathy for the sisters, but the desire to see whether Jesus would come in answer to their appeal and to observe what would happen upon His arrival. The Sisters The difference in the sisters is clearly set forth in the narrative. Martha was in charge of the household and so heard first of the near approach of Jesus. A watch might have been kept of the roadway for the last two days to give an immediate report if He were seen approaching on the highway. Mary, whose deeper spiritual nature was overwhelmed by grief, was isolated in an inner chamber. This does not mean that the sorrow of Martha was not also overpowering, but someone has to stand stalwart and support those who are on the verge of complete prostration in such a tragic hour. The quarrel between the sisters, which Luke describes in Luke 10:38-42, shows that they both had a mind of their own and were very determined, but in this tragic hour they voiced exactly the same feelings and the same idea when they met Jesus. Martha went forth immediately to meet Jesus and tell Him of her grief and faith. Mary either did not hear of the approach of Jesus until told by her sister or else quietly waited in seclusion for His command. When told He desired to see her, she went forth quickly and fell at His feet and wept. Her grief seems to have affected Jesus more than that of the more practical and matter-of-fact Martha. The older sister may have felt obligated to restrain her grief in order to support the more emotional Mary. Both sisters show great faith, but that of Martha faltered as

Jesus ordered the tomb opened, and she had to be reminded of His promise.

Jesus and Martha

Jesus evidently tarried outside the village in order to have private conversation with the sisters. Their trial had been great, and the doubt and misunderstanding which had assailed them must have been hard to bear. “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died” (John 11:21). Martha boldly affirmed her faith that Jesus could have prevented the death of Lazarus. There is the suggestion of reproach in her remark “If thou hadst been here,” (and “why were you not here”). This raises the question: a speedy and immediate journey should have brought Him two days earlier, but would not Lazarus have been dead even then? She seems to be suggesting that by His miraculous foresight He could have known and have been present. She does not presume to complain or question His conduct. Urgent matters might have delayed Him. But she expresses her faith and dejected grief in this pathetic word. She knew, however, of those whom Jesus had raised from the dead. We do not read of any person’s asking Jesus to raise from the dead their loved one. But Martha suggests this: “And even now I know that, whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give thee” (John 11:22). She does not presume to ask; she only subtly suggests. She expresses her faith in Jesus as the Son of God in language all her own. The Good Confession of Martha

“Thy brother shall rise again” (John 11:23). The reply of Jesus was purposely obscure. A good teacher does not work everything out for the student, but gives just enough help to stimulate to the utmost intellectual effort. Just as He had begun the instruction of the apostles in this crisis beyond the Jordan by giving obscure statements, so now He seeks to enlarge and challenge the faith of Martha. His statement was so couched as to leave His meaning uncertain. Did she have enough faith to enter the door He left ajar?

“I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day” (John 11:24). Martha answers with boldness and caution. She is absolutely sure of the final resurrection. The Old Testament shows there is a life after death and even records cases of resurrection. The teaching of Jesus had been clear and constant concerning heaven and hell. The actual cases of resurrection by Jesus confirmed her faith. As in her first declaration there is subtle implication. The emphasis she gave to the words, and a significant look at Jesus would have underscored her unspoken question: “I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day….Is that what you meant?...Did you mean to suggest now...?” Instead of confirming her faith in the general resurrection and offering usual words of comfort or even giving any direct answer to her subtle suggestion, Jesus returned a profound declaration of His Deity and power over life and death. His reply is one of the most significant and impressive statements ever uttered. He began many of His grand declarations of deity with the name of God: “I am,” “the Bread of life,” “the Light of the world,” “the Door,” “the Truth,” “the Life,” “the True Vine,” “the Good Shepherd.”

“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die. Believest thou this?” (John 11:25, John 11:26). Jesus identifies Himself with the fact of the resurrection, as He later identifies Himself with life itself. John had affirmed this same great truth about Jesus in the first chapter. He is now offering proof of what he had there affirmed. Jesus is the Source of all life. The one who believes on Him, even though death overtakes him, yet he will not die in the eternal sense, but will live in

glory with Christ. He will never really die in the sense that an unbeliever gives to the term — extinction. Sadler gives a mystical meaning to the statement and connects it with Romans 6:1-6 and Colossians 2:12. “1 am the resurrection”; we are raised with Christ in baptism. He emphasizes the present tense of the verbs, “Whosoever continues to live in me and to believe in me shall never die.” He argues that the verse cannot be used to sustain the “once in grace always in grace” fallacy.

Martha’s answer is magnificent. She declares that she believes not merely this tremendous and obscure statement Jesus has made, which she is not sure she understands, but she believes everything Jesus says, no matter how difficult or how tremendous it may be. By this same confession of faith she declares her humble acceptance of the course Jesus has followed in regard to the sickness and death of her brother. Whatever Christ does is according to the will of God, whether she understands it or not. “Yea, Lord: I have believed that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, even he that cometh into the world” (John 11:27). She boldly accepts the challenge to affirm her acceptance of what Jesus has just claimed; she goes further to affirm that she had already come to the firm conclusion that He was the Christ, the Son of God, even as He has claimed. Observe how she defines her terms. Paul, in stating the essence of the gospel, reached out to include the entire revelation of the Scripture concerning Christ: “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3, 1 Corinthians 15:4). Martha in like manner includes the entire Old Testament revelation concerning Christ in her confession of faith: “even he that cometh into the world.”

Jesus and Mary

Since we are informed Jesus asked for Mary to come (John 11:28), we conclude that Jesus instructed Martha to tell her privately of His presence and His desire to see her. He evidently desired to comfort Mary and strengthen her faith, as He had helped Martha. Mary’s answer to the summons was immediate. He evidently had halted outside the village for the specific purpose of having a conference with the sisters. Mary made the same heartbroken outcry to Jesus that Martha had uttered. They doubtless had said these very words over and over to one another as they had waited in perplexity for His arrival. They must have spoken it first in hope amid the grave illness of Lazarus and then in despair or at least in grave doubt. The Jews who had remained to assist in caring for the sisters in their grief may have been moved also by the keen desire to see whether Jesus would come in response to their call. They did not know as yet of His arrival, because they thought Mary was going to the tomb again to weep and mourn. Since Mary appeared to be the one who most needed support and comfort, they had concentrated their attentions upon her. Martha was so evidently able to care for herself, they did not watch her movements and seem not to have noticed her absence. They feared Mary would collapse from grief and watched her closely.

“Mary...fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died” (John 11:32). This touching act of worship was Mary’s confession of faith. The presence of the Jews who followed her prevented any such private conversation as Martha had enjoyed. All that Mary had in her heart, she knew was known to Jesus: her grief, her doubts, her fears, her perplexities, her faith, her hope. She expressed them all as she fell on the ground in worship at His

feet.

Jesus' Grief

"When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping who came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They say unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept." (John 11:33-35). The sympathy of Jesus and the manner in which He shares all our sorrows find sublime illustration in this historic record. Some suppose that Jesus wept because of indignation at the unbelief about Him. But there has been no mention of unbelief up to this point. The faith of both sisters had been magnificent. The text shows that the Jews present were sympathetic as they wept with Mary and interpreted the tears of Jesus as evidence of His great love for Lazarus: "Behold, how he loved him" Many of the Jews present believed because of the miracle (John 11:45). Some went away later on and told the Pharisees, but we are not sure of their motives. The basis for the theory that Jesus became so angry He cried, is that this is one of the meanings of this Greek verb embrimaomai, "groaned in the spirit." The marginal reading in the a.s.v. is "was moved with indignation in the spirit." The verb means in its primitive use to snort like a horse when suddenly filled with terror. In the Septuagint version it is used to show indignation. In Mark 14:5 Bernard renders this verb "they roared against her" in indignation at Mary's waste of the ointment; in that passage the idea of indignation is plain. But in Mark 1:43 and Matthew 9:30 it is not possible to render the verb as being indignant or enraged; hence, the translators rendered "to charge sternly," although they could find no other example of such a rendering. The word evidently implied intense emotion in these two cases as in John 11:33, John 11:38. These are the only times the word is applied to Jesus. The fact that Jesus wept shows extreme emotion — sympathy rather than wrath. The interpretation which the Jews placed upon His weeping gives added confirmation. They did not say, "Behold how angry He is!" Both the a.v. and the a.s.v. translate the verb "groaned in the spirit." The verb tarasso, which follows, means "was troubled" or "troubled himself"; Bernard renders it "he shuddered," as His whole frame shook with grief. Bernard says, "He arrived at the tomb, not 'indignant' at anything nor 'groaning' with loud outbursts of sorrow, but making those inarticulate sounds which are the expression of mental agitation and strain" (I.C.C. on John, p. 393). Some would render it, "He strictly charged or restrained his spirit"; He restrained His human nature from any unseemly outburst. Sadler holds that the idea of indignation is inherent in the word and that Jesus was indignant at the effects of sin, so vividly brought before Him in the victory of death over His friend, in the grief of the bereaved sisters, and in the hypocrisy of some of the Jews present, and the deadly hate of others. But the Greek lexicons show that the idea of rage or indignation is not necessarily implied. The translators of the a.v. and the a.s.v. show the majority concurred in this judgment when they translated the verb "strictly charged" and in their translations of the verb in John 11:32-35. The Sympathy of Jesus

It is certainly more in harmony with the character to see Him weep from sympathy rather than of Jesus from rage. There is no evidence of rage at the other times it is recorded that He wept, at the triumphal entry (Luke 19:41) and in the Garden of Gethsemane (Hebrews 5:7). It is never recorded of Jesus that He laughed, but this does not prove that He did not. Laughter is a part of the perfection of manhood, but Jesus' mission was too serious and the Gospel accounts too brief to leave much room for humor. When it is a matter of life and death, laughter is seldom heard. The humor of Jesus which is recorded in the Gospel accounts is always of the most pertinent and

poignant type. It is recorded of Jesus that He wept three times, and in every case there is the tragic undertone of man's doom as a result of his sin and of His death to save man from this fate.

Pure sympathy is most strongly expressed here by the tomb of Lazarus. Bernard notes the strong difference between the character of Jesus and the ideal of absolute indifference to joy and sorrow which the Stoics set up. The Christian is to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those that weep. But the example of Jesus does not encourage excess of grief at funerals. We do not sorrow as those who have no hope. Newman points out in a beautiful passage that "the tears of Jesus" show not only His humanity, but also His deity. He came to show God's love and mercy and to reveal how God cares for us and enters into our suffering. The ultimate difficulty in the problem of suffering is the fact that God suffers. Yet His anguished love for His lost children is the crowning glory of God Himself. The Tomb

Jesus did not need any instruction as to where the tomb was located, if He chose to use His miraculous foresight. But natural means were available and He asked the question to lead the group naturally to the spot. He intended to raise Lazarus. Bethany was on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. The tomb was evidently dug back into the side of the hill. It would not have been dug down into the ground on a flat surface which had no drainage. The a.s.v. says "a stone lay against it," which is much superior to the translation of the a.v. , "a stone lay upon it." The preposition can have either meaning, but the context demands "against" the entrance on the side of a hill. The rock was to keep animals or intruders out. It would be rolled aside as in the case of the tomb of Joseph. "Take ye away the stone" fits such action.

Martha's Doubt

"Lord, by this time the body decayeth for he hath been dead four days" (John 11:39). The Jews who were present concluded from Jesus' weeping that He had loved Lazarus with a very great love. Sympathy for the sisters undoubtedly was included in their analysis of His feelings. Their second remark shows that they realized His miraculous power: "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of him that was blind, have caused that this man should not die" (John 11:37). The attitude of the crowd seems to be friendly as is to be expected of intimate friends of Lazarus. But there may have been a cleavage among them with some leaning toward the unbelieving Jewish leadership (John 11:46).

Bernard insists that Martha had no idea that Christ intended to raise Lazarus and this protest shows "her strong sense of decorum (Luke 10:40), was horrified to think of the exposure of the corpse, it being now the fourth day after death." But this view is to shut one's eyes to the previous cases of resurrection by Jesus and to shut one's ears to the conversation of Martha and Jesus in which the resurrection had been discussed. Martha protested now because her faith began to weaken. She was like a mountain climber who, scaling the mighty precipice, cannot see his destination wreathed in clouds above, and weakens under the fearful ascent, looks down into the depths, and almost loses his balance. Mary with her deeper spiritual nature and more complete faith in Jesus gave no evidence of faltering now. The Glory of God

"Said I not unto thee, that, if thou believedst, thou shouldst see the glory of God?" (John 11:40). This question clearly emphasizes the fact that Jesus required, as a part of His regular program, faith on the part of those seeking miraculous aid. When had Jesus told Martha she would see the

glory of God? Jesus had told the apostles, while they were still in Peraea, that the death of Lazarus would be for the glory of God (John 11:4). It would have been most natural for Martha to have heard this from Jesus or the apostles. Jesus may have repeated the promise to her. The glory of God may be a reference to the mysterious declaration of Jesus to Martha in John 11:25-27 with all that it implied as to the immediate resurrection of Lazarus and all the eternal glories of heaven in the future. Bernard objects that if the resurrection of Lazarus is meant, the bystanders saw the resurrection and yet not all of them believed. He admits that these did not perceive “the inner meaning of this ‘sign,’ and discern in it the exhibition of Divine glory.” But a study of the Gospel narratives shows that while Jesus continually insisted those seeking miraculous aid must believe, He repeatedly performed miracles where many unbelievers were in the crowd of onlookers (cf. Mark 9:14-29). These who disbelieved were not seeking miraculous aid. When had Jesus told Martha she would see the glory of God? Jesus had told the apostles, while they were still in Peraea, that the death of Lazarus would be for the glory of God (John 11:4). It would have been most natural for Martha to have heard this from Jesus or the apostles, Jesus may have repeated the promise to her. The glory of God may be a reference to the mysterious declaration of Jesus to Martha in John 11:25-27 with all that it implied as to the immediate resurrection of Lazarus and all the eternal glories of heaven in the future. Bernard objects that if the resurrection of Lazarus is meant, the bystanders saw the resurrection and yet not all of them believed, He admits that these did not perceive “the inner meaning of this ‘sign,’ and discern in it the exhibition of Divine glory.” But a study of the Gospel narratives shows that while Jesus continually insisted those seeking miraculous aid must believe, He repeatedly performed miracles where many unbelievers were in the crowd of onlookers (cf. Mark 9:14-29). These who disbelieved were not seeking miraculous aid.

Jesus’ Prayer

“And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou heardest me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the multitude that standeth around I said it, that they may believe that thou didst send me” (John 11:41, John 11:42). Jesus urged that His disciples should go into the inner chamber to pray, but His own example shows that He did not mean to prohibit public prayer. The prayers of Jesus are an interesting study — the times, places, people, things concerned. Public prayers of Jesus are recorded when the great invitation was given (Matthew 11:25, Matthew 11:26 and a similar passage in Luke 10:21); when He gave thanks for the loaves and the fishes at the feeding of the five thousand and of the four thousand; here at the tomb of Lazarus; in the upper room; the long prayer of John 17:1-26; on the cross; the thanksgiving with the two at Emmaus. The prayer in John seventeen is the longest. He preserved such absolute harmony with God that all His speech, thought, and conduct illustrate “Pray without ceasing.” The brevity of the public prayers of Jesus is most remarkable when contrasted to the long seasons spent in private prayer. He states that this prayer at the tomb of Lazarus is not to bring His own spirit into harmony with God, but for the sake of those about. Note the absolute assurance of the answer from God, so that He speaks as if the miracle were already achieved, as indeed it was in the mind of God and of His Son. Bernard objects that it is unlike Jesus to offer thanksgiving to impress the crowd and affirms that John 11:42 is a late addition by an editor and was never spoken by Jesus. He also offers the theory that the original text may have read “because of the multitude that standeth around, I did it” (instead of “I said it”). Thus He affirms that

He did the miracle in order that the crowd might believe, and not that He offered the prayer that they might believe. Bernard cites very slight manuscript authority, one uncial and the Armenian Version. But the prayer of Jesus needs no apology; it is the essence of simplicity and sincerity; it affirms that He was praying not to bring any needed confidence to His own heart, but for the sake of those who heard and thus would have this clinching evidence that this was a miracle Jesus was about to perform. Why should there be public prayer at all, if those who hear are not led thereby to the presence of God, and to believe and obey? The Miracle

“He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth” (John 11:43). Some have suggested that if Jesus had not called the name of Lazarus, all the dead would have come forth; but this supposes that Jesus could not have made His will known except by the spoken word. The fact that Jesus addressed Lazarus and called him forth made the miracle indubitable. When “He cried with a loud voice,” all in the presence were able to hear distinctly. Two of the words spoken on the cross are reported to have been with a loud voice (Mark 15:34, Mark 15:37; cf. also Matthew 24:31; Revelation 1:10; Revelation 21:3). The voice of Jesus must have been incomparable.

“He that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin” (John 11:44). Since he was unable to use his hands and unloose himself, Jesus had to order his friends to unloose him from the swathes about his hands and feet and the napkin from about his face, after his emergence. It would seem plain, therefore, that he could not have walked with his feet bound, except by miraculous aid. This is not affirmed, and the bandages may have been loose enough on his feet to permit motion by natural means, but the prodigious character of the miracle seems to indicate the opposite. With the napkin fastened around his face, he would have been unable to see by natural means. Augustine says, “Dost thou marvel how he came forth with his feet bound, and not marvel that lie rose being four days dead? In both was the power of the Lord, not the strength of the dead man.” The text does not affirm that he walked, but that he came forth. The Witnesses

“Many...believed on him. But some of them went away to the Pharisees, and told them the things which Jesus had done” (John 11:45, John 11:46). Sadler insists that among the intimate friends of Lazarus and the sisters there would not have been found anyone so hostile to Jesus as to go and tell the Pharisees from malicious unbelief. But in all large companies a division of character and motives may be expected. The whole current of John’s narrative would naturally lead us to conclude that these were proceeding from a motive more or less hostile. The company is parted by John’s narration between those who believed on Jesus and those who went and told the Pharisees Possibly they went because they were determined to see to it that the Pharisees had to face this new evidence. The adversative conjunction but is against such a view. The entire atmosphere seems to indicate more or less hostility on their part: the repeated efforts to kill Jesus; the demand that anyone knowing His whereabouts should report to them so they might arrest Him. The motives of those who went to the Pharisees may have been varied, but it seems they did not believe, even though they had seen the incredible miracle. The Pharisees

“The chief priests therefore and the Pharisees gathered a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many signs” (John 11:47). A hurried session of the Sanhedrin followed the receipt of this exciting news. They declared that there was a crisis in the life of the nation. They claimed that the growing excitement over the miracles of Jesus made imminent an outbreak against Rome

which would bring ultimate disaster on the nation. This was a real peril in the light of the numbers, fanaticism, and power of the Zealot party. Jesus continually changed the location of His ministry to prevent the Zealots from capturing His movement. The hypocrisy of the chief priests and Pharisees is apparent, however, in their frank admission that Jesus was actually working miracles. The immediate conclusion is that He was speaking the message of God and they were obligated to Him. Any sort of political crisis is insignificant when compared to the wrath of God. The real folly of their objection is seen when it was actually presented to Pilate and he tore the cover from their hypocritical claim that Jesus was a rival of Caesar. Their wicked determination not to believe and repent was the real ground of their objection.

Caiaphas

“Caiaphas, being high priest that year...” (John 11:49). The high priest, according to the Old Testament law, ruled for life, but the Romans found they could make vast sums of money by deposing a high priest and selling the office to the highest bidder. At first, they permitted a high priest to rule for a number of years, but in the years immediately preceding the fall of Jerusalem they became more corrupt and demanded more bribes from the incumbent high priest and sold to the highest bidder in rapid succession. Annas ruled from A. D. 6 to 15. He was deposed by Gratus, but shrewdly managed to keep the succession in his family for a considerable period and a number of changes. His son-in-law, Caiaphas, was appointed in a.d. 18 and held office until a.d. 36, during the reign of Pontius Pilate. Bernard suggests that the phrase that year does not reflect these frequent changes at the whim of the Romans, but means “that fateful year” when the Messiah was crucified. Sadler also argues that it means the memorable year when the final atoning sacrifice was offered and the office of high priest over the temple and nation as set up in the Old Testament was no longer necessary.

Caiaphas scornfully rebuked the leaders for hesitating in their plan to kill Jesus. He urged the political situation as the ground for immediate action and declared that with the life of the nation at stake, they should not hesitate to kill Him. “He prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation.” God’s providence was guiding the course of events which gave a deeper meaning to Caiaphas’ wicked words and made them true in a higher sense than Caiaphas realized. God used Caiaphas’ words to have a profound meaning through the record of John, who points out that it was not only for the Jewish nation, but for all people that Jesus died.

“From that day” they began to plot with renewed venom for the death of Christ. Before this time their plotting had been spasmodic and hesitating as on occasion they were enraged and then became quiescent because their plans went astray or they were afraid of His divine power. It was becoming increasingly evident that He did not intend to use His miraculous power to destroy them, and the resurrection of Lazarus was so tremendous and so located in their very midst that they could not ignore it. From this time they plotted with unyielding determination under the furious leadership of Caiaphas They pretended to be God’s representatives in guiding and saving the nation, but they were determined to kill Jesus, whom they admitted had the divine credentials proving He was revealing God’s will to the nation. They pretended to be moved by the desire to save the nation and defended their plot to kill Jesus by the greater objective of saving the nation; but, if Jesus was the Son of God as He claimed (and they could not deny His miracles, hence His claims were true), then the good of the nation demanded above all else that they yield allegiance

to Him.

Ephraim

“Jesus….departed thence into the country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim” (John 11:54). The wilderness of Judaea, called Jeshimon, was immediately west of the Dead Sea and extended several miles up the Jordan River from where it emptied into the Dead Sea. The second most desolate section in Palestine was a sort of continuation of this wilderness in the wild mountainous section to the north between the Jordan and Bethel. Ephraim is not mentioned in any other passage in the New Testament. Josephus locates a fortress called Ephraim in the mountainous region northeast of Bethel. Scholars have located ruins four miles northeast of Bethel on the road from Samaria to Jericho and about fifteen miles from Jericho. It is uncertain how long Jesus remained in this desolate section before going across the Jordan and resuming His Peraean ministry.

105. Chapter 46 - The Healing of the Ten Lepers

Chapter 46 - The Healing of the Ten Lepers

Luke 17:11-19 The Locale

Although Luke does not record the visit to Bethany and the resurrection of Lazarus, his account fits perfectly into the chain of events John has described. “And it came to pass, as they were on the way to Jerusalem, that he was passing along the borders of Samaria and Galilee” (Luke 17:11). Luke represents Jesus in a general movement toward the capital for the final Passover. The Galilean campaign was over; He was now evangelizing new territory, yet Luke describes Him as traveling in a direction away from Jerusalem. The note that Jesus was passing “along the borders of Samaria and Galilee” would be puzzling because of mentioning Samaria before Galilee; but, if Ephraim is correctly located in northern Judaea, then this description is a help in understanding the swinging movement of Jesus. He traveled northward out of this wild, desolate section of mountains about Ephraim along the edge of Samaria and Galilee into Peraea. Thus numerous commentators point out that the accounts of John and Luke join at this place. Luke does not indicate the exact location of this scene. The Lepers

“And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us” (Luke 17:12, Luke 17:13). Luke does not state whether the village was in Samaria or Galilee. It may have been in a sort of no man’s land in between sections so hostile to one another. Leper houses and colonies have existed in Palestine through the centuries, but the Bible gives no clear description of their manner of life, except that they were excluded from society by the Old Testament law and compelled to warn all who came near them. Relatives and friends probably brought food to them. We naturally find in the borders of Samaria and Galilee a mixed company of lepers — part Jewish and part Samaritan. Such a dreadful misfortune breaks down barriers between aliens. These ten may have been associated together or may have collected upon hearing of the approach of Jesus. They met Jesus as He was entering into a village, and they seem to have been lingering in the outskirts of the village, awaiting His coming.

They stood afar off as was commanded in the law (Leviticus 13:45, Leviticus 13:46). But instead of issuing the dismal warning Unclean! Unclean!, they addressed Jesus as “Master” and called on Him to have mercy on them. They did not feel it was necessary to state their need of help. Their brief, eloquent appeal shows faith both in His mercy and His power. Jesus’ answer was as brief and pointed as had been their request: “Go and show yourselves unto the priests.” Thus they were commanded to prove the faith which they had just declared. To turn away from Jesus before being healed was a severe test. The miracle followed immediately upon their obedience, as they started to go. They would probably seek priests living nearest their homes in some priestly city. The Samaritan would probably seek a priest in the temple on Mount Gerizim. The testimony of a priest as health officer was essential to restoring a leper to society. This provision in the law would be in use frequently when someone had been isolated under suspicion of having leprosy and would

need verification by a priest that it had turned out to be some minor skin trouble, and not leprosy. In the case of these ten lepers another useful purpose was served, for the priests had to face the evidence of another miracle worked by Jesus. The Samaritan

Schleiermacher held that the Samaritan went to the priest and returned to Christ, but how would he have been able to find Him after so long a journey? And in the case of another meeting after some days Jesus could not have expected the ten lepers to be together. The text says plainly that the Samaritan turned back as soon as he saw that he was healed, which must have been instantly. There is no indication that he waited until he had been declared healed by a priest. His recovery would have been instantly apparent to him. Obedience is more important than sacrifice, but obedience and love are inseparable. The expression of his heartfelt gratitude was a natural act by which he dedicated his life to Christ in obedience. His Worship

“And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, with a loud voice glorifying God; and he fell upon his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan” (Luke 17:15, Luke 17:16). Some suggest that the reason for the loud shout was that he still stood afar off as the law had commanded until a priest had declared him clean. But his outcry seems rather to have come the instant he saw he was cured. It was the mighty shout of joy from the breast of a man who had recovered life anew. He was like the lame man healed by Peter and John at the gate of the temple, who showed his great joy by leaping and praising God. The next verse shows that he came close to Jesus and fell at His feet to express his gratitude. How much this posture revealed his acceptance of Jesus as the Son of God and his offering of divine worship to Christ, we cannot tell. If we knew what he said in his thanks-giving, we could determine how clear and strong his faith was.

All ten lepers had evidently heard much about Jesus. The first thing they would hear would be concerning His miraculous power and the fact that He had healed lepers. The second thing would be His astounding claims to deity and the fierce plots of the Jewish leaders to destroy Him on the ground that He was guilty of blasphemy. The emphatic manner in which Luke states that he was a Samaritan seems to imply the others were Jews. The reference of Jesus to him as “a stranger,” i.e., not a Jew, seems to carry the same implication (Luke 17:18). As ingratitude is one of the worst sins, it is also one of the most common. The character of these ten men was revealed by their conduct at this critical moment. The first thought of the nine was their selfish desires. The first act of the Samaritan was an expression of his love of God and his gratitude and devotion to Christ. The bodies of the nine had been changed, but their souls remained as selfish as ever. The Samaritan leaped for joy as he dedicated himself to Christ in grateful recognition of His power and truth. The actual examination by a priest could be delayed long enough to permit him to thank God and express his gratitude to Christ. The Samaritans were half Jewish and half heathen both as regards race and religion, but the Jewish religion prevailed among them as the years passed. Some refugees from Judaea also settled in Samaria and intermingled with them. No more heathen are reported as brought in, but Gentiles may have been in the midst, as was true of the Decapolis. Heathen idolatry prevailed largely at first, but gave place to monotheism as the Samaritans followed, in the main, the Pentateuch. It might have been difficult for this Samaritan to have shared in the great closing scenes of Jesus’ ministry. He might have learned much from the Samaritans of Sychar and could have heard from Philip the full gospel that was later preached in Samaria. The Nine The nine lepers who were in such haste to return to their former lives had faith enough to be

healed, but not love enough to return and thank Jesus. They were like nominal Christians who profess faith and repentance, and are baptized, but do not appreciate what has been done for them by Christ sufficiently to live nobly for Him. Numerous are the excuses which have been suggested as probably in the hearts of the nine: (1) anxiety to get back to their families, and business and society; (2) thoughtlessness of their great debt to Christ; (3) influence of example; some went on because others did; the majority failed or refused to return, so the weaker ones went on with the crowd; (4) procrastination; some quieted their conscience by promising themselves they would return later, find Jesus, and thank Him. The Rebuke

“And Jesus answering said, Were not the ten cleansed? but where are the nine? Were there none found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger?” (Luke 17:17, Luke 17:18). This is another instance where Jesus asked questions in order to get those present to know and understand the facts, not to gain information for Himself. He answered the earnest words of gratitude by calling attention to the fact that all ten had been cleansed and all ten should have been grateful. The fact is brought out that the ones with the largest background of religious privilege had been ungrateful, and the Samaritan with the least opportunity to know and accept the truth had risen to the heights in this great moment of his life. Plummer holds that Jesus was addressing bystanders whose presence has not been mentioned. But it seems rather that this is Jesus’ comment on the entire incident. There doubtless were others about, His apostles and chance travelers and bystanders, but why should He ask them what the Samaritan would be better prepared to answer?

Jesus “answered” the joyous expression of thanks by the Samaritan as He addressed the man, those standing about, and all who read the account. These questions so full of pathos strike deep into our own hearts and lives as we reflect upon our ingratitude. Jesus used this method of emphasizing that all ten had been healed. Luke has already affirmed this fact in his account, but those present may have needed to hear this fact plainly. The statement of Jesus is a dramatic expression of His poignant grief, which rises to a climax in this last question, that seems to be directed to the whole group about Him. The Spiritual Blessing

“And he said unto him, Rise, and go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole” (Luke 17:19). Jesus’ general comment on the entire incident is followed by this direct, intimate word of assurance to the Samaritan. He is commanded to rise from his posture of worship, as he is prostrate on the ground before Him. To go his way would mean to fulfill the first command awaiting him, which was to seek out a priest for examination. He must then seek to make his “way” God’s way. “Thy faith hath made thee whole” shows the part the man’s faith had played in his cure in leading him to obey the command of Jesus to go and, then, to return instantly with grateful devotion. It also seems to suggest that a deeper spiritual blessing was conferred on the man by reason of his dedication of himself to Christ. The Greek verb is sodzo, “hath saved thee.” The nine, who were in such a hurry to get back into the world, lost this supreme blessing of the favor of God.

106. Chapter 47 - A Sermon on the Second Coming

Chapter 47 - A Sermon on the Second Coming

Luke 17:20-37 The Perplexed Disciples

Doubt and agonized perplexity assailed the apostles during the closing period of Jesus' ministry as He continually pressed upon them the fact that He was now going up to Jerusalem, where He would allow His enemies to kill Him. Jesus helped their faith and hope by keeping before them His return in glory and the consummation of the kingdom of God. It is hard to see exactly how much they understood these predictions and how far they were able to fit together the tragic present and the glorious future. Their anxious question at the close of this sermon as to the geographical location of His return shows how they were struggling to harmonize the seemingly contradictory items He kept revealing to them. The revelations concerning His second coming had begun early in the ministry of Jesus in the parables, such as the parable of the tares, and in repeated assertions that He would be the Judge of all mankind in the final day (Matthew 13:36-43; Matthew 7:22-27; John 5:19-47).

Question of the Pharisees

Naturally, similarities occur in the predictions Jesus made in this sermon on the second coming and the sermon which He delivered to the apostles on the Mount of Olives during the final week. The destruction of Jerusalem was the prediction which brought about the latter sermon. It had a large place in the entire discussion Jesus gave. It is a moot question as to whether the impending doom of the capital also enters into this sermon delivered in Peraea. A question of the Pharisees brought up the entire discussion. Jesus had already predicted the doom of the holy city and had solemnly declared that God would no longer defend it, but that it would be left desolate (Luke 13:34, Luke 13:35). We cannot be sure how much this prediction of doom for Jerusalem was remembered by His hearers as He made these predictions of the second coming and the final consummation of the kingdom.

"And being asked by the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God cometh, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here! or There! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20, Luke 17:21). Observe first that He answered their question of "when" with an answer of "where," and that this question was still asked by the disciples at the close. Because the Pharisees asked the opening question does not prove that their motives were evil. But the probabilities are that there was an undercurrent of scoffing at the kind of campaign Jesus was carrying on and its probable end, and the lack of any of the evidences of a worldly kingdom such as they desired and expected. They might have been hoping to entrap Him in some sort of definite prediction of His immediate establishment of the kingdom and to secure information as to His plans and program. His reply shows that He was trying to correct their false idea of a material kingdom. The Kingdom

“The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, There! For lo, the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20, Luke 17:21). The verb from which the noun observation is derived is used by medical writers of watching symptoms of a disease. It sometimes implies sinister watching, but usually only close watching. If the former connotation colors the passage here, Jesus was suggesting that all their malicious plots and speculations would be in vain to forestall His plans and program. The warning not to heed the false prophets who declare the presence of false christs, “Lo here! or, There!” seems to place the emphasis upon their mistaken idea that the kingdom was to be worldly with vast armies, lofty thrones, worldly wealth and luxury. They could see none of this in the campaign of Jesus. But He warned them that His kingdom was not worldly; it was spiritual. No close watching could enable any man to foretell its coming. This spiritual kingdom was of God’s making; it would be brought about by His will, not by man’s observation.

Pentecost The alternate reading in the footnote of the a.s.v. for within you is in the midst of you. It suggests, “You seek vast political transformations as evidence of the coming of the kingdom. But the kingdom is in your very midst now in the Person of the Son of God, who is the King. You who are blind to His Person, His teaching, His miracles, will find no greater signs to awaken you to the presence of the kingdom.” When the kingdom of God was set up on the day of Pentecost, only one hundred twenty persons were in the select company of disciples as Peter preached the first full sermon to the multitude. Three thousand persons were baptized as the kingdom, or church was established. Those who were intent on a political kingdom still did not realize that the kingdom was in their midst even though it had not actually been established. The Will of God The translation within you causes one to turn back to the model prayer with its parallel petitions: “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth” (Matthew 6:10). The kingdom was to come in its preparatory stage during the ministry of Jesus, in its actual establishment after His ascension, and in the final consummation at His second coming. Men would enter into the kingdom by doing His will; its citizens would be in subjection to His will.

Within you in the context of Luke would mean “The kingdom will not come with great worldly pomp and glory as you expect; it is completely spiritual. It will not be gained by observation which is centered in worldly might and power, but rather by yielding your hearts in obedience to God.” Gregory Nyssen held it to mean the image of God bestowed upon all men at birth, but this overlooks the entire context. Cyril of Alexandria interpreted “lies within your power to appropriate it.” Moldonatus gave the sense that they had the power to accept Christ if they would. This interpretation fits the meaning “in the midst of you.” He argued it could not mean “in your hearts” because He was addressing the Pharisees who were continually rejecting Him, and because Luke emphasizes that the next verse was addressed to the disciples. Modernists quote this passage widely to set aside the importance of the church as an institution, its divine character, and divinely ordained means of entrance, and to argue for their “social gospel.” The Second Coming

“And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it” (Luke 17:22). This question was of tremendous interest to the disciples also. Since they undoubtedly had discussed it among themselves many times, Jesus turned to detailed instruction of His disciples concerning the establishment of the kingdom. The repeated predictions Jesus had made of His voluntary surrender to death at the hands of His enemies in fulfillment of the will and the definite plan of God now made very critical the questions

“When and where the kingdom?” Both questions were on their hearts and came up for discussion. At the close of this sermon the disciples were still asking, “Where?” Christ shows that there would be signs of His second coming, but none that would enable men to foretell the time. They had to beware of being misled by those who would insist on predicting the time. Jesus shows that the time and place are immaterial; the attitude and condition of the disciples are of supreme importance.

Whether the Pharisees had withdrawn under what amounted to a strong rebuke or remained to hear this discussion is uncertain. This discussion seems to have been private, following the public instruction introduced by the question of the Pharisees The fact that the predictions during the final week recorded in Matthew 24:1-51, Mark 13:1-37, and Luke 21:1-38 were private inclines one to think that this second discussion was to the disciples alone, after the Pharisees had departed. “Ye shall desire to see.” Some identify the meaning with Matthew 9:15 and Mark 2:20, where Jesus predicted He would be taken away from His disciples and they would with great sorrow realize His absence and long for one such day of fellowship as they had enjoyed during these years of His ministry. But the meaning here seems to be the longing which the disciples will have for His glorious return. During times for persecution they will experience this desire for His coming again. It is possible that the phrase one of these days may be a Hebraism for “the first of the days of the Son of man,” i.e., the beginning of His eternal reign. As the Lightning

“And they shall say to you, Lo, there! Lo, here!” This verse does not contradict the statement of Jesus in Luke 17:21. He had warned against such folly, but in spite of His warnings false prophets and false christs would abound. The disciples were not to heed those who would claim they could predict the time of the second coming. “For as the lightning, when it lighteneth out of one part under the heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall the Son of man be in his day” (Luke 17:24). The lightning offers a vivid illustration of the nature of the second coming. In general, a person can tell when to expect lightning, but the exact moment cannot he predicted. We are told in the New Testament that evil men will wax worse and worse, that the love of many Christians will grow cold, that fierce opposition and persecution will be endured by the followers of Christ, but no precise signs are given to indicate the approach of the second coming, as were revealed concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. The figure of the lightning streaking across the sky pictures the Son of God coming in glory to all the world, seen by all at once, but the time foreseen by none.

After this glowing picture of the parousia, Jesus renewed the somber prediction of His approaching rejection and suffering. They would not have been able to understand His coming again if they did not realize that He must first go back to heaven. They had to be prepared for very dreadful experiences before they could see the establishment of the kingdom. The refusal of man to give heed to His warnings is compared to the godlessness in the days of Noah and in the destruction of Sodom. There is strong similarity in the teaching given in this sermon and the more detailed instruction given to the apostles during the final week.

Unprepared!

“So shall the Son of man be in his day” (Luke 17:24). “After the same manner shall it be in the day that the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he that shall be on the housetop...(Luke 17:30, Luke 17:31). The reference seems to be to the second coming in each of these verses. In his day in

Luke 17:25 is followed immediately by in the days of the Son of man (Luke 17:26), but this seems to be a general reference as one might say “in the time of.” In Luke 17:30 it is brought out very clearly: “in the day that the Son of man is revealed.” Some would refer Luke 17:25-32 to the destruction of Jerusalem, the day in which the predictions of the Son of man shall be completely vindicated and the nation destroyed because of its rejection of Christ. They would refer only Luke 17:32-37 to the second coming. The general similarity between this discourse and the one delivered during the final week would naturally invite the expositor to make this division here. But the destruction of Jerusalem is explicitly presented in the final discussion in Matthew 24:1-51. In this sermon in Peraea we may well have a more limited presentation with much of the same teaching included. The comparisons with the times of Noah and of Lot would apply either to the destruction of Jerusalem or the second coming, except that the suddenness fits better with the second coming, and the idea of trying to rescue their goods fits the destruction of Jerusalem better. Since Jerusalem is not definitely mentioned in this sermon in Luke, one is inclined to apply the entire sermon to the second coming. The warning not to go down into the house to rescue precious, worldly possessions is, then, a figurative warning against any thought of earthly goods or attempt to cling to them in the time of the second coming.

Lot’s Wife

Lot’s wife allowed her mind to turn back to the earthly treasures left behind and, even in the hour of rescue, was destroyed. Thus it will be with those who cling to earthly treasures at the very last. The fact that no warning is given to flee to the mountains, as in Matthew 24:16, inclines one to apply this entire sermon to the second coming. Luke does record this warning to flee to the mountains in Luke 21:21.

“Remember Lot’s wife” (Luke 17:32). Observe that Jesus does not say, “Behold Lot’s wife!” No support is given for the ridiculous efforts of Josephus and early Christian writers to identify a gargantuan formation on the mountain along the southern shore of the Dead Sea as the pillar of salt into which Lot’s wife was turned. On the other hand, Jesus gives powerful substantiation to the historic verity of the fact that Lot’s wife was actually turned into a pillar of salt. To a student who once asked him what had become of the pillar of salt, McGarvey answered that he presumed the winter rains had washed it away or the cows had licked it down.

Losing Life

“Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it: but whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it” (Luke 17:33). This is a favorite saying of Jesus, and the only great saying which is recorded in all four narratives (Matthew 10:39; Matthew 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; John 12:25). The particular turn given to the saying in this sermon is warning against the effort to gain earthly possessions at the expense of the soul and the willingness to lose earthly possessions in order to gain the heavenly. It is, of course, implied in lose his life that he does not lose his life as a drunkard or a gangster, but “ for Jesus’ sake.”

Night and Day

“In that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall he taken and the other shall be left” (Luke 17:34). This verse is clearly a reference to the second coming, but one may not infer that Jesus is saying it will occur in the night, for the next verses picture women and men at work at

home and in the field. The whole picture fits the world perfectly because it is actually day on one part of the earth when it is night on the opposite side. The puny achievements of man in this space age show him circling the earth in a swift circuit. Orbiting the earth in this fashion gives us a suggestion of how God in His infinite might will he able to reveal His Son to all the earth in a manner similar to the sweep of lightning across the sky. Instead of naming an exact geographical location in answer to the eager question of the disciples: “Where, Lord?” (Luke 17:37), Jesus gives an enigmatic answer. They are left with the universal appearance of Jesus at His second coming. It is a picture in motion rather than a specified location.

“Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles he gathered together.” The reference is plainly to vultures rather than eagles. Plummer remarks that eagles do not go in flocks and do not feed on carrion. Bishop Lightfoot thought the reference was to the Roman eagle at the head of a Roman legion, and his influence has caused the word to be translated eagle. The saying has been taken to mean that as the vultures, circling in the sky, indicate the general location of a dead body so (1) the fulfillment of expected conditions will indicate the general approach of the second coming; or (2) the clinging of sinful men to earthly treasures will indicate where the judgment of God will descend in the Person of His Son.

107. Chapter 48 - Parables on Prayer

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Luke 18:1-14 The Context

Out of the multitude of events and discourses in the Peraean ministry, Luke selects the next two parables on prayer. We are unable to determine whether the parable of the unjust judge was delivered at the same time and to the same audience as the preceding address on the second coming. Luke introduces it without an obvious break: “And he spake a parable unto them.” There is a direct line of contact in the thought seen in the surprising conclusion to this parable. It emphasizes the oppression and persecution which the righteous will experience at the hands of the wicked and the difficulty of maintaining the faith until the day of glory when Christ shall return. The supreme importance of His coming, the uncertainty of the time, and the seduction of worldly treasures should lead them to be persistent in prayer. A similar connection is presented between the second coming and persistence in prayer in Luke 21:36 and Mark 13:33. This parable also carries a strong emphasis upon trust in God and upon the faith once for all delivered unto the saints.

Principles The two parables teach (1) persistence in prayer, and (2) humility in prayer. The parable of the unjust judge is a good place to see that the details of a parable must not be pressed into parallelism, but that the interpreter must be content with the fundamental principles taught. Luke states the main principle taught by the parable: “And he spake a parable unto them to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18:1). Praying or fainting sounds like a strange choice of alternatives! To faint means to lose consciousness, when used in a physical sense. In the spiritual realm, to faint means to grow weary and discouraged, and to quit. To pray always means to maintain constant contact with heaven by keeping the life in harmony and in communion with God. It is essential to have regular and special seasons of prayer, but it is most important also to keep the heart and life in constant seeking and doing God’s will.

Persistence in Prayer The allegorical method of interpreting parables, which insists on identifying every detail, is reduced to an absurdity in this parable, where God would be represented by a judge so wicked he respects neither God nor man and finally gives justice to the widow only in order to get rid of her. Jesus states the fundamental principle of persistence in prayer both at the beginning and at the close. The Judge

“And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith And shall not God avenge his own elect...?” In other words, if a wicked judge will grant justice to a poor, helpless widow just to get rid of her, how much more will the righteous God of all the earth grant protection and succor to His own chosen faithful servants, besieged in a hostile world? Jesus does not undertake to minimize the wickedness of the judge in order to draw a parallel with God. He rather emphasizes the wickedness of the judge. Two brief clauses set forth the absolute baseness of the judge: “...judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man.” He had no reverence for God and no respect even

for the noblest of men. He loved only himself and served himself. Justice and truth had no meaning for him. The only similarity between God and this judge is the place of authority which he had and which gave him the power of life and death. The Widow The helplessness of the widow introduces another element of the parable which is developed at the close: the persecution of the helpless righteous at the hands of the powerful wicked, and the difficult problem as to why God permits this situation to continue in the world. The widow was helpless because she had “no protector to coerce, nor money to bribe the unrighteous judge,” assuming, of course, that she would have used such base methods to secure her end if they had been available. We no not know what sort of mistreatment this helpless woman was enduring. In His blistering denunciation of the Pharisees on the last day of His public ministry Jesus declared, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows’ houses and for a pretense make long prayers: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation” (Matthew 23:14). Devouring houses suggests clever trickery to get a mortgage on the home and then to foreclose the mortgage without mercy. It is noteworthy that Jesus does not urge long prayers in this parable, but unbroken succession of brief prayers which constitute praying always. Long prayers may cause a person to pray and faint at the same time, as his mind wanders off to earthly things, even while he is in the posture and act of addressing God. This is not prayer, but pretense. The Appeals

“Avenge me of mine adversary” (Luke 18:3). The Greek phrase means, “Give me a sentence of protection from,” “preserve me against his attacks,” rather than “deliver me out of his power” (Plummer). The tense of the verbs is impressive. The imperfect tense is used with its emphasis upon continued action: “She came oft”; “she kept on coming”; also, “He kept on refusing.” “And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest she wear me out by continual coming” (Luke 18:4, Luke 18:5). This judge is as boastful of his wickedness as the Pharisee in the next parable is boastful of his goodness. But this is no public confession of sin by the judge; it Is merely the shrewd calculation of his private thoughts and intents. The verb wear me out (a.s.v.), weary me (a.v.), has the following meanings: (1) “hit under the eye, give a black eye”; (2) “beat black and blue” ; (3) “mortify, annoy greatly.” A number of commentators, including Meyer, Godet, Weiss, and others, hold to the primary meaning and put a glint of humor or exaggeration into the declaration: “Lest she give me a black eye,” or “Lest she beat me black and blue.” But this picture is entirely contrary to the helplessness of the widow and the continuance of her appeals. Moreover, the tense of the Greek verbs renders this interpretation impossible, as also the phrase “by her continual coming.” Presumably a surprise assault might have given the judge a black eye, but the helpless widow would not have been able to give the judge a black eye every day or heat black and blue continually. The judge might have secured a bodyguard or had her put in prison, but such a move would have increased the public humiliation and annoyance. His wicked character would have been underscored publicly. If he refused to allow her to have an audience in his court room, she still could follow along the highway with her appeals and make it very embarrassing for him. The Longsuffering of God

“And shall not God avenge his elect, that cry to him day and night, and yet he is longsuffering over them?” (Luke 18:7). The background in the hearts of the apostles during all this period is the fearful realization that Jesus is going up to Jerusalem to die at the hands of the wicked leaders of the nation. The problem of evil and the question as to why God permits the wicked to persecute

and slay the righteous is also in the background of this parable. The disciples would make their own application. God has a plan and a purpose in all that He does and permits. It is hard for us to understand now, but it all will he made plain to us in eternity. The verb long-suffering over them (bear long with them, A. V.) may mean “slow to anger,” and over them would then refer to the enemies of the righteous whom God is seeking to save. He is long-suffering with the wicked because He does not desire that any should perish, but that all men may he brought to repentance and reconciliation with God. For this reason God permits the righteous to suffer, even as He sent His Son to die for all lost mankind. The verb may mean “is not impatient,” and over them would then refer to the persistence of the righteous in prayer. The wicked judge was worn out and disgusted with the widow’s continuous pleading, but God is not impatient at the repeated appeals of just persons. The kind of prayers we offer, the manner in which we offer them, the indolent spirit in which we fail to back up our prayers with our deeds must he enough to try the patience of God. He is merciful toward us in our weakness as He is toward the rebellious wicked in their stubborn disobedience. The Triumph of Righteousness

“I say unto you, that he will avenge them speedily” (Luke 18:8). This kind of action is what John the Baptist had predicted would be the Messiah’s course. How often the apostles must have recalled his blazing denunciations and predictions, and then turned in perplexity to witness Jesus’ refusal to use His miraculous power to destroy His enemies. But the disciples were given this strong assurance that God would finally act; and, when He did, it would be swift and terrible. This was a most important element of this parable because Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, which was so full of rebellion against God and deadly plots of death to His Son. The chief principle is persistence in prayer, but the fact that God lives and rules, and will finally prevail over all the wicked is a secondary element which should not be overlooked. The difference in the viewpoint of God and man in regard to the passage of time seems to enter into this word speedily. God knows man’s needs and possibilities, and acts with perfect wisdom. Man may feel it is a perplexing delay over a long period as he suffers and wrestles in prayer. God acts speedily even though the Christian may he tempted to faint during the long wait. Godet holds that speedily means that “although God delays to act; yet, when the moment comes, He acts swiftly, as in the Deluge and the destruction of Sodom.” This approach furnishes another line of contact with the preceding discourse.

“Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8). The adversative conjunction nevertheless is startling. It arrests the reader and makes him search for the contrast. It asks whether “in spite of the fact” that the gate of heaven is always open, that at any moment of need a Christian may seek God’s help without any preliminary wait for an audience to be granted, and that man’s need is so great and the hostility of the world so oppressive, will man yet seek the presence and help of God with enough frequency and perseverance that he will be able to prove faithful? The Faith The climax of the parable comes with the final triumph of God over all evil and the sending of His Son to bring eternal blessedness to the righteous and doom to the wicked. The definite article in the text gives strong emphasis to “the faith.” It is not only man’s persistence in prayer, but his actual preservation and proclamation of the divine message of redemption both in his words and in his life. Shall He find “faithful ones on the earth”? This is tantamount to finding “the faith” still believed, proclaimed, and lived. Some urge that it means the faith which perseveres in prayer, but to limit the meaning in this fashion is to overlook the close connection between this parable and the discussion of the second coming, where the world is

pictured as imitating the time of Noah and Lot. The answer to the question has hen given by Jesus on many occasions, as He pointed out that there will he the few who enter by the narrow gate. This outcry of Jesus is not despondent; it casts no doubt upon His Person or power or the certainty of His second coming. It reflects only upon man's wisdom and loyalty. The point of the question here is that although God is so patient and His answer to prayer so certain, yet man always tends to tire, to lose his appreciation, and to desert God.

Unanswered Prayers? The problem of unanswered prayers is presented to us in this parable. There are many reasons discernible to us, besides what is hidden from our sight. (1) We pray for the wrong things or in the wrong spirit or with wrong motives. (2) We lack faith and obedience (James 1:2-8). (3) We fail to do our part. (4) The stubborn will of others enters in to frustrate the will of God, as is seen in the prayers offered for the salvation of a loved one. Most lives are barren because they are prayerless: "Ye have not because ye ask not" (James 4:2). We offer selfish, sinful, foolish prayers: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your pleasures" (James 4:3). "Ye know not what ye ask" (Mark 10:38). "Teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1).

Context The parable of the Pharisee and the publican is directed to the Pharisees: "And he spake also this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and set all others at nought" (Luke 18:9). The lines of connection between the content of this parable, the sermon on the second coming, and the parable of the unjust judge are not evident; and we cannot tell whether it was delivered at the same time. It may be placed here because it also treats the subject of prayer, or it may have arisen out of the preceding discussion. Trusting in themselves that they were righteous, the Pharisees rested on a doctrine of salvation by good works rather than the mercy of God. They felt they could be so good that they deserved salvation. The scorn they had for others was in proportion to their blind conceit and self-praise. The Two Men

"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican" (Luke 18:10). Whether they went up from some section of the lower city or from the country of Judaea or the provinces, the description went up is accurate. The temple was on Mount Moriah. These two men doubtless prayed in the court of Israel, where only male Israelites over twenty years of age might enter. In the outer courts the crowds would have been larger. The Pharisee might have sought the most prominent place before the largest crowd, but not the publican. The two seem to have had the court or some section of it to themselves; they stood apart in sufficient isolation that the Pharisee was able to keep his eye on the publican. The Prayer of the Pharisee

"The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican" (Luke 18:11). The Pharisee did not pray to God; be was talking to himself. There is deep irony in that phrase thus with himself. God was purely incidental and secondary; he himself was all-sufficient; the time, place, and form were all merely chosen for self-glorification. His address God, I thank thee coupled with the prayer that follows was condescension itself. He congratulated God in having such a wonderful worshiper as himself, and his thanksgiving turned into a boast. He divided all the world of mankind into two parts — himself and "the rest of men." If it were not for his own spotless life and perfection, God would have been bereft of true worshipers.

It is a question as to how far his boasting was deceitful or self-deceived. He was probably blind to his faults and imagined that he was correctly stating the case. Just how far he was from understanding the true nature of the virtues he claimed can be seen in that he claimed never to have been unjust, and in the same breath was guilty of injustice toward the publican in attempting to estimate and judge his life, a task of which only God is capable. He freely charged “the rest of men” as guilty of these sins. His declaration that He was free from adultery was not humble enough to take into account the attitude and thoughts of the heart as well as the conduct of life. His estimate of the other sins would have been just as superficial. He reminds one of the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son. The rich young ruler also comes somewhat into view as we study this Pharisee.

Fasting and Tithing

“I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I get” (Luke 18:12). The Mosaic law ordered a fast on one day out of the year — the Day of Atonement. To commemorate various national calamities, other fasts were observed (Zechariah 8:19). The Pharisees went beyond the law with a work of supererogation by fasting twice a week on Mondays and Thursdays. These days were established by tradition because Moses was supposed to have ascended Mount Sinai on the fifth day and to have come down on the second day. A Pharisee who fasted twice a week through the entire year was exceedingly strict. All that I get (a.s.v.) is a more accurate translation of the Greek verb than the all that I possess in the a.v. The Pharisee did not tithe his capital, but his income.

ThePublican’s Prayer

“But the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God, he merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13). The definite article “the sinner” (a.s.v. , footnote) is even more emphatic, suggesting “of whom I am chief.” The publican stood afar off from the entrance to the court of priests and from the Pharisee, who evidently had chosen a prominent place near the entrance to the most sacred area. He did not feel he was worthy to be in this holy temple and certainly should not push himself up to the front. He was, however, in the inner court of Israel and not the court of the Gentiles, because he desired isolation from the noise and hubbub of the crowd. The Pharisee probably would not have seen him so readily if he had been in the larger court. As he did not choose a prominent position, so he did not even look toward heaven. His agony of repentance expressed itself in an eloquent gesture, as he continued to smite his breast. This could have been in a manner not to attract the attention of men. The words so much as in would not lift up so much as his eyes seem to mean “not to mention his hands or face,” or “not to mention adopting a familiar or patronizing air such as the Pharisee affected.” The extreme brevity of the prayer is like the sharp outcry of a man in deadly danger or desperate need. He does not undertake to excuse himself or defend himself by making comparison He might have selected someone far worse than himself and thanked God that he was not like men who never repented or came to confess and ask forgiveness of God. Many abandoned publicans would never even enter the temple. He might have cited various good deeds and generous acts but he accepted prayer as a time for penitence rather than boasting. As the Pharisee had divided the world of mankind into two parts, himself, and “the rest of men,” so the publican in extreme humility suggests the same sort of division, “Be merciful to me, the sinner.”

God’s Answer

“This man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (Luke 18:14). Here is the fundamental principle of the parable stated at its close, even as it had been suggested at the opening: “who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and set all others at nought” (Luke 18:9). This man echoes the contemptuous reference of the Pharisee. Even this publican was justified, i.e., was accounted righteous by being forgiven and accepted of God, rather than the punctilious Pharisee. Was the Pharisee justified at all? He did not ask forgiveness or express any sort of lack or need. Since he confessed no sin and did not ask forgiveness, how could he have been forgiven? God would not force forgiveness upon him unasked, or grant it to him unrepentant. Why did the Pharisee bother to come up and pray? Did he pray? A Prayer for the Pharisee A. B. Bruce suggests the following prayer as one which would have been fitting for the Pharisee:

I thank Thee that I have been preserved from extortion, but I confess I have coveted oft times what I have not laid hands on. I thank Thee I have not been an unjust man, but I acknowledge that I am far from being a generous man. I thank Thee I am not an adulterer, but I confess that my heart has harboured many wicked thoughts. I thank Thee that my lot, my opportunities, and my habits differ widely from those of the class to which this man my fellow-worshipper, who beats his breast, belongs; but I do not flatter myself that had I been in his circumstances I should have been better than he, and I deplore that I and the class of which I am a member feel so little compassion toward these much-tempted men, that we content ourselves with simply abhorring them and holding aloof from their society. I thank thee that it is in my heart to attend punctually to my religious duties, but I acknowledge that my zeal and liberality come immeasurably short of what is due Thee, and contrast but poorly with those of him who centuries ago offered up this prayer and thanksgiving in the holy city: “Now therefore, our God, we thank Thee and praise thy glorious name. But who Amos 1:1-15, and what is my people, that we should he able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee. O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build Thee and house for Thine holy name cometh of Thine hand, and is all thine own.” What are my poor tithes to the liberality of King David, or what my religious devotion compared to his whose whole heart was set upon building a temple for Jehovah such as that within whose sacred precincts I now stand? (The Parabolic Teaching of Christ, pp. 318, 319). A New Life for the Publican The publican might have formulated a prayer to defend himself in his low estate after the fashion of the Pharisee. He might have pointed out to God that at least he was not a hypocrite, such as the Pharisee. He might have referred to good deeds in his life or defended himself by comparison with others who were so wicked they would not even enter the temple. His humble confession and plea for forgiveness carried the necessary pledge to make a stronger fight against sin than he had ever done before. He would still fail to reach perfection. Each day he would find himself compelled to pray in humility for forgiveness for the sins of commission and omission during that day. But even facing the prospect of trial and failure, he had begun a new life. Repentance is a sham if it does not include the most determined struggle against sin. The Whiffenpoof Song

God’s forgiveness requires man’s repentance. To experience sorrow for sin is not enough. The change of mind must he joined to reformation of life. As we pray for forgiveness, we must pledge a stronger battle against the temptations that beset us. Upon hearing for the first time on the radio The Yale Whiffenpoof Song, what Christian has not been startled and surprised? thrilled by the

beauty of its music when rendered by a great male chorus? saddened by the thought content, which pledges a life of boastful dedication to a wicked habit and contemplates a death without hope? shocked and dismayed by the blasphemy of such a cynical prayer to Almighty God? The Temple Bar is the name of the Saloon in New Haven. Mory is the name of the owner. Louis is the bartender. The title Whiffenpoofs presents the picture of the gay, young blades starting a night of drunkenness. First they take a “whiff” of the odor; next they “poof,” as they blow off the foam; then they drink it down. To the tables down at Mory’s, To the place where Louis dwells, To the dear old Temple Bar We love so well.

Sing the Whiffenpoofs, assembled With their glasses raised on high, And the magic of their singing Casts its spell.

Yes, the magic of their singing Of the songs we love so well, “Shall I Wasting,” and “Ma-vour-neen,” And the rest.

We will serenade our Louis While life and voice shall last, Then we’ll pass and be forgotten With the rest.

We’re poor little lambs Who have lost our way: Baa! Baa! Baa!

We’re little black sheep Who have gone astray: Baa! Baa! Baa!

Gentlemen songsters off on a spree, Doomed from here to eternity;

Lord have mercy on such as we: Baa! Baa! Baa! As faith without works is dead, so a prayer for forgiveness without repentance is an insult to God. “God, be merciful to me a sinner” requires the necessary complement “Help me to begin a new life in this very moment and help me to climb up to higher ground every day.” It is inconceivable trifling with the long-suffering, patience, and love of God to ask Him for forgiveness if we do not pledge to Him our life’s devotion and follow through with an unyielding battle against temptation. Who of us is so good he does not need to give heed to the urgent warning of our Savior: “Except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish”?

Both parables end with man standing before the judgment seat of Christ in the final day. As a general rule, even in this wicked world, those who exalt themselves find that their fellows deflate their egotism. A Hitler or a Mussolini may strut before hypnotized followers for a time, but the current of history has a way of humbling those who exalt themselves and of exalting those who humble themselves. Where the inequalities of earth leave the proud and haughty in power through a long life, death finally comes to summon them to the judgment bar of Christ. THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN: A STUDY IN CONTRASTS I. Position and life of both men (Luke 18:9)

A. The Pharisee 1.A member of the extremely pious sect of the Jews, priding himself on his devotion to God and the Old Testament 2. At home in the temple and present as a result of habit 3. His prayer a revelation of his life and to be accepted at face value

4. Not an extortioner (in contrast with the publicans, who were notorious for oppressing the people and collecting more taxes than were due) 5. Not unjust (temptation of publicans to use power unjustly) 6. Not an adulterer (publicans, notable outcasts from society) 7. Fasted twice a week (one regular fast a year on the Day of Atonement required in the law) (Luke 18:12) 8. Gave tithes of all (only the produce of herds and fields required to be tithed in the law) (Luke 18:12)

B. The publican 1. A despised outcast and colleague of Gentiles 2. A stranger in the temple and present as the result of desperate need 3. His prayer a confession of his sinfulness, his gesture and words implying he was a great sinner (Luke 18:13) II. Attitudes of both toward God (Luke 18:10-13)

A. The Pharisee 1. Revealed by manner and content of his prayer 2. “Prayed with himself” and ignored God (Luke 18:11) 3. Adopted a patronizing air toward God: “I thank thee that I am not as the rest of men” (Luke 18:11) 4. Trusted in himself, rather than in God (Luke 18:9) 5. Had no confession of sin to offer (Luke 18:11, Luke 18:12) 6. Recited a list of his virtues (Luke 18:11, Luke 18:12) 7. Had no petition to present; altogether self-centered and satisfied

B. The publican 1. Realized God’s holiness and the solemnity of the occasion: “standing afar off,” (Luke 18:13)

2. Realized the privilege of prayer and his unworthiness: “would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven” (Luke 18:13) 3. Made no claim to goodness 4. Expressed desperate need. “smote his breast” (Luke 18:13) 5. Confessed his sin and asked forgiveness, and implied his repentance and vow for renewed battle against sin III. Attitude of both toward their fellowmen

A. The Pharisee 1. Scorn and depreciation for his fellows: “set all others at nought” (Luke 18:9) 2. Blind to his own sin, but alive to the sin of others: “I am not as the rest of men” (Luke 18:11) 3. Attempted to elevate himself by casting reflection on others: “even as this publican (Luke 18:11)

B. The publican 1. Felt unworthy to associate with his fellow worshipers: “standing afar off” (Luke 18:13) 2. Did not attempt to indict his fellows 3. Did not attempt to excuse himself C. Effect of their attitude and action (Luke 18:14) 1. The Pharisee, praising his own goodness, fastened his sin upon himself.

2. The publican, confessing his sin and pleading for mercy, was forgiven.

108. Chapter 49 - Broken Homes Versus Happy Homes

Chapter 49 - Broken Homes Versus Happy Homes Matthew 19:1-15;Mark 10:1-16;Luke 18:15-17 Harmony of Accounts In quick succession the Synoptics present a vivid picture of broken homes and then a deeply moving scene of Jesus taking little children into his arms in a happy, God-fearing home. The broken homes are introduced by the report of a discussion with the Pharisees concerning divorce. Matthew and Mark locate this discussion in Peraea. The fact is conclusive in that they tell of this exchange with the Pharisees just before they record the scene of Jesus in the home of a disciple, where He welcomes little children, and the incident about the rich young ruler. Since Luke, who does not record the discussion about divorce, gives the next two scenes at this time, the three accounts obviously fit together. Luke's record of new material has filled almost nine chapters, from the transfiguration scene forward, but now the three accounts join as Jesus approaches the capital. Luke will still have some new material to introduce, but John is the one who furnishes the most new information about the events in the upper room.

Polygamy and Divorce

Matthew 19:1, Matthew 19:2 tells of Jesus' teaching and healing ministry in Peraea and the great multitudes which surrounded Him. His record is in agreement with the account Luke has been giving of this ministry. "And there came unto him Pharisees, trying him, and saying, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" (Matthew 19:3). They did not raise the question of the propriety of polygamy. The reasons are obvious: (1) The law of Moses did not condone polygamy. (2) The Jews no longer practiced polygamy. (3) It was not at this time a debatable subject. The bare historical record of the Old Testament reports without comment the practice of polygamy by such leaders as Abraham and Jacob. Isaac's marriage is presented as a very beautiful example of monogamy. The record brings out the evils of polygamy in the account of the jealously, strife, confusion, and hatred in the home of various men, such as Abraham, Jacob, and particularly Elkanah, the father of Samuel. After the Babylonian captivity the Jews no longer practiced polygamy; Herod the Great with nine wives was an isolated exception. A man could have a succession of wives, but not a plurality of wives at the same time. The objective of the Pharisees in this discussion was to get evidence that Jesus opposed the law of Moses or presumed to change it or claim superiority to it. They had seen what they considered indications of this in His teaching, and they wanted clearer evidence. The Two Schools

There are two schools of thought, each headed by famous rabbis, on opposite sides of the question of divorce. Should divorce be granted freely for any cause, or solely for the cause of adultery? Mark states their question in a general way as concerning the validity of divorce, but Matthew shows the specific turn of the discussion; they were tempting Him (seeking to ensnare Him) over the proposition as to whether divorce should be granted "for every cause." There was no dispute that the Old Testament permitted divorce (Deuteronomy 24:1); the question was as to how the law was to be applied. The school of Shammai held that the law did not grant freedom of divorce for any other cause than adultery. They reached this position by interpreting that "some

unseemly thing" (Deuteronomy 24:1) could only refer to adultery. The school of Hillel defended divorce for any cause and held that this was the plain teaching of Deuteronomy 24:1. The Pharisees did not quote these famous rabbis, nor did Jesus refer to them in His reply. As in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke with authority. His reply shows that both schools were wrong; the school of Shammai was wrong in interpretation, and the school of Hillel was wrong in practice. Jesus boldly set aside the teaching of the Old Testament on the subject. In the Sermon on the Mount He had repeatedly declared, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time...but I say unto you." Some claim that in these cases Jesus only deepened and reinforced the law, declaring that unrestrained lust in the heart constitutes adultery just as the act, and that hatred and desire and intent to kill in the heart is the same as murder. But Matthew 5:31, Matthew 5:32 shows that Jesus set aside the law on divorce. The Pharisees, therefore, knew what the answer of Jesus would be as to the propriety of divorce; the crux of their attack was to be His attitude toward the law of Moses.

John the Baptist

Just how intense the discussion over divorce was can be seen from the fact that John the Baptist had gone to his death over this very issue. Whether in the court of Herod Antipas or from a distance John had handled this proposition and condemned Herod for driving off his wife, the daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia, in order that he might live with Herodias, the wife of his brother Herod Philip of Rome. Thus it was not merely a rabbi, Shammai, who had taken this position that divorce was only to be granted for the cause of adultery, but also an inspired prophet, John the Baptist. The answer of Jesus is unique, then, only in the sense of the divine authority with which He spoke and the evidence which He presented. The Divine Plan

"Have ye not read, that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh? So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:4-6). Jesus meets their shrewd plot to place Him in opposition to the Old Testament by citing the historical account of Genesis; God did not make one woman and several men or one man and several women; He created in the beginning one man and one woman, and thus demonstrated His divine plan. Further, Jesus quoted what God said concerning the solemnity of the marriage relation. Thus the whole matter was not one of a theoretical interpretation of a Jewish rabbi or even an avowed position of John the Baptist. God had ruled on the whole issue in the beginning. Jesus' answer was a general statement that marriage was a once-for-all, lifetime relationship, supremely sacred by its very nature. The corollary to this proposition would be a sharp No to their question of divorce for every cause. Let not man put asunder gave a ringing declaration to answer their question. The Law of Moses

"Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put her away?" (Matthew 19:7). Moses had not commanded divorce, but had given a ruling permitting divorce. They were in great difficulty to bring their charge against Him of destroying the Old Testament law because Jesus had just quoted from Genesis the divine plan of God as revealed in the beginning. They could only ask how Moses could have given a different judgment. Mark's account shows that Jesus asked them to quote the law on the subject (Mark 10:3). This quotation enabled

Jesus to give an independent analysis of the law and the problem apart from any discussion of the prevailing schools of thought. They quoted the law correctly, and the interpretation which the school of Shammai had attempted to place upon the passage was destroyed, for the law made no mention of adultery and set no limits to the grounds for divorce.

Hard Hearts of People

“Moses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it hath not been so” (Matthew 19:8). The Greek word means hard in the sense of rough or coarse, rather than unimpressible. In the primitive age when the law was given, freedom of divorce was granted because the rudeness of human nature threatened to destroy marriage and the home altogether. The Old Testament ruling was the best which could be applied at that time. The Bible was a progressive revelation as man became able to receive the fuller, more perfect and complete revelation. God spoke in the prophets to them of old time in divers portions and manners, but unto us at the end of the age in His Son (Hebrews 1:1, Hebrews 1:2). The Old Testament itself had declared that it was to be superseded by a new and superior covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:6-13). Jesus’ declaration shows that the school of Hillel had been correct in interpretation, but Jesus set aside the law by affirming the new and higher standard. Jesus pointed out: (1) God in the beginning created one man and one woman, showing His plan and program for the human race. Any deviation from this falls short of the ideal God had established, and is the result of man’s sin. The change from this ideal in the regulation of the law of Moses was but a temporary expedient. (2) Marriage causes a man and a woman to leave their parents and establish a new home. The very nature of the union forbids polygamy or freedom of divorce. (3) Since God has thus ruled, man has no right to interfere and to separate those so joined by God’s decree.

Scriptural Ground

“Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery” (Matthew 19:9). Both Matthew and Mark give independent material at this point. Matthew notes the exception “except for fornication.” Mark shows that Jesus also specifically mentioned a wife divorcing her husband, a course which was not unknown in the Roman Empire at that time (Mark 10:12). Such divorces had occurred in Judaea; Salome divorced her husband Costibar (Josephus, Ant. XV: VII:10). The word fornication has the general meaning of sexual sin, and the specific meaning of the sin of unmarried persons as distinguished from adultery, which is the sin of married persons. Here, the term fornication is obviously used in the general sense and refers to the sin of married people. While Mark does not mention this exception, he implies it by giving the same emphatic statement concerning the two becoming one: adultery breaks the marriage tie; Matthew is fuller and clearer on this point. Matthew shows that the ruling on divorce (Matthew 19:9), given in answer to the Pharisees, was spoken before the entire crowd. He then records a conversation with the disciples concerning this teaching. Mark 10:10 shows that this discussion occurred in private after they had gone into the house of some disciple. When Jesus made the first public declaration, the apostles were evidently so confounded by it that they asked Jesus for more information in private. Jesus repeated His solemn declaration that marriage was for life. It was in this declaration that Jesus included the proposition of a wife divorcing her husband. The Old Testament granted no

permission to a wife to divorce her husband. But Palestine in the time of Christ had come under the influence of Graeco-Roman civilization, where women had the right to divorce their husbands. His hearers would readily understand His meaning. Jesus was issuing God's decree to all the world, and it was fitting that He should thus make the ruling complete. The Disciples Reaction

"The disciples say unto him, If the case of the man is so with his wife, it is not expedient to marry" (Matthew 19:10). The disciples were evidently stunned by the severe ruling Jesus had given. They felt that if marriage is such a fixed and irrevocable tie, the chances of a happy marriage are too small and a man should not marry. If nothing but the cause of unfaithfulness is sufficient to warrant divorce, then the union with a woman who was quarrelsome and ill-tempered would become an intolerable condition. This objection seems to indicate that the principle of no divorce except for the cause of unfaithfulness, was not the current conception or practice. The effort of Shammai to interpret the Old Testament in this manner had evidently not been widely accepted. On the other hand, these men had been disciples of John the Baptist and had heard him preach on this subject and had seen him go to his death at the hands of Herodias because of his stand. This should have made them aware of God's divine plan. They were now brought to face the problem in a clearer way by this discussion of Jesus with the Pharisees, and they were profoundly impressed. Jesus does not say that a person who is being abused and the life imperiled by a drunken mate, must continue to live with this person. The prohibition is not against separation, but against divorce. Divorce is for the purpose of remarriage.

Nothing reveals more clearly what J. Edgar Hoover calls "the subsidence of our moral foundations" than the breakdown of the home, both in the relation of husband and wife and that of parents and children. From its inception Communism has carried on a vicious attack upon marriage. This has found fertile soil in the present corrupt state of modern society. Russia's bitter experience with roving bands of wild, illegitimate children, robbing, burning, killing, caused the Communist leaders to turn back to seek a re-establishment of the home. But their atheistic propaganda has borne fruit in the modern vagaries, not only of a denial of the sacredness of marriage, but even a denial of the need for such an institution at all. The effort to erect a new system of morality is merely the resurrection of ancient immorality.

Marriage a Matter of Choice

"But he said unto them, Not all men can receive this saying, but they to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs, that were so born from their mother's womb: and there are eunuchs, that were made eunuchs by men: and there are eunuchs, that made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it" (Matthew 19:11, Matthew 19:12). Some commentators interpret this saying as meaning Jesus' declaration concerning marriage being an irrevocable tie except for the cause of adultery, but it is hard to see how Jesus could give such a clear and positive ruling and then say that a man is at liberty to obey or disobey God's divine plan. This saying evidently refers to the statement of the disciples that it is better not to marry since marriage is so fixed in character. The answer which Jesus gave discusses this proposition of the single and the married state. He declares that the statement of the disciples is correct under certain circumstances; there are some who should not marry: those who are eunuchs because of "natural infirmity or the cruelty of men," and those who are voluntary eunuchs, those who choose to remain single in order to devote themselves more completely to the work of

Christ. Marriage is open to all, but no one is obliged to marry. It is not profitable for some; it is profitable for others.

Happy Homes This solemn and severe discussion of broken homes is followed by one of the most touching scenes in the Gospel narratives. Jesus' love for little children is one of the most precious revelations which the inspired biographers have given us. Children are especially mentioned as present at the feeding of the five thousand and of the four thousand. Their irrepressible praise of Jesus in the temple on the morning after the triumphal entry brought down the wrath of the chief priests and Pharisees Upon returning to Capernaum after the transfiguration, Jesus rebuked the apostles for their quarrel over the chief places in the kingdom by taking a little child and warning them they would not even get into the kingdom if they did not change their attitude and become as little children. Children undoubtedly were always in the midst as Jesus taught, preached, and healed. Several children were healed by Jesus: Jairus' daughter, the daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman, the son of the man at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration.

Little Children

Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should lay his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them" (Matthew 19:13). The parents were bringing little children that the great Prophet, whose touch healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, and raised the dead, might place His hands on their heads and bless them. Mark and Luke say "touch them," but Matthew makes the purpose clearer; it was that He might lay His hands on them and pray God's blessings to be granted to them. The independence of the records is remarkable. Luke uses the Greek word for infants; whereas Matthew and Mark say "little children." They were evidently of various ages, but all young children. The word also in Luke 18:15, "and they were bringing unto him also their babies," is interesting. This seems to suggest that in addition to their sick, who were being so wonderfully healed, they were bringing unto Him their infants. Some early Christian writers suggest that the disciples rebuked the parents because they felt the children were unworthy to approach Jesus, but there is no suggestion of this in the text. Children are often a vexation and worry when older people have great enterprises on hand. The disciples thought it was taking too much of Jesus' time and strength arid that it was an imposition, since the children were not sick or in need of healing. Some suggest that it was bedtime and the children were being brought in to tell Jesus good night. The time of day is not stated, but Jesus was in the midst of His daily teaching, which was now being carried on in the home of some disciple.

Jesus' Rebuke

Mark is more explicit than the others in describing the effect upon Jesus of this move by the apostles: "But when Jesus saw it, he was moved with indignation, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me; forbid them not: for to such belongeth the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14). His indignation was not merely at the presumption of the apostles in trying to take command of the situation, for Jesus could have asked the parents to desist if He had so desired; He became indignant rather that His own followers should try to prevent anyone from coming to Him. Jesus was always eager and ready to receive all who came, even little children. The fact that little children manifestly loved Jesus is shown in this passage. They quickly reveal their attitude as they assess the character of each person. Jesus did not need the direction of the apostles in arranging His program, but this seems a secondary consideration. Luke says, "But Jesus called

them unto him" (Luke 18:16). This means He called back the parents who were being ushered out by the apostles. He then explained to the entire group of disciples His attitude.

Early Christian writers observe that Jesus did not say, "of these is the kingdom of heaven," or "of all children," but "of such," i.e., of people whether young or old who exhibit the beautiful childlike character which is seen in the ideal little child. Paul urges in his epistles that the Christians should act like men, not children. He means, of course, to refer to the disgusting qualities of spoiled children. Jesus is not urging us to become like some children we have seen. He is talking of the ideal little child. The admirable qualities in a little child are humility, trust, simplicity, sincerity, courage, teachableness, unselfishness, loyalty, innocence, loving devotion, and an obedient spirit. Observe how these characteristics stand out in the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount.

Salvation ofLittle Children His words suffer the little children to come unto me have a deeper and wider significance than this incident. He did not say, "Suffer the parents of little children to bring them unto me." This is what was certainly being done in the case of the infants who were brought to Him. There is the strong responsibility of parents to use their influence in teaching and leading little children to love Christ and to want to obey Him. With His customary emphasis upon individual choice and responsibility Jesus sets forth that the children are the ones to exercise their own will and come to Him. Parents cannot believe or repent for their children. There is no ground for baptizing a child on the basis of the parent's faith. Baptism is not mentioned in the passage. It is always fitting to lay one's hands on a little child and pray that God's richest blessings may be upon him, but not to make a church ordinance out of it, as is done in "Infant Dedication." When children desire to come to Jesus, they are not to be forbidden. The age differs at which children come to an understanding of the essential elements of the gospel and pass from the state of innocence into a state of realization of being lost. It differs according to the background and ability of the child. Undue pressure which is sometimes exerted on very young children in revival meetings and summer camps is to be deplored. The child should be permitted to come to his own realization of sin, salvation, and the Savior in very early years. Wisdom and tact should be shown in giving children the proper understanding and faith before they come to be baptized.

Mark reported Jesus as saying, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein" (Mark 10:15). One may receive the kingdom by absolute acceptance of the will of God which circumscribes the kingdom. He thus enters it as a subject. It is thus that a person becomes a naturalized citizen of a country. He receives the country as a citizen of it. Mark is particularly vivid and touching in his description of this scene as Jesus took the children in His arms and blessed them. It was not necessary for Him to take them into His arms in order to lay His hands on them and bless them. Each child seems to have been taken up by Jesus as a beautiful expression of His love for them and for all mankind. It is also an expression of love and confidence on the part of the children.

109. Chapter 50 - The Rich Young Ruler

Chapter 50 - The Rich Young Ruler Matthew 19:16-22;Mark 10:17-22;Luke 18:18-23 The Young Man

“And as he was going forth into the way, there ran one to him, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” (Mark 10:17). Luke records that “a certain ruler” asked Jesus this question; Matthew merely says, “One came to him and said Mark’s account gives the additional details that Jesus was traveling along a highway and that this person ran in order to overtake Jesus or to intercept Him at some point, and then kneeled before Him in reverence. Matthew calls him “the young man twice (Matthew 19:20, Matthew 19:22); all three writers make plain that he was very rich. The whole picture shows the abounding energy, enthusiasm, self-confidence, and immaturity of youth.

Since he was a young man, he was probably not a member of the Sanhedrin, but a “ruler” of the local synagogue. He had lived an exemplary life, and was very lovable in personality and disposition, had an inner longing for eternal life and the idea that he could gain it by some outstanding good deed, but he lacked the courage for heroic self-dedication. He reminds one of the Pharisee praying in the temple since he was able to survey the entire Old Testament law and affirm that he had kept it all from his youth. But he did not show the supercilious air of superiority which the Pharisee revealed. He realized in a vague way that he lacked something, and he desired to provide for this lack. He had youth, wealth, position, and fame, and yet was dissatisfied with himself. There was none of this self-examination or admission of failure seen in the Pharisee in the temple. His Problem

Dissatisfaction with his own life had evidently arisen from his contact with the personality, message, and missionary campaigns of Jesus. He had considered himself a model of uprightness and virtue, but what he had heard or seen about Jesus and His wonderful spiritual power and dedication to the service of his fellow men had awakened an inner longing to undertake some truly great and heroic thing for God. He evidently was a Pharisee, as is indicated by his idea that salvation could be earned by the doing of some great, good thing and by his estimate of his success in keeping the law. But he must be classified as one of the Pharisees who was most attractive in personality and attitude.

Modernists, who attempt to rewrite the accounts out of their imagination, give numerous bizarre explanations as to why he was not a young man.” Weiss, Neander, and others maintain that Matthew mistakenly supposed that he was a young man because Christ quoted to him “honor thy father….” The phrase from myyouth is held to be out of harmony with his being a young man. Holzmann goes to the opposite extreme and holds that this is the phrase which misled Matthew into supposing he was a young man. Their fantastic theories are built upon the presupposition that Matthew, the apostle and eyewitness, was not the author of this book, but that it was written by some unknown person who used his name and was so far removed from the facts that lie could only conjecture the details. The established early date of the Gospel narratives destroys this

presupposition. Matthew gives a harmonious and convincing description. Anyone who has heard a boastful young man in his twenties brag about “all his life” and “from his youth up” can readily verify this attitude of the rich, young ruler. The Rebuke of Jesus

“And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good save one, even God” (Mark 10:18). Modernists claim that by this answer Jesus confessed His own imperfections, His sins, and lack of goodness, and His inferiority to God. Such perversity puts into the words of Jesus a meaning absolutely contradictory to His whole life and teaching. Jesus’ answer is the beginning of His effort to puncture the shallow self-complacency of the young ruler, just as He did with Nicodemus. Matthew’s report shows that the young man also asked concerning some “good thing” which he could do. In other words, he spoke so glibly, using this word good twice in his request, that Jesus immediately began to uncover the chief weakness of the young man, which was his shallow character. He used words without deep thought; he viewed life without deep understanding; his blindness to his own faults was characteristic. When he approached Jesus with this address Good Teacher, what good thing, it seems almost patronizing. This is more of the flavor of Pharisaism. Jesus rebuked him instantly: “Do you know the meaning of this word you apply to me and which you use so freely? There is none good save God; if you apply that term to me and you understand what you mean, you affirm that I am God.” Plummer protests that the young man would not have understood what Jesus meant. This, however, was the very method which Jesus used in His teaching. Nicodemus, who was also a ruler and a Pharisee, had been utterly confounded by the declarations of Jesus. He had been sent home with some very perplexing problems and told to do his homework. The Deity of Christ The first thing necessary was to shock this young man into doing some honest thinking. Furthermore, it is a very large assumption and one which contradicts the Gospel narratives to say that the young man would not have understood what Jesus meant. Why not? The entire nation was in a ferment of excited expectation as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem to face the national leaders who had publicly and repeatedly charged Him with blasphemy for claiming to be the Son of God. They had decreed His death. In fact they had on a number of occasions attempted to kill Him on this charge. This young man was no ignoramus. It is impossible that he did not know of this amazing claim of Jesus and the resulting furor, which had been going on for three years, and was now coming to a swift climax. If he knew anything about Jesus (and he did), he would have known this. The fact that he kneeled to Jesus gives clear evidence that he knew of these claims. His act of reverence was undoubtedly as shallow as his words, but both the act and words say the same thing. They affirm that he knew what the national situation was with respect to Jesus. The radicals attempt to show a “development” in the account from Mark, who admits that Jesus was addressed as “good” and gave this surprising answer, to Matthew who is now developing the idea that Jesus is the Son of God and omits this remark of Jesus as giving unfortunate implications. But this procedure is based on a denial of the plain meaning of the words of Jesus. Instead of offering difficulty or indicating a development from Mark forward, it shows that Mark is giving the same strong succession of assertions of deity by Jesus as the other writers. Moreover, Luke confirms the fact which Matthew records as to the young man’s asking about some “good thing” that he desired to do. The Commandments

“Thou knowest the commandments, Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor thy father and mother” (Mark 10:19). The young man was a

Jew; the Old Testament had been given to show the way of life and to answer the very question which the young man raised; hence he was referred to what God had already said on the subject. Jesus did not attempt to rebuke the young man for his false, Pharisaical idea that salvation can be earned by good works. If he was capable of its realization, Jesus' stunning command at the close would bring the young man to see this. The reference to the Old Testament commands did not mean that Jesus had nothing further to offer, as His startling challenge at the close shows. Jesus simply began the instruction at the proper starting point. In logical fashion Jesus referred the young man to the revelation which he already possessed, before giving further guidance. The fact that Jesus did not quote all ten commandments is not significant. He cited representative commands which could be expected to cause difficulty for a rich young man. By mentioning some of the ten commandments He not only cited the whole Decalogue, but all the Old Testament as well. Matthew shows that Jesus said, "If thou wouldest enter into life, keep the commandments" and that the young man asked which commandments. Jesus was not suggesting to the young man that he would have to keep these selected commandments, but might omit the others. Rather, He cited a list of the commandments and necessarily implied that all were binding. All three Synoptic writers report that Jesus cited the commands against murder, adultery, stealing, false witness, and the command to honor father and mother. Mark adds "Do not defraud," which enforces by repetition the temptation of the rich to steal from the poor who are in their power. Most significant is the addition of Matthew: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Since this command is not in the Decalogue, Jesus was selecting out of the entire Old Testament commands which would furnish a particular test to a rich, young ruler. The Young Man's Avowal

"Teacher, all these things have I observed from my youth" (Mark 10:20). This gives a strong reminder of the Pharisee in the temple and his self-commendation. The young man evidently thought he was telling the truth. He was seeking something from God and was anxious to do something for God. He was sincere in his assertion that he had kept the Old Testament law; he had evidently lived on a high moral plane and avoided the coarser sins that so often plagued the rich. The fact that he walked into the proposition of having kept the command to love his neighbor as himself, with all his wealth and with all the poverty and need that surrounded him, shows he had not scratched the surface of what the Old Testament commanded. Like the Pharisee in the temple, he needed to qualify his assertions so as to include his thoughts and intents, in addition to his actions.

Jesus' Challenge

Jesus did not undertake to argue with the young man as to the validity of his claim. He simply gave him such a startling entrance examination into eternal life that the young man was stunned. It he had actually kept the spirit as well as the letter of the Law, he would have been willing, as the Galilean fishermen had been, to accept the challenge of Jesus. "And Jesus looking upon him loved him." Mark records thus a most searching look which Jesus gave to the young man. He must have been stimulating the young man to search his own heart and life anew. Peter, who according to early Christian writers directed Mark in writing this biography, had a keen recollection of the look which Jesus gave to the young man, as well as the look which Jesus gave him on several occasions.

Jesus' Love

Mark expressly declares that Jesus loved the young man. Jesus loves all men, but the emphatic mention of His love here shows that the young man had not been hypocritically lying about his life. In spite of a tendency to boast, a blindness to his own faults, and a shallow character, the young man must have had many very admirable qualities. He had lived a clean life and was a commendable person. He was one of those “popular” persons who excite general admiration, but usually fall short of greatness. The love of Christ reached out to this young man to challenge him to gain the supreme level of self-denial and heroic dedication. He needed to go beyond his superficial obedience to the law and surrender his whole heart and life to Christ. Jesus called upon him to follow in His company, but He stated a shocking surrender of the young man’s whole way of life before he would qualify to be a disciple of Christ. The Young Man’s Lack

“One thing thou lackest; go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me” (Mark 10:21). Thus did the whole universe of his conception of his own goodness and way of life come crashing about his head! Matthew shows that Jesus also said, “If thou wouldest be perfect...” (Matthew 19:21). When He used such language, Jesus descended to the young man’s plane of thinking in order to show him the folly of his whole attitude. He evidently felt he was near perfection; almost, but not quite. He would now remedy any lack by some heroic act which would bring both fame and eternal life. He was very far from becoming as humble as a little child at the entrance to the kingdom. just how far away he was suddenly became plain. Instead of arguing with the young man, Jesus gave this startling test. The young man could figure out for himself how far away from perfection he actually was. He claimed to have kept the commandments when he did not even begin to understand what they required. He expected to earn eternal life by his own goodness, whereas it is not possible to attain absolute perfection or to earn eternal life by meritorious works. That there is a slight touch of sarcasm in “if thou wouldest be perfect” is shown by the proposition which Jesus immediately submitted. If he accepted the invitation of Jesus, he would enter upon a new life as a disciple, and by heroic self-sacrifice he would learn the truth at Jesus’ feet. If he refused, he would at least recognize how far short he fell of the perfection he believed attainable. The Principle The principle involved in the command of Jesus is that men must surrender whatever is separating them from God. Where a person is showing himself a good steward and is properly returning to God and sharing with his fellows that with which God has blessed him, he is allowed to continue in this course. Proof of this fact is seen in Jesus’ failure to repeat this command to sell all and give to the poor when he talked with the rich man, Zacchaeus. He wisely decided to give half of his possessions to the poor and keep the other half to meet any possible demands for refund of tax money by any who had been defrauded. But the rich young ruler was so in love with his wealth that his only hope was to cut loose from it completely. If the young ruler had been using his wealth wisely in the service of God and his fellowmen, the command to give it all up would not have been necessary. As he was commanded to change the center of his interest and devotion, so everyone who would follow Jesus is commanded to surrender whatever has become his idol, which separates him from God, and prevents him from doing God’s will. The Tragic Refusal

“But when the young man heard the saying, he went away sorrowful; for he was one that had great possessions” (Matthew 19:22). Mark says, “His countenance fell at the saying.” Luke says, “He became exceeding sorrowful.” The personality of Jesus was so winsome and His words so penetrating and true the young man found nothing to make him angry, but much to make him

sorrowful. He desired to enter into life, he would have liked to follow Jesus, but he was not willing to pay the price. To give up his luxurious way of life and to take up a cross was too much. He had been living in a world he thought he understood and which he viewed with almost complete assurance. Now suddenly he found himself in a world whose depth he could not fathom. He had been anxious to do some adventurous, heroic thing for God, but he had never dreamed of such a complete surrender. “His countenance fell” pictures the gloom which settled upon him.

“He went away.” Where did he go? Back to his countinghouse? Where could he go when he had rejected the Prince of life? Did he repent and enter into the new life with Christ when the full gospel was preached at Pentecost? He had declared that he possessed the fundamental moral requirements set forth in the law — the essential background of a noble life. He had been commanded to surrender what separated him from God, to dedicate these possessions to God’s service instead of his own enjoyment, to give himself completely to Christ, and to go with Him, learn of Him, and live like Him and for Him. Jesus did not propose to make the young man an apostle. He had a wider group of disciples, such as the seventy; and others, who were with Him as much as possible, were always eager to do His bidding. Jesus invited the young man into close relationship and constant service.

Trust in Riches

“It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye, than a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (Matthew 19:23, Matthew 19:24). Mark again records a stern look which Jesus gave to all of those about Him, as the young man went away sorrowing. He also specifies “those that trust in riches.” Luke shows that Jesus looked at the departing young man. He then spoke of the great peril of wealth. They tend to separate a man from God and his fellowmen, to make him feel independent of God and entirely self-sufficient, to cause him to worship worldly things and to seek them as the chief end of life. The young man had managed to escape the entanglement of the sins which so often allure and corrupt the life of the prosperous, but he had come to regard wealth as more desirable than the favor of God. The disciples received this warning with utter amazement. Plummer supposes that this warning was meant especially for Judas, to stir his conscience. This may have been a primary motive, but Jesus certainly had a wider objective in mind. The Camel and the Needle

It is surprising how many commentators have tried to explain away the hyperbole which Jesus used of a camel passing through the eye of a needle. They do not seem to perceive that this is the dramatic method Jesus continually used in His teaching. They do not seem to be disturbed about a person’s going around with a saw log protruding from his eye (Matthew 7:4), but this camel passing through the eye of a needle is too much for them. They have to change it into something which can be done by men, whereas Jesus plainly declared He was talking about something which could not be done by men. Some early copyists of the manuscripts were evidently troubled with the passage. Some manuscripts of Matthew and Luke have camilos, instead of camelos, meaning cable instead of camel. But the manuscript evidence is very slight, and the alteration was evidently made to lighten the force of a very difficult saying. The effort to interpret “the eye of a needle” as a city gate through which a camel can go only when he has been rid of his load misses entirely the point of the passage and overlooks the method of Jesus in His teaching. Certainly it is no more

possible for a man to swallow a camel (Matthew 19:24) than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. All things are possible with God. To enforce His point of the extreme difficulty of saving a rich man, Jesus used an illustration so exaggerated that man cannot even imagine it, not to mention accomplish it. But God can accomplish even so difficult a thing as the salvation of a rich man. He cannot force a rich man to do His will, but His patience and perseverance are very great, and the moral and spiritual forces at His command are beyond our comprehension. The Amazed Disciples

One of the things that caused the disciples to be so astonished at the teaching of Christ was the fact that the religious system of the day put forward the rich into the prominent places of leadership, as it often does today. Rich Pharisees represented themselves as the special objects of God's favor and their wealth as proof of this divine pleasure in them. The declaration as to the extreme difficulty for "them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God" implies it is no easy matter for anyone to enter and extremely difficult for a rich man to escape the entanglements of the world and to give himself to God. "Who then can be saved" epitomizes the astonishment and perplexity of the disciples. Jesus seems to be making the kingdom so spiritual and inaccessible as to exclude all. Their materialistic idea of the kingdom may have been clouding their vision. The entire current system of religion was being turned upside down.

Peter's Question

"Then answered Peter and said unto him, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee; what then shall we have?" (Matthew 19:27). Jesus' declaration had been to the entire group, but Peter, who had been following with keen interest the conversation with the young ruler and the discussion which followed, felt impelled to answer Jesus. Peter saw the young man disappearing in the distance, returning to his riches, his worldly cares and pursuits, and closing the gates of eternal life against himself. The thought came that the apostles had done the very thing the young man refused to do. It had not been so hard for them because they had not possessed much, and it had not possessed them. Matthew was probably the former rich man of the group. One is inclined to wonder how great may have been the worldly riches Paul surrendered when he changed from Saul the persecutor to Paul the apostle. Peter's question sounds very selfish, but he may not have intended to give that sort of content to it. If earthly riches are so perilous, of what sort is to be the reward that awaits those who renounce all for Christ?

Future Glory

"Ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28). Some interpret this to refer to the setting up of the kingdom on the day of Pentecost and the fact that the apostles had the honor of proclaiming to Israel the full gospel with its redeeming grace. This interpretation has to hold as figurative "The Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory." The final warning of the passage seems to imply that Jesus is speaking of the second coming and the judgment. The New Testament proclaims a new heaven and a new earth; God is to make all things new. This is to be the regeneration. The apostles who have sacrificed and lived for Christ shall have special places of honor in that day. The thrilling scenes depicted in the Book of Revelation confirm this interpretation.

Present Blessings

“And every one that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life. But many shall he last that are first; and first that are last” (Matthew 19:29, Matthew 19:30). Mark adds the important item “with persecutions” (Mark 10:30). This does not promise a hundredfold in kind, or it would invite the very thing which Jesus had just denounced. Wall Street brokers would find the front seat at church the surer road to earthly wealth than the vagaries of the market. The Pharisees idea of religion, and life, and their wealth as proof of God’s favor would have been verified. God does not use the poorest medium of exchange in rewarding His faithful servants. He is able to give the ultimate satisfactions of life. Jesus did not mean that if a person has to part with his father and mother in order to do God’s work, that he will literally give him a hundred fathers and mothers, but there will he a multitude of Christians who will he like a father and mother in tender love and unfailing help. The fellowship in the kingdom will more than compensate for any worldly, godless people with whom he has had to part company, no matter how close the blood relationship. The spiritual joys of the kingdom will outweigh by far the earthly riches and pleasures that have been surrendered. The Last and the First The last warning is against the peril of pride,which may assail the poor as well as the rich. They must not anticipate that Jesus will necessarily exalt them above all later disciples because they have been among the first to follow Him. One naturally thinks of the apostle Paul and his mighty career. The parable which follows in Matthew elaborates on this closing saying. The very evident reference is to eternity and not to Pentecost. They will receive future glory if they prove faithful, but not if they become puffed up with pride and take too much for granted. Notice the emphasis on the positive side of following Jesus (Matthew 19:28) as well as the negative side of leaving worldly people and things, and the emphatic “for my sake and for the gospel’s sake” (Mark 10:29).

110. Chapter 51 - Rewards and Suffering

Chapter 51 - Rewards and Suffering Matthew 20:1-28;Mark 10:32-45;Luke 18:31-34 The Final Rewards The connection between these discussions that arose out of the exchange with the rich young ruler is so close it is hard to find a clear line of division. The revelation Jesus made of the high honor which the apostles would receive in the final day led naturally to a sharp warning against exalted pride. The parable of the workers in the vineyard followed immediately to warn against the idea that salvation can be earned. Salvation by works was the very folly which encompassed the young ruler. It could assail the apostles even now. They are warned that many that are first will he last; and last, first. This statement may refer to time of service or amount of opportunity and service. Jesus purposely left it vague so that it could cover the entire field and serve as a warning to all. This cryptic statement opens and closes the parable. Some would connect this statement with the rich young ruler and have it teach that many who are first in the world by reason of wealth, position, fame, and social prestige will he last in the next because of their failure to use their gifts and opportunities. But this parable implies that both the first and the last were saved, so could the rich young ruler he included? Some would apply it to Judas, but he cannot be the objective for the same reason.

Others connect the statement with the self-assurance of Peter in taking for granted that all the apostles would be saved because they had left all and followed Jesus. The only question was what reward they would receive. In the answer of Jesus, Peter was warned not to presume that those who had first followed Jesus would necessarily outrank those who came later, or that because it is so difficult for a rich man to he saved, therefore those who have left all to follow Jesus would necessarily he saved. Some would make first and last refer to those who are first and last in time of following Jesus, and others would make them refer to those in prominent positions in the church and those in humble places. This last interpretation would be similar to the rule of greatness that the one who would be greatest is to be the servant of all. Most important is the word many in Matthew 19:30. It is not by mathematical procedure, but by God’s wisdom, that the rewards shall be given. Rewards furnish a justifiable motive in the heart of a Christian. The Sovereignty of God

Whatever may be the particular emphasis of the enigmatic statement about the first and the last, the central principle of the parable is clear; salvation cannot be earned. There will be rewards, but not salary. It is the payment of wages in the parable which brings out the fact that no one of the servants had actually earned what he was paid and that it was a manifestation of the generosity of the master that they should have been given employment and that any should have been paid so much. The generosity was greater toward the men who had only the opportunity to work for a short period, but the master was very clear and firm in his enunciation that he had a right to exercise his own judgment in the payment of the workers. Salvation is the free gift of God, and man cannot expect to dictate to God how it shall be given.

Saved by Grace

“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13) means whosoever seeks salvation at God’s hands and upon God’s terms. God will keep His promises; each man who labors faithfully according to his opportunities shall be graciously rewarded by God. If the first turn out to be the last, and the last, first, it is none of man’s affair. God is Master of His world and will bestow rewards as He deems best.

Other Principles

There are other elements evident in the parable. Christ’s invitation is a call to work. The joy of working for God and the glory of achievement fill the entire Bible. The Christian’s task is as wide as the world and to the end of time; there can never be any excuse for idleness. Observe how the word idle stands out in the parable: “Why stand ye here idle all the day?” The glorious, inexhaustible character of the eternal reward which man can never deserve, and the responsibility of man for his opportunities are two other elements seen in the parable.

Scenery

Much in the parable is scenery rather than identifiable details. The market place was the gathering place of the idle and true to life in Palestine. The hiring of men at different hours in the effort to save the harvest was also common. The third hour Isaiah 9:1-21 a.m.; the sixth hour is noon; the ninth hour is 3:00 p.m.; the eleventh hour is 5:00 p.m. The urgency of the master that every possible means he used to save the harvest is seen in his persistent returns to the marketplace to find more workers, even to the eleventh hour. The fact that the men hired last were paid off first has no especial meaning, but the parable is so arranged as to emphasize the complaints of those who had worked longer hours. It was necessary for them to see what the late comers had been paid before they could have a basis for their complaints when they came to be paid. The envy and jealousy of the men who worked through the entire day toward the eleventh-hour men is common in this world. It is not true of heaven; it is nothing more than scenery in the parable to enforce the lesson of God’s sovereignty and the impossibility of man’s deserving eternal life. The wage, a “penny,” or shilling, or denarius, is about seventeen cents in our money, but the course of inflation through the centuries makes it difficult for us to estimate the actual worth. It was equal to a day’s wage. The wage represents the gift of eternal life, which none really can earn. The fact that all received the same amount does not imply that there will be no difference in the rewards bestowed in eternity. The basic idea Jesus stated at the beginning and the end of the parable is that the first shall he last and the last shall be first. This will he true of “many.” This principle is exactly the opposite of affirming that the rewards of all will be the same. The request of James and John for the chief seats and the reply of Jesus makes this same proposition very clear. This conclusion of the parable is not that “therefore, all shall receive the same reward,” but that there will be many that are first, and many that are last. God’s wisdom and grace determine the position. The Eleventh-Hour Men

Others is a most important word in the parable. “And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing in the marketplace idle” (Matthew 20:3); “and about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing” (Matthew 20:6). The conversation with these eleventh-hour men shows that they had not been working because they had not been able to secure work all day. Here was their first opportunity. The parable does not represent any rejections of the invitations to work. In this respect it does not present a full picture of life. We must remember that parables are

constructed to reveal segments and do not claim to represent all truth in any parable. Too many details introduced in a parable tend to distract from the main principles taught. The parable does not represent some men in the marketplace refusing to work and then hiding around a corner of a building to persuade others at the third and sixth hour that there is no need to go to work this early in the day, and that the master was very anxious for workers and would be back later in the day and they could go in and work at the ninth or the eleventh hour. The parable offers no discussion of the question of death-bed repentance. The eleventh-hour men cannot represent people who have rejected Christ all their lives and then give Him the last few moments. They represent those who have never had an opportunity before, who gladly accept the first call they receive, and who do the best they can in the time they have. Some old person in the jungles of Africa who hears the gospel for the first time when his life is nearing the end of the earthly journey, and who accepts joyfully and works diligently for the time that is left, would be properly represented by this eleventh-hour man. God will decide what to do in regard to those who reject repeated invitations and then finally come in the last moments of their stay on earth. We do not qualify for judgment on mankind and are not commissioned to decide. We preach the gospel.

Warning of the Impending Tragedy

These discussions about rewards were tempered by Jesus in a manner calculated to emphasize work rather than reward, and responsibilities rather than rights. The method He used was to make another very pointed prediction that He was going up to Jerusalem to die in fulfillment of the will of God. “And they were on the way, going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed; and they that followed were afraid” (Mark 10:32). This comment seems to be a commonplace statement, but it is full of deep pathos. It presents a situation which made a pro. found impression upon the disciples at the time, and later on, when they looked back across the years. Here is the distinct touch of an eyewitness who saw with keen vision and reported situations which impressed him particularly. This verse seems to bear out the tradition that Peter directed the writing of Mark. It also is killing in its impact on the Two-source Theory. If Matthew copied from Mark, and Luke copied from both Mark and Matthew, why did they omit such a vivid touch as this? Jesus was evidently accustomed to walking freely in the midst of His disciples, teaching them and conversing with them as they walked. But now He was striding on before them with such a look on His face and such a determined manner that the disciples were awe-struck and followed at a distance. Up to this time He had been proceeding in His Peraean campaign in a somewhat leisurely manner, gradually coming closer to the capital. Now this description indicates an abrupt change in His procedure, as He ceased side campaigns and turned with startling determination to go to Jerusalem.

Awe and Fear

Mark does not explain what made the disciples so fearful, or whether this sudden change in the feelings and actions of the apostles resulted from the change in Jesus’ appearance and manner. They were afraid to remain in His immediate company. The enemies of Jesus were frequently caused to shrink back from His presence. The apostles do not seem to be following at a distance because of any command of Jesus, but because of the atmosphere about Him. Mark does not state whether their fear was for what would happen to Him or them. Perhaps they could not separate the two in their own minds. Since they were human beings, they must have experienced

fear as they anticipated death for themselves at the end of this fateful journey. But their chief anxiety was for their Lord. They realized the desperate crisis which was about to ensue at Jerusalem. They believed Jesus to be the Son of God, but He had repeatedly predicted that He was going up to Jerusalem to be killed by His enemies and that He would not defend Himself against them; He claimed to be fulfilling the will of God for which He had come into the world. What then? The Final Journey

“And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them the things that were to happen unto him.” Matthew says, “He took the twelve disciples apart” (Matthew 20:17); Luke reports, “He took unto him the twelve” (Luke 18:31). They were evidently traveling in one of the regular highways, but now Jesus turned aside into bypaths or more rugged terrain and separated the apostles from a larger group of disciples for this private conference. They had probably come into territory where thousands of pilgrims were going along on their journey to the Passover. We cannot tell how long Jesus traveled along, stern of demeanor and separated by considerable space from His disciples, before He called them aside to explain. This private conference may have come at the end of the day or at meal time. He had frequently spoken to the multitudes concerning His death, but such predictions had been veiled in character. This prediction is to be very clear and pointed; hence, it is for the apostles alone. He evidently sought to explain to them the thoughts upon His heart which had transformed His appearance and manner, and the crisis ahead for which they must be prepared. In His earlier predictions He had spoken of an indefinite time. He had said, “We must go up to Jerusalem”; now He says, “We are going up to Jerusalem.” This definitely identifies this journey as the last and fateful one.

Fearful Details

“The Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him unto the Gentiles; and they shall mock him, and shall spit upon him, and shall scourge him, and shall kill him; and after three days he shall rise again” (Mark 10:33, Mark 10:34). Every one of these dreadful details must have beat upon their hearts like an alarm bell in the night. They had been so slow to understand or believe that He would submit to death. It seemed incredible in the light of His divine Person and His miraculous power. Clearer details should help them now to grip the approaching reality and strengthen their faith to meet it. After the resurrection these predictions must have become one of the very powerful bases for their faith as they looked back upon the tragic events. It is most convincing evidence to us of His miraculous foresight and of God’s plan for man’s redemption. His death was not “by the hands of wicked men” who thwarted God, but by “the deliberate counsel and foreknowledge of God.”

Mark gives each of the various distinct details in the prediction, such as the betrayal by Judas (“delivered unto”), the trial and condemnation by the Sanhedrin, trial by Pilate, mocking by the Jews and Roman soldiers, and the death and resurrection. Matthew alone mentions the particular form of death — crucifixion. Mark and Luke imply this in saying that His death was actually to be accomplished by the Gentiles (Romans). Matthew and Luke agree in saying that the resurrection was to be “on the third day”; Mark reports, “after three days.” These differences show the accounts to be independent; none of them is an exact or exhaustive record of what Jesus said, but a summary. That the method of counting time was the popular one of counting a part of a day as a day is shown by the free manner in which “after three days” is laid parallel with “on the third day.”

Luke tells us that the disciples were still in stupefied perplexity after this prediction: “And they understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, and they perceived not the things that were said” (Luke 18:34). Matthew and Mark do not undertake to analyze their feelings and reaction. They seem stubbornly to have closed their minds to any further consideration of why Jesus should follow such a course and only went forward blindly to share whatever would come to Him.

Modern Denials The fact that these predictions offer such strong proof of the claims of Jesus has made them the special target of unbelievers. Extreme modernists deny that Jesus ever made such predictions and hold that these are mere inventions put into the mouth of Jesus after the events occurred. Other skeptics hold that Jesus could have foreseen in general that His death was inevitable as any man might do, and that He actually predicted His death. Allen (Com. on Matt., p. 216) and Gould (Com. on Mark, p. 198), both suggest that the details of these predictions are so explicit that the reports may have been colored up by the writers after the event had enabled them to specify such details. Plummer (Commentary on Luke, p. 428) replies ably to the entire group. He asks why, if Luke colored his report here with definite details, did he not do the same in Luke 9:22, Luke 9:44? The gradual revelation of more definite details is true to the facts and in entire harmony with the methods of Jesus. And further than this, how about the predictions of Isaiah fifty-three, Psalms 34:20, and similar passages in the Old Testament? No one can claim that these were colored up after events! The predictions of Jesus do not rest upon the predictions of Isaiah; Jesus does not repeat the predictions of Isaiah that the death of the Messiah is to be with the wicked and His burial with the rich. The independence of the predictions of Jesus and of the Gospel accounts adds to their impressiveness. After His resurrection Jesus must have made powerful use of these predictions when He showed the disciples from the Old Testament Scriptures that it had been foretold that the Messiah would die for the sins of the world. While Matthew and Mark do not state that the disciples failed to understand, when they tell immediately afterward of the request of James and John, they demonstrate that the disciples refused to contemplate the dreadful future which was near at hand. It was much more pleasant to think on the more distant glory. The Request of James and John

Mark evidently is summarizing when he reports that James and John made this request for the chief seats in the kingdom. Matthew says that their mother came with them and spoke for them in the beginning of the conference. And even Matthew shows that although the mother made the request, Jesus answered not the mother, but the two. “Are ye able?” Since the two sons were really the ones who made the request through their mother and since Jesus’ reply was made to them, Mark is justified in his summary. Matthew and Mark have their own way of indicating that the request was so couched as to ask Jesus to promise to fulfill it before it was stated. This was as childish as their use of their mother in making the request. The fact that their request was so selfish in character undoubtedly caused them to proceed in such a devious manner. The comparison of the names of the women at the cross indicates that the wife of Zebedee was a sister of Mary of Nazareth, the mother of Jesus. If this is true, then they probably were hoping to use this relationship to gain personal advantage. Their mother would have been interested in the advancement and future of her sons.

Confused Hopes

It is a strange thing how spirituality and selfishness wage an everlasting battle in the heart. Coupled with the selfishness, there seems to have been lingering hopes for a worldly kingdom. The materialistic idea had been evident in Peter's question as to what sort of reward the apostles would have. The reply that they were to sit on twelve thrones had evidently been taken in a literal sense, while Jesus had meant it spiritually. James and John then decided that they would seek the chief places. Critics argue it is impossible that Jesus should have so clearly predicted His death in the manner that Luke declares and yet the apostles still have been thinking of a material kingdom. But they forget how slow the mind is to comprehend one thing when all the desires and attention are concentrated on the opposite. They were so full of dreams of the material kingdom that they found it doubly hard actually to believe the predictions of Jesus' death. Their sorrow and anxiety were so great when they did turn to face these predictions they found welcome relief from impending tragedy by thinking and talking about the coming glory of the kingdom. They were in a state of confusion, which is not surprising under the circumstances. The Chief Seats

"Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" (Matthew 20:22). Mark adds, "or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (Mark 10:38). Jesus' strong rebuke that they did not understand the nature of the kingdom or the significance of what they asked is too often an appropriate response to modern petitions. If we think the request of James and John is unparalleled, we should take another look at church history and the situation in the world today with the scramble for the chief seats in the vast political organization which the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches is constructing. A material kingdom vs. a spiritual kingdom is the perennial struggle in the church. Before we denounce too loudly the stupidity of the apostles for not understanding the spiritual nature of the kingdom, we need to examine ourselves and reflect upon the fact that we have the full gospel in our hands. But it is a gospel which has been rejected by those who construct the modern Tower of Babel. The "Cup" and the "Baptism"

Jesus used two figures to remind them of the approaching tragedy in Jerusalem. When He promised them a hundredfold reward, He had added that they must anticipate persecution from these wicked men even as they experienced the blessings of God. Now He reminded them of this prospect, using the figures of a cup from which He was about to drink and a baptism with which He was about to be baptized. Cup is a common figure of speech for either joy or sorrow (Psalms 23:5; Psalms 16:5; Isaiah 51:17; Jeremiah 49:12). Here it pictures the agony of death. What dregs were in that cup! He bore the sins of all the world in all the ages, as He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. Baptism is also used figuratively here as an immersion in suffering, which overwhelms. The meaning " immersion" stands out even in this metaphorical use of baptidzo. Jesus had previously used this figure to represent His death (Luke 12:50). The independence of the accounts of Matthew and Mark here is remarkable. If Matthew copied from Mark, why did he leave out the figure of baptism? No intelligent answer can be given by those who derive the Gospel accounts from sources.

Overconfident

"We are able" (Matthew 20:22). Both Matthew and Mark report their blunt, precise, bold reply in this brief manner. They declared they understood that they were to die for Jesus' sake and that they were not afraid to die. Their overconfidence makes the more lamentable their failure on the

final night when Jesus was arrested, and they all forsook Him and fled. If the sons of Zebedee had been questioned in later years about occasions which they could recall only with embarrassment and regret, they certainly would have named as one such occasion this scene with its selfish request and its too-confident assertion. It seems strange that one of the well-known hymns of the church today should anchor itself on this unfortunate episode in the life of James and John and have congregations repeat today “We are able,” instead of offering a humble petition that God will help us to be able in the time of extreme trial. These two apostles were determined to go to their death for Christ and yet to fend off thoughts of the death of Jesus. We cannot be sure, however, that they were not thinking of Jesus’ death and their own, and of the final triumph of the kingdom in some manner they did not yet comprehend.

Jesus seized the opportunity to tell them that they would indeed suffer for Him even as He was about to suffer for them. In the resurrection appearance to the seven apostles by the Sea of Galilee in the early dawn, Jesus revealed to Peter that he would die a martyr’s death by crucifixion (John 21:18, John 21:19). Undoubtedly recalling this earlier prediction concerning the sons of Zebedee, Peter asked concerning the fate of John. His unseemly curiosity was rebuked by Jesus: “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me” (John 21:22). This indefinite prophecy leaves the fate of John unrevealed.

Martyrs for Christ

“My cup indeed ye shall drink; but to sit on my right hand, and on my left hand, is not mine to give; but it is for them for whom it hath been prepared of my Father” (Matthew 20:23). This repetition of the figurative language leaves uncertain whether Jesus is predicting a martyr’s death for these two apostles or whether He means they would suffer great persecution for His sake. They were both to drink a bitter cup and to be overwhelmed with suffering. James was beheaded by Herod Agrippa 1. John lived to an extremely old age at Ephesus in spite of great persecution, exile on the island of Patmos, and endless suffering for Christ. Early Christian writers declare he finally died a natural death at Ephesus. The facts of his longevity and that his books were written late in the century furnish critical evidence for the inspiration and divine authority of the New Testament books and for the formation of the canon. It is sometimes said that James suffered “red martyrdom” ; and John, “white martyrdom.”

God’s Choice

Jesus did not respond to their request for the chief seats by saying that there will be no seats of honor since everyone is to have the same reward. He declared that there would be chief places in the kingdom and that they would be bestowed by God Himself, and as He saw fit. The verb must be supplied, but the meaning is plain: “But it is for them, [or, it shall be given to them] for whom it hath been prepared of my Father.” Jesus’ answers show, not merely that God would be the One to bestow these honors, but that they would be given as a matter of achievement, rather than appointment. In the kingdom they would receive the places for which they had fitted themselves. As we reflect on the great joy we will have in heaven in meeting those to whom we are especially indebted, such as the apostle Paul with his grand influence on our lives through his life and writings, it is plain that a natural and inevitable result of our labors for Christ will he reflected in heaven. For whom it hath been prepared of my Father suggests predestination; it is useless “for them to ask chief places, God knows beforehand what each man will achieve and become, and

has prepared in advance the places they shall have in His kingdom." Jesus plainly says this has already been settled by God on the basis of His foreknowledge. The concluding remarks of Jesus that greatness in the kingdom is achieved by humble service in His name show how far they missed the whole ideal when they thought that an earthly request might forestall the other apostles and might secure for them high places by appointment. Since we see some in special places of honor at Pentecost when the kingdom was established, it should not be surprising to us that there will be special honors in the consummation of the kingdom. The Quarrel

"And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation concerning the two brethren" (Matthew 20:24). Is the word brethren sarcastic in this setting? To have heard the heated though subdued discussions, one might have thought these brethren were not in a brotherly mood. It is not hard to fill in the details as to how Peter felt when he heard that James and John had executed such a political maneuver as this. Had not Jesus promised him a most exalted place in the kingdom? Was he not to have the keys which would open its doors? Was he now to receive neither the seat on the right hand nor on the left? Jealousy always lurks in the background where groups of leaders are associated together; it comes into the foreground when special favors are sought. The twelve had quarreled over such matters before, and even in the upper room on the night Jesus was betrayed and arrested, they quarreled, and it was over the seating arrangement (see "The Quarrel"). On certain occasions special honors had been bestowed upon the inner three, Peter, James, and John; these occasions had been the resurrection of Jairus' daughter and the transfiguration scene. This same spirit of jealousy and rivalry had shown itself after the latter scene, and Jesus had been compelled to rebuke and warn His disciples for their quarrel. A little child in the midst became the illustration He used to condemn and shame the apostles. Those earlier honors had been bestowed by Jesus. Now that two of the disciples moved to seek special honors, their former quarrel must have started to flame up.

Christ's Example

"Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them" (Matthew 20:25). They evidently were by themselves or off at a distance where Peter could give James and John a piece of his mind with more freedom. Jesus interrupted their quarrel with a sharp summons. The rulers of the Jews also lorded it over all within their control, but they themselves bowed to the yoke of Rome, that ruled all the world. Therefore the reference to the Gentiles was more vivid and all-inclusive. The principle of greatness as the inevitable result of humble service brings in two words, minister and servant. The first Greek word means a servant who works for wages, and the second means a bond-slave. The first denotes a servant in relation to his work without making clear his relationship to his master. The word minister, as it is used today, so often carries such an official content of honor that we are apt to forget that the basis of the word is humble service. Not from the motive of becoming prominent, but from the humble desire to help others, comes the spiritual exaltation.

"Even as the Son of man came not to he ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). In laying down this startling and strenuous rule of greatness, Jesus did not make an exception of Himself, but became our Exemplar here as in all else. This is the first time in His predictions of His death that He had indicated it would be for the redemption of the world: "for many," i.e., for all who will accept Him as Savior. He had repeatedly declared that

He would be the Redeemer of the world. Passages such as John 3:1-36 :l4-l6 had indicated in a veiled manner His vicarious death, because He “gave his only begotten Son” can only mean “gave him to die for our sins” in light of all the rest of the Scripture. But now Jesus was speaking clearly. In the matter of humble service Jesus was going to the last limit of devotion as He gave His life as a ransom for many. As in the case of parables, such figures are not to be pressed into parallel details. The question immediately becomes troublesome as to whom the ransom was paid, and why. We must accept the thrilling illustration without expecting that any illustration can be found which can adequately picture the atonement. In searching through the Bible for exceeding precious words to write indelibly on our hearts, we certainly must give this humble declaration of Jesus a high place.

111. Chapter 52 - Jericho

Chapter 52 - Jericho Matthew 20:29-34;Mark 10:46-52;Luke 18:35-43;Luke 19:1-10 Earlier Campaigns?

Since Jericho is on the main line of travel to the capital from both the east and north, we conclude that Jesus must have been in Jericho many times. The fact that this is the only time we have any record of a visit to Jericho or of any sermons or events in this city leads again to the conclusion that our Gospel narratives give only a fragmentary account. But how are we to explain the excited effort of Zacchaeus to get to see Jesus if He had been here a number of times? Certainly Zacchaeus seems to have been a fixture in Jericho, well known to all. Jesus had been baptized by John near Jericho. This was now in the somewhat distant past, and Jesus' immediate disappearance into the desert would have prevented any effort to see Him. When Jesus returned from the temptations to the scene of John s ministry, the location of his campaign was near the Sea of Galilee. Jesus may have passed through Jericho a number of times unobserved. Since He had carried on both an earlier and later Judaean ministry of considerable length, we would expect a preaching ministry in Jericho. Zacchaeus might have been in Rome or Caesarea in connection with his tax collecting business at such times. The excitement began to surround Jesus as He approached the capital. Swarms of pilgrims headed for the Passover feast were now suddenly inflamed by the miracle of healing blind Bartimaeus. There are startling variations in the narratives as to where this miracle occurred. Two-source Theory advocates are utterly helpless to explain these variations in the light of their theory. For years critics have declared that these accounts are hopelessly in contradiction and cannot be harmonized. By their own argument then, the accounts certainly cannot have been copied from one another. While the differences can be harmonized, no conceivable explanation can be offered as to how such differences could have arisen, if the narratives were copied from one another or from a common source. If the narratives were written independently by eyewitnesses or upon the testimony of eyewitnesses, then such variations are the natural result of independent narration; but, if the narratives were copied from one another, what writers could have been so stupid or perverse as deliberately to have changed the record thus?

Location of the Miracle

Mark says, "As he went out from Jericho"; Matthew agrees. Luke says, "As he drew nigh unto Jericho." The possibility that we have here a scribal error in which one preposition was changed to another (eis for ek) is faced with the added difficulty that the verb used by Luke is engidzo, which means to draw near. Several explanations have been offered as to what caused the authors to offer such seemingly contradictory accounts. (1) As Christ entered Jericho, Bartimaeus cried out for help too late to be heard, since Jesus was in the forefront of the crowd, and the blind man did not realize His presence until He had passed. Not to be defeated, he circled the town, and, having been joined by another blind man, appealed to Jesus as He left the town, and was healed. John Calvin seems to have originated this explanation. It has been adopted by many, including J. W.

(2) The Jericho captured by Joshua was in ruins, but two others are identified today and referred to in the Old Testament, Josephus, and the New Testament. They lie a short distance apart directly in Jesus' path whether He came across the Pilgrim's Ford from Peraea or had crossed the Damieh Ford near the mouth of the Jabbok River and was traveling south on the western bank of the Jordan. He would thus have passed through the older Jericho and, crossing the plain, would have entered the new Jericho, the luxurious city which Herod the Great had constructed. Matthew and Mark refer to the older city in telling of his departure; Luke is thinking of the new city in his account. Macknight seems to have originated this explanation, which has been widely adopted (by A. T Robertson, among others). Plummer objects to this theory on the ground that we have no evidence that Old Jericho was still inhabited or would have been called Jericho without some epithet attached. But this objection is based purely on the argument from silence — on our lack of documentary evidence which may have abounded. The fact that these two Jerichos were in existence offers the most plausible explanation of the difference in the accounts. The Crowd As one approaches Jericho, various highways converge into the main road to Jericho. The terrain was so forbidding all travelers to the capital would from this point follow the one highway. Pilgrims coming from all directions would be joined by a larger throng. At this time Jesus probably emerged from privacy with His apostles; and, hence, we have the immediate mention of the great crowd. The preceding day had been spent in swift and solitary travel, as Jesus walked ahead, and the disciples followed at a distance. One could readily travel bypaths in the rough hills of Peraea and he alone, and could join himself at will with the crowd on the main highway. Weiss, Holzmann, and Keim attack the record of Luke, saying he must have deliberately changed the miracle from the departure to the entrance to Jericho in order to account for the great crowd that hindered Zacchaeus. This is without foundation, however, for all three Gospel writers specifically describe the presence of a great crowd before the miracle. The fame of Jesus was so great that no other explanation of the crowd is necessary. That He was evidently going up to the Passover in Jerusalem despite the public threats of the hierarchy would create intense excitement. The Blind Men

Matthew states there were two blind men, while Mark and Luke tell of only one. This omission of the second blind man, doubtless, was because one was a forceful leader and the other less conspicuous; the one led in addressing Jesus, and the description of his healing was duplicated in tile other. Mark alone gives the name of the blind man. Bartimaeus means "Son of Timaeus." The fact that he was a son of Timaeus may have been mentioned because the latter became a well-known disciple. This blind man shows faith, courage, and persistence; he reminds one of the blind man in the ninth chapter of John.

"And when he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David; have mercy on me" (Mark 10:47). He showed his faith by his cries for help, by the title he used, by his persistence amid the protests of the crowd, and by his obedience to Christ. He must have heard of the claims and miracles of Jesus. The healing of the blind man at Jerusalem had doubtless stirred this whole section. He declared that Jesus was the Messiah when he saluted Him publicly as the "Son of David." He probably expressed the growing conviction of most of the wavering crowd who saw Jesus starting up to Jerusalem to face His enemies. All realized that a final crisis was at hand. The blind man could have heard the tramp of many feet and the sound of

a multitude of voices which indicated the presence of a great crowd. Lack of vision intensifies the hearing. He thus would have realized the presence of a great multitude before many had passed by. As in the triumphal entry, some of the crowd were in front of Jesus; some surrounded Him, and others followed. Upon learning from the vanguard what the excitement was about, he began to cry out for help, and was rebuked by those who were going before Jesus. If the theory of John Calvin be correct, the narrative of Luke divides at Luke 18:37; the man learned of the presence of Jesus too late to make an appeal to Him as He entered Jericho. The man then circled the city, awaited His departure from Jericho, and made the appeals found in Luke 18:38, Luke 18:39 as Jesus left. Under this view, Luke has condensed his account, placing the events concerning the blind man all together in order to preserve the unity of the account of the miracle. But it is more probable that the miracle took place between the two Jerichos and that this explains the difference in the accounts.

Effort to Silence the Blind Man

“And many rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried out the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me” (Mark 10:48). The following suggestions have been made to explain the efforts of the crowd to silence Bartimaeus: (1) Jesus was teaching as He walked amid the crowd, and they resented such interruption by a mere beggar.

(2) The crowd planned to stage a triumphal presentation of Jesus as the Christ when they entered Jerusalem; they tried to silence any premature demonstration such as the blind man was starting.

(3) The crowd was full of materialistic ideas of the kingdom. Being filled with delight at the prospect of Jesus marching straight into Jerusalem where they hoped to see Him destroy His enemies, they resented the appeals of Bartimaeus as likely to turn Jesus aside to a healing ministry again.

(4) The Pharisees and other enemies of Jesus tried to silence the blind man because they resented His publicly proclaiming Jesus as the Son of David.

(5) The crowd, hardhearted and cruel, tried to silence him simply because they did not want to be annoyed. Oversimplification is apt to result when a person tries to reduce the motives of a large number of people in a crowd to a single status, even when they are saying or doing the same thing. Those who joined in trying to silence the blind man may have been of different character, with different ideas and motives.

Independence of the Accounts The independence of the three accounts is most pronounced in describing how the miracle was performed. They each tell different details, but their accounts are not contradictory. Matthew reports that Jesus touched the eyes of the two blind men; Luke says that He gave a command, “Receive thy sight,” i.e., “Look up”; Mark gives a comforting word: “Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.” Thus each narrator records a detail of the miracle which the others do not.

“And Jesus stood still, and said, Call ye him. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good cheer: rise, he calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, sprang up, and came to Jesus” (Mark 10:49, Mark 10:50). Those who addressed the blind man and told him of the summons from Jesus certainly did not give any evidence of being hardhearted, cruel, or hostile. They spoke in a kind and sympathetic manner. They do not seem to have been the ones who had been carrying on the shouting contest with the blind man. The more they shouted for him to keep

still, “he cried out the more a great deal.” When Jesus stopped and put an end to the shouting contest by summoning Bartimaeus, it is possible that some of those who had rebuked the blind man and ordered him to keep still now veered with the wind and changed their attitude to suit the turn Jesus had just given to the situation. It seems more probable that these were persons more sympathetic in nature and more understanding in regard to Jesus’ spiritual program. The two blind men had evidently been seated, begging by the roadside. From this position Bartimaeus had been crying out to Jesus with all his might. The moment he was summoned, he responded with the utmost energy: “And he, casting away his garment, sprang up, and came to Jesus” (Mark 10:50). His cloak was his most precious possession. It was his protection against the cold and rain in winter, and his warm covering at night, as he slept. Yet he cast his garment aside as if it were nothing and sprang up with abounding energy. The Miracle

“And Jesus answered him, and said, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? And the blind man said unto him, Rabboni, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole” (Mark 10:51, Mark 10:52). Jesus did not ask this question for His own information. He “answered” the appeals the man had been shouting for Jesus to “have mercy” upon him. Jesus was also testing the man’s faith and making plain to all the great multitude the miracle which was about to take place. Many in the great crowd undoubtedly had only heard shouting going on at this spot without knowing its cause or significance. In the great stillness which settled over the entire scene, the conversation between Jesus and Bartimaeus would have been plain to most and passed on quickly to those at a greater distance. The answer of the blind man was very respectful, and full of faith. Rabboni has a little touch of tender emotion: My Master, rather than the standard, Rabbi. The other blind man was evidently standing alongside allowing this strong character, Bartimaeus, to speak for both. Jesus commanded the blind man, “Go thy way,” which would probably in most cases have led such a person straight home. To this blind man, however, it carried the freedom to go where he chose, and he chose to go with Jesus.

“And straightway he received his sight, and followed him in the way” (Mark 10:52). The blind man may have had no home ties to bind him or call him back. His gratitude would have led him to want to he in Jesus’ company. It would have been a great privilege to go up to Jerusalem, see the temple, and enjoy the Passover feast with eyesight restored. The great excitement attendant upon the deliberate public entrance of Jesus into the midst of the national leaders who had vowed to kill Him, would have swept him on to the capital in the midst of this excited multitude. What a witness for Jesus this man must have given in Jericho that day, as Jesus was in the home of Zacchaeus, and on the journey up the mountain, and at the triumphal entry. “And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God” (Luke 18:43). The power of Jesus was so evidently from God, all that Jesus did caused people to give glory to God. This miracle made such a profound impression that the hostile and worldly elements in the crowd were inclined to sink into the background. Nobler people would naturally have their thoughts turned into more spiritual channels. In Jericho

“And he entered and was passing through Jericho” (Luke 19:1). This emphatic statement may be Luke’s way of showing that Jesus was now leaving Old Jericho and entering New Jericho. Observe how the geographical solution also fits Mark’s statement: “And they come to Jericho: and as he went out from Jericho.” If Luke’s reference is now to entering the New Jericho, then the suggestion is that Jesus did not halt but for a moment for such an exciting miracle as had just

occurred. Nor would He have halted from His steadfast march to the capital for such a considerable city as Jericho, except that conduct of an outcast publican caused Him to tarry and to have mercy upon him. The Publican

“And behold, a man called by name Zacchaeus; and he was a chief publican, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the crowd, because he was little of stature” (Luke 19:2, Luke 19:3). Zacchaeus means pure. That he was a Jew is shown by the name he wore and by the fact that the crowd would have complained against Jesus not merely for going into the home of a publican, but for eating with a Gentile. The natural interpretation of Luke 19:9, “for he also is a son of Abraham,” indicates that he was a Jew. The word chief publican occurs only here in the New Testament, and its exact meaning is not clear. It was an official title of some kind, indicating his very high rank in the tax system. Jericho, the point of entry for caravan routes and highways from the north and east into the final perilous stretch of mountain travel to the capital, would have been a likely location for an important official in the tax bureau. It was natural to mention the great wealth of Zacchaeus which would have been the consequence of the position he held. The chief motive is to give a clear portrait of the man and to show the difficulties he had to overcome in accepting Christ. Luke had just offered extended description of Jesus’ encounter with another rich man and of a sermon He preached on the peril of riches. The rich young ruler and Zacchaeus are thrown into immediate contrast, and the possibility of saving even a very rich man is illustrated. His Motives

If Zacchaeus had been seeking to see Jesus in any mood of condescension or from curiosity, his efforts would probably have been ignored just as Jesus ignored the desire of Herod Antipas to see Him. The entire reputation of Jesus, the excited multitude now deeply stirred by the miracle of healing the blind man, the national crisis, and perhaps the fact that Jesus had been reported as everywhere gracious to publicans helped to stir his great desire to see Jesus. Who he was seems to indicate that he had never seen Jesus before. If Jesus had campaigned in Jericho before this time, Zacchaeus probably had not been present in the city. He was anxious to form his own estimate of the great Prophet of Galilee. That Zacchaeus was a very determined man is shown in his persistence. The great desire of his heart is also shown. The excitement of the crowd would have influenced him.

“And could not for the crowd.” Some would translate this, “He was not able to free himself from the throng.” This is a possible rendering of the Greek text, but is plainly contrary to the context. This is precisely what he did do; he freed himself from the throng and ran around by back streets to get ahead of the throng. “He was not able to see from the crowd,” i.e., he was not able to separate or distinguish Jesus from the crowd or was not able to see Jesus because the people around him shut off his vision. Knowing the evident situation of Jesus and that He would probably follow the main line of travel through the city, and knowing all the side streets and alleys, he was able to outrun the slow-moving crowd. Trench holds that he was so ashamed of his past he wished to hide; hence, he ran ahead and climbed the tree. He maintains that the call for him to come down was like the insistence of Jesus on the woman with the issue of blood that she make herself known. But the text gives no suggestion of such a motive. He was not daring to seek a special blessing from Christ unknown to Him; he wanted to see Jesus and climbed a tree to get a good view. He was not hiding in the tree, but looking from it. Some suggest that he had to endure the derision of the crowd. There is no suggestion of this in the text. The derision came later, when

Jesus showed such mercy upon him. As Jesus was passing along, everyone was too much interested in seeing Him to have paid much attention to this little man up a tree. He had been crowded out by a selfish multitude which was too in tent on their own desire to see Jesus to give any heed to this publican. He did have to sacrifice his dignity and make a spectacle of himself, but in such exciting times this stirs little comment. He was more of a “forgotten man” than a derided man until the signal honor which Jesus conferred upon him aroused the anger and derision of the crowd. The tree into which Zacchaeus climbed was a “fig-mulberry” tree, which has fruit like the fig and leaves like the mulberry, and is very different from the sycamore tree we know. Tristram describes it as similar to the English oak with heavy shade, short trunk, and wide, lateral limbs which would have made it convenient to climb. It is disputed whether the sycamine of Luke 17:6 is the same as the sycamore (fig-mulberry) or whether it is the mulberry.

Jesus’ Summons

Plummer inconsistently argues that Jesus did not know Zacchaeus’ name by miraculous insight, but that His proposal to stay in his house that day did show supernatural knowledge of the man’s heart. He says that Jesus might have heard the people calling to Zacchaeus or that He may have inquired his name. This not only is not indicated in the text, but it upsets the whole dramatic character of the interview. It contravenes the continual proof of miraculous foresight which Jesus constantly used to challenge the faith of those He met. So far as the text indicates, Zacchaeus was up in the tree unnoticed by the crowd, who were concentrating their attention upon Jesus. With divine insight and authority Jesus paused, when He came to the tree, looked up, and addressed this man by his personal name — this man whom others delighted to insult with such epithets as “accursed traitor,” or “dog of a tax collector.” Zacchaeus had been in great haste to climb the tree, but now Jesus commanded him to make haste and come down, “for this very day” He must abide in his house. In the Home of Zacchaeus

Luke records the instant obedience of Zacchaeus and the fact that “he received him joyfully” (Luke 19:6). The joy of the publican is quite understandable. He had only hoped to get a distant view of the great Prophet, and he was overwhelmed with the gracious manner in which Jesus honored him by declaring before the entire multitude that He had selected him to be His host for the day. The two verbs used, I must abide and He is gone in to lodge, do not necessarily mean more than taking a long rest at a place. Jesus may have spent the night in the home. He would hardly have started the long, difficult climb up the mountain to Jerusalem late in the day. Having spent most of the day in the entry into Jericho and in the home of Zacchaeus, it is more probable that He also spent the night. This does not necessarily follow, however, because so large a crowd would have changed the lonely, perilous road into a dense highway, and the overnight stop might have been at the traditional scene of the Good Samaritan rescue halfway up the mountain, where there would have been abundant leisure to deliver the Parable of the Pounds. The Crowd

“And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner” (Luke 19:7). Here is the dissident element in the crowd once more creating one of those sudden fluctuations common in excited crowds. The Pharisees evidently had had a part in trying to silence the blind man, and they now led the crowd to criticize the course of Jesus. The Zealots also would be quick to express disgust at these two disappointing turns to His spiritual ministry and away from the worldly, military leadership for which they hoped. The people of Jericho with stolid

hatred for the high commissioner of taxes would have readily joined in the criticism. The crowd in general, eager to get on to the capital and see the final climax of exciting drama unfolding, would have added their voices of frustration and disappointment. A delay in an exciting journey is always unwelcome and wearisome. To have to stand around all day in front of the home of a tax collector, while Jesus preached to the household within, was enough to disgust the worldly-minded.

Jesus' Sermon

We are not told the topic or the text of the sermon in the home of Zacchaeus. We can be sure that Jesus did preach, for this is the very purpose for which He came from heaven, and the unchanging procedure of His entire ministry. It is also evident from the results of the sermon, which Luke records. What a sermon it must have been as they sat about the banquet table, and Jesus continued the discourse which He had been presenting all during the time that the banquet was being prepared. How Jesus must have pictured that the wages of sin is death; how He must have reminded Zacchaeus of the days of innocence in childhood before greed and lust marred his life and scarred His character; He must have unveiled the gate of heaven through which no man has ever taken any houses or lands, any bank notes, or gold, or silver, or even a pinch of diamond dust. Surely every single person seated about the table must have been in tears.

Zacchaeus' Surrender

"And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold" (Luke 19:8). There is something very manly, as well as deeply moving, about the manner in which this little man stood up to make his confession of faith in Christ as the Son of God and to surrender his life. He declared both his faith and his repentance, as he vowed a new way of life. His address of Jesus as "Lord" matches all that the Gospel narratives put into that divine title. He had heard of the mighty conflict which was shaking the nation. He stood up to declare himself, and to dedicate his life to Christ and all that He claimed, taught, and commanded. The participle having stood indicates the taking of a set attitude, which was the result of his deliberate high resolve. It evidently took place at the close of the sermon Jesus preached. The word Behold is used by Zacchaeus to emphasize the sudden resolution and the sweeping change of life which he now announced. Some suggest that the cynical remarks of the crowd, milling around in the street, caused him to do this in order to prove that he was not such a great sinner after all. Anyone who takes such a shallow view shows that he too cannot see Jesus for the crowd. The personality and the preaching of Jesus is thrust into a secondary place where crowd pressure takes the place of divine attraction. It was Jesus' love, presence, example, and message that led him to such heroic action. "I will draw all men unto me." The comments of the crowd are recorded by Luke to contrast their ignoble attitude to the divine love of Christ, who was forever seeking the lost and thrusting His lantern into the darkest corners to find some soil who might be brought back to the Father's house. His Vow The verb give is present tense, indicating his immediate action: "I am giving here and now." He was not making a vague promise to do this at some future date, which might be forgotten or broken when Jesus was gone. He made a public pledge which all might hear, and witness his immediate fulfillment. Godet would render "I am in the habit of giving," but this misreads the entire account and changes Zacchaeus from a publican brought to repentance to a Pharisee boasting of his goodness. Moreover, the noun used means capital, not income, and hence does not fit "I am in the habit of

giving.” The second verb must harmonize with the first, “I am restoring here and now.” He would not have been in the habit of deliberately defrauding people and then restoring fourfold. To have him declare he had been in the habit of restoring fourfold any accidental mistakes would have made him an incredible boaster. We cannot tell how much guilt of defrauding rested on Zacchaeus. The form of the condition in the Greek implies a frank confession on his part. He did not say, “If I ever should have,” but, “If I have.” This fourfold restitution had been commanded in the law where there had been intentional, destructive robbery (Exodus 22:1; 2 Samuel 12:6). Sevenfold was sometimes restored (Proverbs 6:31). Stolen property which could be returned undamaged was to be repaid double (Exodus 22:4, Exodus 22:7). Voluntary confession and restitution called for a fifth to be added (Leviticus 6:5; Numbers 5:7). A Faithful Steward

Zacchaeus did not pledge to sell all he had and give to the poor. In case he had defrauded anyone, such a course would have left him unable to repay and would have amounted to his giving away to the poor what really belonged to someone else. Jesus did not tell Zacchaeus that his proposal was inadequate and that he must sell all and give it to the poor, because Zacchaeus gave evidence of being master of his possessions, and not a slave to them. The only hope of bringing the young ruler back to God was to get him to give up completely the riches he worshiped. Jesus did not oppose private ownership of property. He taught stewardship of possession. Zacchaeus proved now that he was a faithful steward by his decisive action.

Salvation

“And Jesus said unto him, Today is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:9, Luke 19:10). The poor to whom Zacchaeus was now giving one-half his fortune and the wronged who would receive fourfold restitution would be blessed, but their blessing would be nothing compared to the one that came to Zacchaeus in yielding himself to Jesus and undertaking to prove his devotion by such heroic giving. Jesus did not command him to follow Him on this journey to Jerusalem, as He had commanded the rich young ruler. Any persons who had a charge of defrauding to bring against Zacchaeus might take this as evasion after an empty promise. If Zacchaeus did follow on up to the capital, he undoubtedly established an office force first to take care of the complaints which might be brought in. Jesus read the hearts of the others in the household as He declared that “salvation is come to this house.” Jesus knew that they all joined Zacchaeus joyfully in expressing their faith and repentance, and pledging their obedience. Publicans were regarded as having forfeited their birthright as sons of Abraham, but Jesus pointed out that this Jew had now become truly a son of Abraham by his noble repentance. It is His gracious way of expressing the forgiveness granted to Zacchaeus. It also suggests the spiritual birthright which now is open to him as a disciple of Jesus and a member of the spiritual Israel.

Broken Barriers

Luke 19:1-10 I. The barriers which separated Zacchaeus from Jesus (Luke 19:1-4) A. Sin: “He was a chief publican” (Luke 19:2).

Associating publicans and sinners together suggests their outcast condition. He realized he was an outcast and that a great chasm separated him from the great Prophet of Galilee. Sin is always a separating factor between man and God and between a man and his fellow men.

B. Wealth: “He was rich” (Luke 19:2).

1. Wealth tends to separate a man from God by leading to such concentrated efforts to gain more wealth as to leave no time for spiritual things, or by making him feel self-sufficient and independent of God.

2. Wealth tends to separate a man from his fellows by causing him to think himself better than his fellow men, or to isolate himself from fear that men will steal his wealth.

C. The crowd: “He could not [see] for the crowd” (Luke 19:3). The very people who were following Jesus and praising Him prevented Zacchaeus from seeing Jesus. Their selfish attitude was a constant barrier. The familiar cry today of “hypocrites in the church” shows that someone cannot see Jesus for the crowd.

D. His diminutive stature: “He was little of stature” (Luke 19:3).

If Zacchaeus had not been such a little man, he would have been able to see over the crowd. The people who try to hide behind hypocrites today confess by their action they are smaller than the hypocrites behind whom they would hide.

II. How the barriers were broken down (Luke 19:5-10).

A. Zacchaeus sought to see Jesus (Luke 19:3).

1. He wanted to see Jesus in order to form his own opinion.

2. He made an earnest effort, but was balked by the crowd.

3. He refused to be discouraged, and continued his efforts (Luke 19:4).

B. He secured a higher viewpoint (Luke 19:4).

1. He climbed up higher.

2. He could now see over the heads of the crowd.

C. Jesus welcomed Zacchaeus (Luke 19:5).

1. Faith comes by hearing.

2.No one ever sought to see Jesus earnestly and found Him other than eager and willing.

3. Jesus halted to confer with Zacchaeus, and the entire crowd was forced to wait (Luke 19:5).

4. Jesus showed His love and gentleness by calling Zacchaeus by name (Luke 19:5).

5. Jesus entered the home of Zacchaeus. The supreme tact of Jesus is shown here. It would have been futile to talk to Zacchaeus before the crowd. Social fellowships help to break down the barriers for soul winners.

D. Jesus preached to Zacchaeus.

1. There is no mention of the sermon.

2. Jesus’ life purpose and ministry make it certain He did preach.

3. There were glorious results of the message (Luke 19:8).

III. Breaking down the barriers between Zacchaeus and his fellow men.

A. Zacchaeus accepted Jesus.

1. His original purpose had been to see Jesus so he could form his own estimate.

2. Jesus' constant desire and effort led Zacchaeus to Him.

3. Zacchaeus' acceptance of Jesus plainly is implied. a. Zacchaeus, statement (Luke 19:8). b. The closing declaration of Jesus (Luke 19:9, Luke 19:10).

B. Zacchaeus acted in accordance with his new faith.

1. He cut loose from his wealth (Luke 19:8).

2. He imitated Jesus in loving service to the needy (Luke 19:8).

C. Zacchaeus acted to break down the barriers between himself and his fellows.

1. Broken barriers between man and God always mean the breaking of barriers between man and man.

2. The barrier of wealth was removed by sacrificial giving (Luke 19:8).

3. The barrier of sin was removed by restitution (Luke 19:8).

D. Jesus proclaimed the salvation of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:9, Luke 19:10).

112. Chapter 53 - The Parable of the Pounds

Chapter 53 - The Parable of the Pounds

Luke 19:11-28 The Crowd of Pilgrims

“And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear” (Luke 19:11). The visit in the home of Zacchaeus was over. The crowd of pilgrims was climbing up the mountain highway with Jesus in the midst. Everyone was anxious to hear from the apostles or members of the household who were present exactly what was said and done in the home of Zacchaeus while they waited impatiently in the street. Much excited discussion was carried on among the pilgrims as they talked of the healing of the blind man and the conversion of Zacchaeus. But most of all they talked of tomorrow and what would happen when Jesus came face to face with the wicked rulers in Jerusalem. This false expectation that the next day or two would see the establishment of the kingdom is what caused Jesus to deliver this parable, in which He showed clearly that the Messianic King was to go away for a long period and finally return for the glorious consummation. There must have been a strong contingent of Zealots in such a multitude as this. It was important to warn them and temper their misplaced zeal. They were approaching the capital, but there was enough of the long journey left to give them time for reflection and discussion among themselves as to the meaning of this parable. Predictions of His approaching death had been repeatedly given to the apostles to prepare them for the tragedy they must now face. This parable given to the multitudes did not picture the death of the Messiah; the parable of the wicked husbandmen, delivered four days later on the last day of His ministry, predicted this clearly. The Parable of the Pounds issued the warning “not now, but later,” and underscored the solemn responsibility of each one to make the fullest use of his opportunities. The Locale The incident in the home of Zacchaeus was definitely connected with this parable by the clause and as they heard these things. Plummer thinks this refers to those in the home of Zacchaeus who heard the words Jesus spoke to him, and he holds that this parable was delivered while Jesus was still in Jericho. This is a possible interpretation since Jericho was “nigh to Jerusalem.” Jericho to Jerusalem took about six hours. But it seems more probable that this parable was delivered at one of the rest periods on the stiff climb up the mountain. If the stay in the home of Zacchaeus was only a few hours in the middle of the day and the journey resumed in the afternoon, then the overnight stop would have been at the halfway point made famous by the Parable of the Good Samaritan. An inn, fort, and two pools would have furnished water and protection, and the sunset hour amid the wild mountain scenery would have furnished the background for this sermon of which we have only the parable recorded.

If Jesus remained overnight in the home of Zacchaeus, it seems probable that they would have been much closer to Jerusalem and that it was mid-afternoon when this parable was delivered. The Two Similar Parables

Strauss and various other hostile writers have argued that this parable is an invention in which Luke mixed up a variant form of the Parable of the Talents with another setting which might he called “The Parable of the Rebellious Citizens.” The only possible basis for this radical view is the bare hypothesis that Jesus would not have delivered on different occasions parables similar in some of their details. Repetition is the life of effective teaching. If a first parable had not been properly understood or digested, a second similar parable would have been helpful. Both Luke’s intelligence and accuracy of information are assailed by this view. The differences between the parables are pronounced. The Parable of the Pounds was delivered publicly, as Jesus approached Jerusalem; the Parable of the Talents was given privately to the apostles two days after the triumphal entry. The one represents the owner leaving home for a time; the other tells of the nobleman going into a far country in search of a throne. The talents were distributed to three men unequally; the pounds were given to ten men equally. In the giving of rewards and punishments there is considerable difference. Moreover, the parable in Luke’s Gospel introduces a number of entirely new items grouped about the effort of the nobleman to gain a throne, and the opposition and punishment of his enemies.

Double Objective The parable is directed toward two diverse elements: (1) Some of the disciples were in a fever-heat of excitement over the prospect that as soon as He arrived in the capital He would use His miraculous power to destroy His enemies and proclaim Himself the Messianic King. They had materialistic ideas of the kingdom and too small a conception of their spiritual responsibilities. (2) Others were enemies who did not believe on Him and were determined to frustrate His movements and destroy Him. The disciples were warned that the final consummation was not close at hand; they must wait with patience for the kingdom and work faithfully for Christ until His return from a far country. The enemies were warned that their opposition was known, would fail, and that terrible destruction would be their fate. The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen is also devoted to this second objective.

Current History Were it not for contemporary history, the critics would have had a more convincing argument against this parable that it represents an inconceivable situation. A nobleman goes into a far country to receive a kingdom, and returns to rule. If he desires to “receive a kingdom,” why go into a far country to get it? If it was acquired in a far country, why not stay there and rule? Behind this parable one sees the shadowy outline of historical events in Palestine. Josephus tells of several such instances in which Herod the Great or his descendants went to Rome to be confirmed as rulers of Palestine. Those hearing this parable would probably be reminded of these recent historical events. They would say, “Oh, yes. We had something like that happen in Palestine when Archelaus went to Rome to have Herod the Great’s will confirmed.” Herod’s will had bequeathed to Archelaus the rule over Judaea, Samaria, and Idumaea. Herod Antipas was made ruler over Galilee and Peraea. The Trachonitis country to the north was given to Philip. After some consideration Rome confirmed the will of Herod the Great. The Jews knew the barbarous, cruel character of Archelaus and feared their fate would be worse than under Herod the Great. They sent an embassage of fifty of their ablest leaders to Rome in an appeal to Caesar Augustus against the confirmation of Archelaus.

Rome kept order in the provinces by permitting such appeals to Caesar, even against a Roman governor. But Rome kept the appeals from multiplying over petty matters by making it a life-and-death appeal. If the appeal was sustained the Roman governor would be dismissed,

exiled, or even executed. If the appeal failed, the members of the delegation making the appeal would be slain. This was the fate of those who opposed Archelaus. Herod the Great began his reign in like manner by slaying forty-five of the leaders of the opposition in the Sanhedrin. Jesus does not refer to all this current history, but the hearers must have been reminded of it as they listened to the parable. If there had been a definite reference to the wicked Archelaus in the parable, then we would have the same sort of situation as in the Parable of the Unjust Judge, where the details do not fit and the interpreter must be content with the principles taught. The nobleman in this parable is benevolent and only acts against his enemies as a last resort to mete out just punishment. Any connection with current history is nothing more than shadowy outline in the background.

Ten Servants

“And he called ten servants of his, and gave them ten pounds, and said unto them, Trade ye herewith till I come” (Luke 19:13). The nobleman represents Christ; the servants answer to His disciples; the citizens who oppose him are Christ’s enemies. There is probably no special significance in the number ten in this parable or the number three in the Parable of the Talents. These were round numbers and fitted to show typical attitudes and achievements. In this parable strong emphasis is placed on the rash enthusiasm of the crowd, and a warning is given that He must go away, but will finally return and assuredly reward both the righteous and the wicked according to their deeds.

Achievements and Rewards

One servant, who had increased his pound to ten pounds, was given jurisdiction over ten cities. Another, who had now five pounds, was given the rule over five cities. This shows the purpose of the nobleman in distributing the pounds in the first place; he wanted to test the capacity of the men with the idea of promotion. We cannot argue that it teaches degrees of reward in heaven because we cannot be sure whether this detail of the parable has a spiritual parallel. It suggests at least that the nobility achieved in this life will determine the measure of appreciation we shall have of the blessedness in heaven. The statement Jesus made to James and John that there are chief seats in the kingdom which will be given to those whom God has selected comes nearer to positive proof. This statement is not in a parable, but it still is subject to the different interpretation of those who would refer it to the day of Pentecost, the setting up of the kingdom then, and the place which Peter and the apostles had in its initial establishment. But Jesus seems to have been talking of the final consummation in that passage. There is certainly nothing startling or inconsistent about there being a difference in rewards in heaven; in fact, it seems to be an inevitable result of the character and fruitage different Christians have achieved. The Talents and Pounds

“Well done, thou good servant: because thou wast found faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities” (Luke 19:17). In the Parable of the Talents the master had distributed his entire possessions to three servants, each according to his several ability. The amount committed to each was very large. A talent of gold was almost $30,000; a talent of silver was about $1,950. In the Greco-Roman period the Attic talent was from $960 to $1,180. In contrast, the pound was very small, only about $20, and each of the ten servants was given the same amount. The newly-crowned king emphasized the fact that the amount he had given each was “a very little,” but it had been sufficient to test their fidelity. The reward was immense as compared with the small

amount they had handled. It was on the basis of faithfulness rather than success. The man who had gained five pounds was praised as warmly as the one who had gained ten pounds, even though the reward was different in extent. The Faithless Servant

“And another came” (Luke 19:20). The most strongly supported text is the other. One important uncial and some later manuscripts have another. Following the majority of the best manuscripts and the principle of choosing the more difficult reading, the textual critics generally adopt the other. The a.s.v. has another in the text and the other in a footnote. The thing which makes the other a difficult reading is that if there were ten servants and two had reported, why say “the other”? Weiss claims that this proves that the present report of the parable is confused and that originally there were only three servants represented, and that this parable and the Parable of the Talents were the same. Plummer replies vigorously that it would have been tedious to have gone through all the ten reports; the three are considered examples of all — some gaining greatly; some, moderately; some or one, none at all. “The other” may imply that all the other nine made some gain at least in harmony with the achievements of the two that are reported, but this one stood apart from all the others.

“For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that which thou layest not down, and reapest that which thou didst not sow” (Luke 19:21). The word translated “austere” meant originally rough to the taste, stringent. The master is represented as severe and bitter in his dealings. The servant charges that if he had gained anything with this pound, it would have been taken away from him; and, if lie had lost by his business transactions, he would have been blamed for the loss. The actual conduct of the king shows that this is a false charge. He had “laid down” and “sowed” generously to these ten servants. Instead of seizing what had been gained by the faithful servants, he rewarded them in an amazing manner. Usually when this is read in public a faulty emphasis has the king admit in Luke 19:22 that the charge against him is true. A lilt in the voice will make it a question: “Thou knewest that I am an austere man taking up that which I laid not down, and reaping that which I did not sow?” — “so this is your opinion of me, is it? Well, I will judge you upon the basis of your own false opinion of me.” The master repeated the charge against him not as true statement of fact, but to make it the basis of judgment upon the wicked servant. If the man had been fearful he would lose the pound in unwise business ventures, he could at least have placed it in the bank where it would have been as safe as it was buried in the ground and where it would have borne interest. This verse offers interesting information on the antiquity of banking and the reputation for stability of primitive banking. The bankers were the money changers. The Greek phrase into the bank reads literally “on a banker’s table.” Aristotle bitterly opposed taking interest on money; Cato quoted Cicero as saying it was on a level with murder. But Jesus was not communistic in His teaching; the right to private property with the individual responsible to God as a faithful steward is everywhere taught; there is no suggestion of anything wicked in a fair rate of interest. Such denunciation of interest as came from Aristotle and Cicero was tantamount to a denial of the right to any business transactions or to the possession of private property. The Principle

“And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds” (Luke 19:25). It is not clear who is speaking. The king has just commanded that the one pound be taken away from the servant who had refused to use it, and be given to the one who had ten pounds. “They said” may refer to the servants who are commanded to take the pound away from the one servant and give it to the

other. Some think it means that some in the audience broke in on the teaching Jesus was giving and voiced a protest against the turn He was giving to the account. It seems more probable that this was the protest of the servants to the king. “Unto every one that hath shall be given; but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him” (Luke 19:26). Here is the principle taught in this section of the parable. The wise use of the pounds brought about their increase; the refusal to use even a very small amount would mean the loss of this possession, ability, or opportunity. “Him that hath not” means in a relative sense. Nothing could be taken from one who had nothing, but in a relative sense the man with the one pound stands beside other servants who have gained larger sums by their diligent efforts. There seems to be no particular reason for the one pound being given to the man who had ten, rather than divided among those who had increased their pounds in smaller amounts, except to emphasize the general principle that “to him that hath shall be given.”

Final Triumph of Righteousness

“But these mine enemies, that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me” (Luke 19:27). The parable closes with a dreadful warning to the wicked rulers who were plotting His death. These repeated declarations foretold the time when He would fulfill the Messianic predictions of the Old Testament and bring final judgment on the wicked who had despised and defied God. Such a prediction must have collided strongly in the minds of the apostles with His predictions of approaching death at the hands of these wicked leaders of the nation. The verb slay is a compound verb meaning to hew to pieces, to slay utterly. This suggests both the terrible doom of Jerusalem when destroyed by the Romans and the eternal doom which awaits those who rebel against Christ. The criticism that the Old Testament presents a God of wrath and the New Testament pictures a God of love and mercy, and that the two do not harmonize is supposed to be a “modern” idea, but back in the fifth century Augustine used this passage in the New Testament to combat this very criticism of the Bible.

“And when he had thus spoken, he went on before, going up to Jerusalem” (Luke 19:28). This picture of leading the great multitude up the mountain highway reminds one of Mark 10:32, when Jesus went on before the apostles with His face so full of determination and severity that the apostles followed in a huddled group. This is not affirmed of the multitude now, but Jesus was leading the way to His death in a way that must have filled His followers with awe and amazement.

113. Book Four The Final Week

Book Four The Final Week

114. Chapter 1 - The Arrival at Bethany

Chapter 1 - The Arrival at Bethany John 11:15-57;John 12:1,John 12:9-11

Never were all so indebted to One as when Christ died for our sins. Never was there such concentration and condensation in one life-giving message as we find in the Gospel accounts. Of all the priceless history which the Gospel writers have recorded, one-half is devoted to the final week of Jesus' ministry. In magnificent hyperbole John declares that if all the things Jesus said and did had been recorded, "I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should he written" (John 21:25). The Passover Crowd

All roads always led to Jerusalem at the Passover. But this Passover was different. All roads now possessed a mysterious compulsion which drew to the capital excited, expectant multitudes (John 11:55, John 11:56). Would He come? Would He dare to come? Who could prevent Him? Who could withstand Him? Not the rabble-rousing hypocrites of temple and synagogue. But they were deeply intrenched; they had arms and soldiers; they would with shrewd cunning seek the support of Rome. If only He would declare Himself and use His miraculous power to destroy His enemies. What a day of glory that would be! But, if not — what then? The storm clouds were menacing. The tension of suppressed excitement was fast approaching the inevitable point of explosion. Verily, this thing was not done in a corner. The Apostles From a superior vantage point the apostles had listened and watched. The searchlight of intimate revelation had guided their thoughts. But they were still in a state of hopeless confusion, unwilling to accept the inevitable because it was incredible, and longing to yield to the surge of emotions of love and desire. Like an erratic cyclone which lashes out in opposite directions, they rushed from one extreme to another — from delirious hope to utter despair. At the time of their last departure from Peraea to the capital when Lazarus lay dead, Thomas had spoken for all in his outcry of anguish and despair: "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (John 11:16).

Jesus And with what emotions did Jesus approach Jerusalem? The sight of the city caused Him to burst into tears at the time of the triumphal entry. It was not for Himself, but for them that He mourned. As He now went up to the capital His determination was manifest and unyielding.

Pharisees and Zealots

Without doubt both Zealots and Pharisees had made objections to the bold salutation of blind Bartimaeus of Jericho as he hailed Jesus as the Christ (Mark 10:47). The Pharisees: "What is this? Someone daring to hail Him publicly as the Christ?" The Zealots: "Silence that beggar! Now that we have Him going up to Jerusalem for the final collision, we must not allow Him to lapse back into a humble ministry of healing." Waiting around in the streets of Jericho while the Prophet of Galilee "stooped to conquer" in the home of an outcast publican, Zacchaeus, would have given worldly dreams a severe backset. Before the house of Zacchaeus the Zealots fretted and fumed, while the Pharisees spread their scornful attacks. The Inevitable Climax When Jesus dosed His Peraean ministry and definitely started the journey to Jerusalem for the Passover, the disciples in

a huddled group followed the majestic figure of the Master as He strode on before them (Mark 10:32-34). Hoping against hope, they were filled with the anguish of an overpowering dread: they were faced with the tragedy Jesus had repeatedly predicted to them. When He suddenly appeared in the midst of the throng of pilgrims approaching Jericho, it was plain to all that the inevitable climax was at hand. He was about to accept the challenge of the national leaders who had recently issued a demand that anyone knowing His whereabouts should report it in order that they might arrest Him as a public enemy. He was evidently going straight into their midst and, unarmed and unaided, planning to meet them in the temple itself. The dramatic conclusion to the irrepressible conflict was now definitely approaching. The fickle multitudes with their worldly dreams began to feel the excitement, a situation which was intensified by blind Bartimaeus who boldly voiced the slumbering hopes of all and would not be silenced as he shouted from the roadside: “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” The healing of the blind man must have given tremendous impetus to the rising tide of Messianic fervor. As the great crowd again proceeded on their way from Jericho led by the Master, the excitement became so intense that Jesus paused to deliver The Parable of the Pounds, a parable which was directed at the worldly expectations of the crowd and at the desperate plots of His enemies. We are indebted to the Gospel of Luke for all of these important details which enable us to visualize the scenes at Jericho and on the journey up the mountain highway. John gives a vivid description of the situation in Jerusalem and of the arrival of Jesus in Bethany. “Many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the passover, to purify themselves. They sought therefore for Jesus, and spake one with another, as they stood in the temple, What think ye? That he will not come to the feast?” (John 11:55, John 11:56). The form of the Greek sentence indicates a negative answer is expected to this question: “Surely, He will not come up to the feast? Jerusalem swarms with enemies and seethes with plots. He has no army. But has He not marvelous, miraculous power, if only He would use it against His enemies?” These whisperings were carried on in the temple where an ominous, brooding silence prevailed. If the throngs who had arrived early in Jerusalem were thus excited, it is not hard to imagine the tense emotions of the multitude that was slowly climbing the mountain range with Jesus as He approached the holy city.

Early Arrivals for the Passover The Old Testament gave numerous, strict regulations as to ceremonial cleansing that had to be observed before a Jew might partake of one of the great feasts at the capital. Ordinary procedure was observed before worship in the temple. For ordinary forms of uncleanness, such as touching an unclean animal or coming into the house of a Gentile, the required ceremony ended at sunset. The more serious forms of uncleanness would require a week for purification, and thus a person who came up to the Passover might be prevented by such a misfortune from partaking of the feast. For this reason the people were accustomed to come up to the capital some days before the Passover. But the crowds who gathered early on this occasion had the additional motive of excited interest in the tragic drama which seemed likely to be enacted. There is no suggestion in the text of John that Jesus came up to the feast so far ahead of the Passover in order to purify Himself. He undoubtedly did observe the regulations of the Old Testament as He approached the temple for this feast. Even as He was coming up to Jerusalem not merely to eat the Passover lamb, but to become the Sacrifice for the sins of all mankind, so the details of ceremonial cleansing were not the impelling motives for His early arrival, but the desire to save lost men, to issue such a series of warnings to the wicked leaders of the nation and to the people as might echo down through the ages. His death was not to be by secret assassination in a

dark corner. He intended to make His challenge to Satan and his priestly and Pharisaical allies so public and complete that no one could ever overlook it.

Devious Methods of the Pharisees The arrest of John the Baptist by Herod Antipas is described by the same Greek verb which is used of the betrayal of Jesus by Judas. Matthew 4:12 says “John was delivered up.” This does not necessarily imply that John was betrayed into the hands of Herod as was Jesus by Judas. The verb means “to deliver over, as to prison” as well as “to betray.” It would not require great physical effort for Herod to procure the arrest and imprisonment of John the Baptist as he preached. We are not to assume, however, that the Peraean ministry of Jesus was carried on in such secret manner that the Pharisees would have had any real difficulty in finding where Jesus was. John states without refutation the decree of the Sanhedrin, but it needed no refutation: “Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given commandment, that, if any man knew where he was, he should show it, that they might take him.” Why should such a decree as this he issued when Jesus was preaching publicly in Peraea? He had retreated to the provinces, but He was certainly not in hiding. The Pharisees probably had the subtle purpose in this pronouncement of preparing the nation for the struggle which was about to ensue. They had repeatedly tried to kill Jesus, but they had found themselves mysteriously foiled when they tried to attack Him. When they had attempted to have Him arrested at the Feast of Tabernacles, the officers returned empty-handed with the awed report: “Never man so spake.” Meanwhile the hold of Jesus upon the nation increased, and as the mystery of His divine person became the more evident, the possibility of an assassination such as they later planned against Paul and executed against Stephen became more remote. Although they were constantly plotting the death of Jesus, they felt that if they were to achieve their purpose, it must he by a public trial, and for this the nation must be prepared.

Hypocritical Cowardice A further reason for the decree and perhaps the chief reason was their desperate necessity to do something to stem the rising tide. The decree was a colossal bluff. They knew where Jesus was. They could readily have reached the scene of His preaching in a two day’s journey. The sudden journey of Jesus to Bethany for the raising of Lazarus and the sudden departure furnished both the necessity and the opportunity for the issuing of this decree of proscription. The resurrection of Lazarus forced the issue; they could not ignore it or avoid it. They dared not act yet, and so they fumed and threatened in the temple. They remind one of that Greek soldier described by Xenophon, who though large of body was faint of heart and excused his failure to go into battle by his inability to find a sword which was big and strong enough to suit his frame. If ever he could find such a sword, he would readily advance to the combat! He just could not find it! Wicked hypocrites ruling in the temple would have had plenty of equally evil enemies at their heels. Taunts for their failure to face the issue had to be given some answer. This decree served the purpose of saving their faces as well as preparing for the final struggle. The ready proof is that no one attempted to carry out their decree and report Jesus for arrest. Anyone delivering such a report might be asked to execute the commission of arrest!

It is true that Jesus was in the territory of Herod Antipas, but the authority of the Sanhedrin obtained in religious matters among Jews everywhere. And Herod Antipas could hardly be described as a devoted disciple of Jesus. They could have secured his co-operation for the arrest, had they dared to effect it. Herod had tried in vain to drive Jesus out of his domain (Luke 13:31). The predictions of Jesus that He was to suffer death at the hands of His enemies had been

reported to them (Matthew 27:63). His evident determination not to use His miraculous power to defend Himself caused them to grow more bold in their determination to risk all by arresting Him. They did not do this in the provinces where Jesus waited for the Passover. Jesus forced the issue by coming into their very presence in a triumphal entry of Jerusalem.

It is idle for modern critics to declare that if the claims of Jesus are correct and He was actually the Son of God, then it required no great courage to come to Jerusalem and face His enemies who were mere men. The vital point is that Jesus refused to use His divine power to save Himself from suffering and death at the hands of His enemies. He had made evident to both friend and foe that He would not undertake to defend Himself by violence and that He would not permit any of His followers to resort to violence. It requires a certain amount of courage to face death at last when one no longer has the power to avoid it and is helpless to delay it. It requires a far greater amount of courage to give one's life deliberately for someone else, to have the power to avoid death, but to refuse to use the power. When such a tragic decision can he made and executed on the spur of the moment, it is far easier than to face the terrible reality of approaching disaster through long months and years and to meet death full of power to avoid it, but consumed with determination not to do so. The Son of God, as He went up to die for a lost world, gave the sublime revelation of courage.

Time of Arrival The date of Jesus' arrival seems to he set quite definitely by John's Gospel: "Jesus therefore six days before the passover came to Bethany." When this statement is analyzed, however, one immediately faces the following problems: Is the count made from the day on which the Passover lamb was slain (Thursday) or the day of the great feast (Friday)? Does the count include the day of arrival and the day named as the "Passover," or does John mean six days intervened without including these terminal days? The count is usually made from Thursday and the preceding Saturday named as the approximate date of His arrival at Bethany. It is generally held that Jesus arrived late on Friday afternoon since it is not likely that He would have spent the night between Jericho and Jerusalem or that He would have made this long trip (eighteen miles) on the Sabbath. This is probably correct, but it cannot be argued with absolute assurance since the ruins of an ancient khan about half-way up the mountain road from Jericho to Jerusalem show that travelers were under no necessity to make the trip in one day. Moreover, the presence of such a multitude of pilgrims would make possible an overnight camp at any point on the highway, even though the region was desolate and robber-infested. The proposition that Jesus would not have made the entire trip on the Sabbath needs more examination than has been given to it. It rests upon the presumption that Jesus would not have traveled freely an the Sabbath, but would have observed the tradition of the elders which forbade any journey of more than seven-eighths of a mile. The Old Testament law simply prohibited any work on the Sabbath, and the Pharisees set themselves to the task of spinning out all sorts of fine discriminations by way of interpreting this command for the nation. Work? Was it work to walk? That depended on how far you walked; and so, on the basis of the original encampment of Israel about the tabernacle, they ruled that seven-eighths of a mile was the limit of any journey that a faithful Jew might make on the Sabbath. Jesus, however, refused to be bound by the traditions of the Pharisees He even went Out of His way to override and denounce them. The lame man at the Pool of Bethesda might have been healed on some other day. He might have been cautioned to bestow his pallet near by and not attempt to carry it home on the Sabbath (the carrying of any burden was especially prohibited by

the Pharisees). But instead of this, Jesus healed the man and ordered him to take up his bed and go home even though this compelled him to go through the Sabbath day crowds about the temple in open violation of the traditions of the Pharisees There is not one single instance in the ministry of Jesus where He expressly accepted these traditions. Why, then, argue with such assurance that He would not have traveled from Jericho to Jerusalem on the Sabbath? He probably did not, but it cannot be proved. Although Bethany is said to he “a sabbath day’s journey from Jerusalem,” this does not necessarily imply that Jesus and His followers kept the regulation. If Jesus had chosen to make the journey up from Jericho on the Sabbath, the excited multitudes would certainly have accompanied Him. Poor people could not hope to keep the traditions of the Pharisees, because only those with wealth and leisure could have the time to keep the endless round of ceremonies ordered by the exclusive sect. Jesus said concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, “Pray ye that your flight he not in the winter, neither on a sabbath” (Matthew 24:20). This did not mean, however, that such flight would be impossible, only more difficult. To make it mean that His followers could not break the tradition of the elders and flee more than seven-eighths of a mile on the Sabbath, even to save their lives from the Romans, would make the early Christians out-Pharisee the Pharisees! The supreme moment of universal history would lead Jesus to make this journey just as God directed regardless of whether it was on the Sabbath or not. There is thus nothing to prevent the view that Jesus came on the late afternoon of the Sabbath. Some hold that Jesus spent the Sabbath in Jericho at the home of Zacchaeus and made the journey on Sunday, entering immediately in triumph into the temple toward the close of this day. These scholars follow the arrangement of Matthew and Mark as to the anointing of Jesus in Bethany and hold that John’s record of this event is geographical. But it seems more probable that Jesus arrived on Friday or Saturday evening.

Jesus and Lazarus The mention of Bethany naturally brought forth in John’s account the reminder that Lazarus was still there, alive, a compelling, unavoidable testimony to the miraculous power of Jesus. The miracle was recent and still fresh in the minds and the conversation of the people. Crowds came from Jerusalem hoping to get a glimpse of the great Prophet and also of this man whom He had raised from the dead. While a restless multitude of the curious or the more spiritually minded shifted and sought on the Mount of Olives, the palace of the high priest was filled with morose whisperings and deadly plots. Meanwhile the home in Bethany where Jesus and His apostles rested was full of the quiet and calm of a heavenly peace.

115. Chapter 2 - The Anointing of Jesus by Mary

Chapter 2 - The Anointing of Jesus by Mary Matthew 26:6-13;Mark 14:3-9;John 12:2-8 The Master Comes The home of Simon the leper in Bethany throbs with the full pulsation of a supreme moment of life, for the kind of time has arrived for which all other time is made. The lights glow in every chamber. Jesus and His apostles have come to share a supper which devoted friends have prepared. The manner of ecstatic but subdued conversation fills the banquet room. Old friends are meeting again to renew wonderful fellowship as rest and relaxation are provided after an arduous journey. Faces are aglow and eyes are shining, for hearts are beating high. Is not the Master Himself in the midst again? What a look of reverence and gratitude is on the face of Lazarus as he leans forward to hear every word which falls from the lips of Jesus. The Lord is again in Bethany with His dear friends. And will He not go tomorrow into the holy city to face His cruel foes in the temple? No other purpose could have brought Him to this fateful Passover. And what then? An impenetrable veil hangs over a future fraught with tragic suspense. But tomorrow will he another day and tonight is tonight; at least, we can drink deeply tonight of the blessed water of life, for our souls are famished and our lips are feverish.

There is one person in the midst who is not content with such blindfolded reflections. Every hour of this day has sounded a knell of doom for Mary. The outcome of a future that steadily grows darker, although it is still shrouded with the mystery of infinite possibilities of glory or despair, may cause the apostles to blunder on in helpless indecision and uncertainty. Such a state of mind renders them ready victims to the evil suggestion of Judas Iscariot a little later in the evening. But the keenness of a woman’s intuition when it is directed by a great love and deep spiritual insight is in the heart of Mary. She has not heard all the terrifying predictions of death at the hands of the rulers of temple and synagogue that have been vouchsafed to the apostles in hours of private instruction, but she has heard enough; she has seen enough. She has missed no word of the Master spoken in her presence and, like Mary of Nazareth, she has treasured each word pondering them in her heart. Ominous figures of speech delivered in temple sermons or to the multitudes on mountain sides have filled her with foreboding. The apostles, warned at first not to repeat the startling predictions of a death too horrible to contemplate, are beginning to talk freely in the inner circle of friends concerning the fearful outlook. The Insight of Mary Is it surprising under such circumstances that one so spiritually minded should have been able to see clearly the inevitable outcome as the whispered threats against Jesus and even against Lazarus, the innocent witness to the divine power of the Master, increased in volume and venom? It was perfectly clear to her that Jesus did not intend to use His marvelous power to destroy these malicious hypocrites and that naught but His death could quench the fierce flame of their hate. Why should any one doubt the accuracy of Jesus’ declaration: “For in that she poured this ointment upon my body, she did it to prepare me for burial”? The aged Simeon, as he had stood in the temple with the Christ-child in his very arms, had cried out in passionate thanksgiving to God for the redemption of Israel, had predicted that the Child should be “for a sign which is spoken against,” and had uttered to Mary of Nazareth the dreadful words, “Yea and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul.” Like

miraculous foresight could have been granted to Mary of Bethany, but there seems no necessity for it. The Gift of Love

We do not know what transpired in the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus between the time of the resurrection of Lazarus and this beautiful scene in the home of Simon the leper. We can only surmise how and when there was invested what must have been the savings of a lifetime in a small “alabaster cruse of exceeding precious ointment.” On a former occasion Martha had protested bitterly to Jesus against the excessive spiritual concentration of Mary which had caused her to neglect doing her share of the onerous tasks of the day. But Martha offered no protest against the gift of love which has made forever precious the memories of this supper in the minds of uncounted millions of devoted Christians. When Jesus predicted the world-wide fame that should come to Mary as a result of her deed, He in no way suggested that there was the slightest idea of this in her heart or the heart of her friends. She had done what she could as she plainly saw Jesus going to His death. It must have seemed entirely appropriate to Martha that it should be Mary who would present this gift to Jesus. And Lazarus, so silent in all the narratives concerning Bethany, must have felt a peculiar, loving gratitude as he contemplated the gift of life he had received from the Master. We are apt to think of Mary as quiet, subdued, and retiring because so many forceful words are spoken by Martha in the Gospel records. We have but one sentence recorded from the lips of Mary, and that a brokenhearted repetition of the protest Martha had just uttered (John 11:32), but in the presence of the grief of Mary as she fell prone at His feet crying out brokenly of the death of Lazarus, the Master Himself had wept Certainly Mary was no reed shaken by the wind, nor a helpless, clinging vine following the lead of her brother and sister. She was full of individuality, initiative, and determined purpose. It took much of this to have kept her place at the feet of Jesus as He taught in the home — this in spite of the distress signals and urgent need of Martha. It also required great boldness of character for Mary to have interrupted the banquet in the home of Simon by such an amazing gift of love. She could foresee the inevitable fulfillment of Jesus’ predictions of His death, but she could not have been absolutely certain of how Jesus would regard this gift which others would criticize as the most reckless extravagance. It was not such a matter as she might discuss with Jesus and ascertain His will before the time. It had to be done extempore. It would cause a tremendous reaction from every one present. What others might think was of no consequence. The clarity of her spiritual vision which enabled her to understand that Jesus was about to die, also enabled her to believe that Jesus would accept her precious gift. Verily those who do His will shall know of His teaching. A Startling Interruption

We do not know the topics of conversation on this occasion as intimate friends listened to wonderful words of life from Jesus. There was one haunting specter in every heart. It might be crushed and driven Out for a passing moment, but it would continually rush back into the thoughts as on the wings of a tempest. “And while he was in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster cruse of ointment of pure nard very costly; and she brake the cruse, and poured it over his head” (Mark 14:3, Mark 14:4). Whatever turn the conversation was taking, certainly it was broken up in the most startling and amazing fashion “And the house was filled with the odor of the ointment” (John 12:3). Mary had decisively furnished the topic of conversation; not a nook or corner of the entire house but was suddenly filled with the pungent odor of this powerful essence; not a person but thought and spoke only of this. Sadler suggests that the record of how the odor of the ointment filled all the house is typical of the way the

great beauty of her deed would ring through all the world, but this is a mystical interpretation which we cannot assert. We are not told in the New Testament that this was “a mysterious forecast of the world-wide fame of her action.” The Protest When the first gasp of amazement subsided, the reaction was decidedly unfavorable. “Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples, that should betray him, saith, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred shillings, and given to the poor? Now this he said, not because he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and having the bag took away what was put therein” (John 12:4-6). Mark records: “But there were some that had indignation among themselves, saying, To what purpose hath this waste….And they murmured against her” (Mark 14:4, Mark 14:5). This last verb is the extraordinary embrimaomai, which is used to express the very great emotion of Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus — “groaning in himself” (John 11:38). Bernard translates it “And they roared against her.” The blunt command of Jesus: “Let her alone; why trouble ye her?” shows that their criticisms were very pointed, if not vociferous. Matthew informs us that the apostles joined in the protest against the waste: “But when the disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying Here is another deathblow to the theory which Allen uses desperately to sustain the Two-source Theory. He holds that Matthew copied from Mark and changed as he copied to remove any criticism or hint of blemish in the apostles and that this is evidence of the late date of Matthew which was written in a time when growing reverence for the apostles began to color the accounts. A little more investigation might have saved Allen from such folly, for here Mark leaves unidentified the “some that had indignation,” while it is Matthew who definitely declares the disciples uttered this protest! Those who contend that Mary did not really foresee the death of Jesus or intend that the anointing was for His death and burial, but that Jesus just chose to accept her gift with this meaning, overlook the contrast between the understanding and attitude of the apostles and that of Mary as shown by her presenting such a gift that it caused them to offer vehement protest. A deep spiritual insight into the inevitable trend of events and the purpose and heart of Jesus is shown by Mary as she made her gift, even if we did not have the commendation of Jesus to guide us in determining the extent of her understanding. The Time of Anointing A most difficult problem is found in the different the arrangement of this scene in the various narratives. John records it immediately after the arrival in Bethany and before the triumphal entry. He does not state definitely that it occurred at this time, but the account of the anointing is placed between two notes of time. Matthew and Mark record the anointing after the triumphal entry and just before the compact between Judas and the chief priests and the preparations for the Passover meal. They do not definitely state that the anointing occurred at that exact time and their arrangement may he topical rather than chronological. It can hardly be doubted that Matthew, Mark, and John describe the same event in spite of the different arrangement in their narratives.

Some conservative scholars hold that Jesus was anointed three times: (1) by the sinful woman at the banquet in the home of Simon, the Pharisee in Galilee (Luke 7:36-50); (2) by Mary of Bethany at an unidentified home in that village just before the triumphal entry (John 12:1-8); (3) by an unidentified woman in the home of Simon at Bethany three days after the triumphal entry (Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9). The difficulty with this view is readily seen in a careful reading of the accounts of Matthew, Mark, and John: the details are so nearly identical that it is hard to see how the anointing, the protest, the rejoinder, and the praise by the Master could have taken place twice within a few days of the triumphal entry. In the case of the somewhat similar problem as to whether there were two rejections at Nazareth or only one, there is a very wide difference in time

and very pointed differences in details, which lead one to conclude that Jesus made two efforts to evangelize the city of Nazareth.

Some radical scholars go to the extreme of maintaining that Jesus was anointed but once. This view is plainly untenable, for Luke placed the anointing of Luke 7:36-50 in Galilee, and the setting, characters, and details as well as the time are absolutely different. It is possible that Matthew and Mark give a topical setting or John a geographical setting instead of the chronological order. John describes the dramatic character of the arrival in Bethany and the intensely hostile atmosphere in Jerusalem; it may he that he adds this beautiful scene among devoted friends at Bethany to assist the reader in obtaining an insight into the whole situation before plunging into his chronological narration of the final events. But it seems more probable that Matthew and Mark introduce it as a break in their narrative of the plots and betrayal, turning back momentarily to tell of this scene that had happened a few nights before at Bethany. The general manner of introduction indicates this: “And while he was in Bethany” (Mark 14:3); “Now when Jesus was in Bethany” (Matthew 26:6). That Matthew and Mark should thus break their narration at the same point does not furnish any potent argument for the Two-source Theory. The arrangement of plots, friendship, and betrayal is such a natural array of contrasts that it does not argue against an independent writing of both narratives. If breaks from a chronological to a topical arrangement were frequent in the narratives of the whirlwind of events during this final week, critics might build an imposing argument. A single similarity in arrangement and such a natural one is entirely lacking in force. When we recall that all these events had been proclaimed thousands of times in the days following Pentecost by the inspired apostles, it is not hard to understand the similarities in the records of Matthew, who wrote the first authoritative account and Mark, who later wrote as Peter directed (according to the declarations of the early Christian scholars). The fact that Luke makes no mention of this whole event is a most important phase to remember in testing the probabilities that the Gospel narrators copied from one another or from common sources. If Luke copied from Mark and Matthew (or Ur-Mark and Q) what possible reason can be assigned for his failure to recount this scene with its enormously impressive declaration by Jesus of the world-wide proclamation of the Gospel which would be of especial interest to Luke’s Gentile readers? Plummer suggests that Luke had already recounted an anointing in Galilee by a sinful woman and so omitted this one. If Luke wrote independently this might explain the omission; but if he were only copying from sources then it is hard to explain the omission with its particular points of interest. John wrote several decades later, and the original line of presentation of the Gospel by the inspired witnesses soon after Pentecost was supplemented in most powerful fashion by John who certainly had the other Gospel accounts before him and very certainly did not follow them. The Place

John does not locate this scene other than as in Bethany with Lazarus present at the table, Martha serving, and Mary offering the spiritual service of anointing Jesus as He sat at the banquet table. Matthew and Mark expressly declare it was in the home of Simon the leper. Simon was probably a disciple who had been a leper and had been healed by Jesus. It does not prove that the banquet was served in the home of Martha because we find her serving, although many traditions have arisen which explain the differences on this assumption. They affirm that Simon was the father of Lazarus and the two famous sisters, or that Simon was the husband of Martha. But two families of intimate disciples of Jesus or several families may have thus joined in the home of one family without any blood relationship existing. “They made him a supper” (John 12:2) may refer to one

household or the two households or even a much wider group of friends. Churches today abundantly illustrate such fellowship. The nucleus of a group of strong and devoted disciples in the village of Bethany is more than a probability in the light of the frequent visits of Jesus there and the prodigious miracle of Lazarus' resurrection, which John tells us led many to believe on Him. The effort of radical critics to identify this anointing with that of Luke 7:36-50 rests upon the slender foundation of the host in each case having the same name. But Simon was a very common name and it certainly is not surprising that a Pharisee named Simon should have entertained Jesus in Galilee and that a disciple named Simon should entertain Jesus at Bethany a year or two later. In Luke 7:36-50 the host was churlish and neglected the ordinary duties of hospitality, and the woman was a public sinner who was repentant. Here the banquet was the expression of abounding devotion, the woman a devout disciple, and the discussion was with the disciples as to whether her act constituted a waste of funds, instead of being with the host as to the propriety of permitting a woman who was a public character to touch Him. In the earlier anointing forgiveness of the woman's sins was declared by Jesus; at Bethany Mary's devotion was praised and the significant connection of the act with His approaching death and with the ultimate proclamation of the gospel was set forth. The Identity of the Woman

It is remarkable that Matthew and Mark do not name the woman even though they report the prediction of Jesus concerning the fame that is to be hers as her noble deed is proclaimed all over the world. John dearly declares that it was Mary of Bethany. The most surprising efforts have been made to identify Mary of Magdala with the sinful woman of Luke 7:36-50 and to identify both with Mary of Bethany. Radical scholars who hold that there was only one anointing usually attempt to identify these three women as one. Bernard follows the Roman Catholic position in identifying the three women as one and yet holding that she anointed Jesus twice, once in repentance as she left the life of a harlot to rejoin her family and again in grateful devotion to her Saviour. He expends five pages in this bizarre effort.

Early Christian writers show great divergence of opinion about the identity of the anointings and the women, but from the time of Gregory the Great, the Roman Catholic Church has identified the three women as Mary of Bethany. The feast of St. Mary Magdalene on July 22 attempts to teach this theory and to present Mary as a great sinner who became a great saint. This makes a very dramatic story and illustrates the tendency of Catholic tradition to concentrate a large number of scenes in the same "holy place" or a number of individuals in the same personality. To have Mary first a harlot, then anoint Jesus for burial, and finally be the first to see Him risen from the dead does make an exceedingly dramatic account. The trouble with the arrangement is that it contradicts the historical narratives in the New Testament. How can Magdala in the plain of Gennesaret on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee be identified with Bethany the famous village on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives? It is vain to imagine that Magdala is some unidentifiable place on the Mount of Olives for Mary Magdalene is clearly represented as a woman of Galilee and Mary of Bethany as a woman of Judaea. The suggestion that Mary, Martha, and Lazarus formerly lived in Galilee is without the slightest historic foundation for they are always associated with Bethany. (Luke 10:38-42 does not name the village, but it evidently is Bethany.) Moreover, there is not the slightest excuse for the deliberate slander of the good name of Mary Magdalene or Mary of Bethany by trying to identify them with the repentant harlot of Luke 7:36-50. Bernard's effort to interpret "Mary hath chosen the good part" (Luke 10:42) as meaning not the

good part of hearing Jesus instead of serving with Martha, but the good part of becoming a disciple instead of living a life of shame, is monstrous. Such a farfetched effort is self-evident proof of the lack of any real evidence to sustain his attempted identification of persons. The Ointment The accounts vary in the description of the ointment: “an alabaster cruse of ointment of pure nard very costly” (Mark 14:3); “a pound of ointment of pure nard, very precious” (John 12:3). The term “spikenard” (pistic nard) has caused much speculation. Some hold that it is used as an adjective with ointment and means “genuine”; others suggest that it means “potable,” as some perfumes could be used as a drink, but this does not fit the context in any way. The Revised Version of 1901 translates “pure nard” and gives the marginal reading “liquid nard.” Dods holds it refers to a particular type of very rare and costly turpentine which was given this name because of the terebinth which yielded it. Robertson suggests that “pistic” refers to the particular locality from which the perfume was secured. The amazement and storm of protest that followed the anointing is eloquent testimony to the very precious quality of the ointment. “Three hundred shillings” was the quick estimate of the astute Judas. Three hundred denarii would be about fifty one dollars which perhaps should be multiplied by one hundred to make allowance for the difference in the purchasing power of money then and now. Some affluence and prominence for the family of Mary, as well as supreme devotion in her heart, is indicated by this costly gift. The sinful woman, being unable to secure any ointment that was very expensive, seems to have used ordinary olive oil. The Manner of the Anointing

John states that Mary anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped off the ointment with her hair. Matthew and Mark declare that the woman anointed His head. To anoint the head with olive oil was the customary honor bestowed upon guests (Psalms 23:5; Luke 7:46). The sinful woman may have desired to do this, but did not presume to do so and anointed His feet instead (Luke 7:38). To anoint the feet was extraordinary, although it was customary to furnish a basin of water and a towel to a guest in order that he might wash off the dust of travel as he removed his sandals at the door of the home (Luke 7:44). Mayor has cited an illustration from classical literature (Aristophanes), where a maiden anointed and kissed her father’s feet. Bernard argues at great length upon this phase of John’s narrative, asking why Mary of Bethany should have appeared in public with disheveled hair, when it was considered immodest for a woman to have her hair unbound in public; why she should have anointed His feet, when this was so unusual; why no towel was available for wiping His feet in a home where her sister was serving at the banquet; and why Mary should have wiped off the ointment at all. His answer to all this is that Mary is the sinful woman of Luke 7:36-50 and that she now repeats the procedure which she had followed impromptu before. This is exceedingly farfetched and gratuitous. The woman in Luke 7:1-50 probably intended to anoint Jesus’ head and certainly did not intend to break down and weep in public; she was overcome by her repentance and her course in wetting His feet with her tears and wiping them with her hair and anointing them was unpremeditated and done on the spur of the moment. The course which Mary of Bethany pursued was undoubtedly just as spontaneous. She came to anoint His head, saw His feet travel-worn from the long and difficult journey, anointed them also, and wiped off the excess of ointment with her hair. She had no towel because she had not intended aught except to anoint the head of Jesus. To have interrupted her gift of devotion while she went in search of a towel would have been absurd in the light of the supreme devotion which her gift revealed. She might conceivably have used her head-covering to dry off the ointment, but she showed greater devotion by using her hair. The question as to how it was

possible to anoint both the head and the feet of a guest at a banquet table is readily answered when we recall that the Graeco-Roman civilization had caused the custom to prevail for the guests to recline on couches. Most of the artist's pictures of the Lord's Supper are at fault in this respect. We read of Eli sitting on a bench when the messenger came with the news of the capture of the ark by the Philistines; the bench had no back and the old high priest fell backwards and broke his neck upon hearing the sad news. The money-changers sat at tables in the temple market. The synagogues had benches for the worshippers. We read in Acts that on the day of Pentecost "it filled all the house where they were sitting" (Acts 2:2). But there were couches provided for banquets and the guests reclined, resting on the left elbow with the right hand free to procure the food. The anointing of both the head and the feet was not difficult under such circumstances.

Judas Iscariot The character of Judas begins to emerge in a most startling fashion in the home of Simon the leper. John makes clear that it was Judas who first raised the objection and that his motive was not regard for the poor, but desire to have the money for the general fund from which he was stealing. Evidently followers of Jesus were giving continually into this treasury and the money was being used for the necessary expenses of the group and the surplus given to the poor. Judas must have been a keen businessman, for he had been placed in charge of the treasury. The Greek word translated "bag" or "purse" meant originally a case which contained the reeds or tongues of musical instruments and then came to mean any kind of box. It is used as a money box into which the offerings were cast (Septuagint version of 2 Chronicles 24:8, 2 Chronicles 24:10). The box which Judas carried may have been small or he may not have carried it all the time. Judas' whispered protests misled all the apostles and stirred them to indignation — probably some more than others. Hostile critics attempt to say that John is unfair to Judas and tries to blame everything on him. In their perverse effort to go through the Bible and make all the wicked people noble and to picture the noble people as contemptible, they seize upon John's statement, "he was a thief," as evidence of unfairness. But John simply tells the actual facts. The apostles did not learn until later of the baseness of Judas. Instead of being unfair, his statement is wonderfully restrained when one contemplates the circumstances. The Purpose of the Anointing

There is something mysteriously appropriate about this whole scene as we contemplate the tragic but triumphant close of Jesus' earthly ministry. Guests were anointed as a matter of courtesy. Prophets, priests, and kings were anointed in the Old Testament. Jesus was the divine Guest and the great Prophet, Priest, and King. Klausner holds that Mary anointed Jesus as Messianic King and not for His death; he claims that the death of Jesus was not anticipated. Thus do skeptics deny the historic records and rewrite from their own fancy. It is true that Jesus was about to be proclaimed King by men on the morrow as He entered the city in triumph. He was about to be crowned in heaven at His ascension. Both of these events were as yet unknown to Mary. John notes that the disciples did not know the significance of Jesus' conduct at the time when He rode the colt in triumphal entry, but he does not state that Mary did not know what she was doing when she anointed Jesus. The very opposite is affirmed by the writers. Before the final coronation, the death of Jesus intervened and Jesus humbly accepted the anointing as for His burial rather than as King. He declares that Mary so intended it. Like the crown of thorns, this anointing was particularly fitting for the King who was about to die on a cross.

116. Chapter 3 - The Triumphal Entry

Chapter 3 - The Triumphal Entry Matthew 21:1-11;Mark 11:1-11;Luke 19:29-44;John 12:12-19 The Crisis

“Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.” The long expected moment has at last arrived! The Messiah is about to enter the Holy City even as the prophets of old had foretold. The worldlings who still rule in the temple and synagogue are plotting desperately to stem the rising tide of Jesus’ popularity and to maintain their own control over the destiny of the nation. The fatal hour draws near when they must face in their temple the great Prophet from Galilee. And what of the multitudes? The Messiah Himself must now make plain to all the exact nature of His program. If He is to seize control of the nation and set up that glamorous kingdom of which the nation has dreamed, it must be now or never. If He persists in His perplexing disregard for worldly power and His devotion to spiritual teaching, if He refuses to devote His miraculous power to establishing His earthly reign, then what? The crowd is quite sure of His identity and of His intentions — today. They boldly declare their fidelity and shout His praises from the Mount of Olives as the strange cavalcade descends. Their joyful salutations of Jesus as the Messiah and their unrestrained predictions of the “kingdom that cometh, the kingdom of our father David” echo through temple and city and cause Zion and Moriah to tremble with excitement. Like flimsy straws thrown into a mighty flood to halt its course, the protests of the omnipresent, hostile Pharisees are flung aside: “I tell you that, if these shall hold their peace, the stones will cry out.” “Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee.”

Diverse Elements

All of this amazing enthusiasm and display of devotion had been under the surface and very close to the surface, pent-up, a restless, surging impulse. It needed but the slightest encouragement from the Master to break forth in mighty acclaim. Much of the praise was worldly in content and motive, like the self-seekers who uttered it. They were reeds shaken by the wind, but deciding now which way the wind was definitely blowing. They were ready to turn about and join in the hoarse cry “Crucify!” when it became necessary to regain the favor of an evil hierarchy. Much of the enthusiasm was sincere, but still sadly mistaken as to the destination. And the disciples who really loved Jesus better than their lives, the apostles who had come up to Jerusalem sworn to die with Him, for He had repeatedly declared He was coming up to His death, what of them? What do they now think? Do they not rather refuse to think? Do they not sternly dismiss any somber reflections of terrifying predictions or even of that strange scene last night when He had been anointed for burial? Do they not rather yield blindly and with bewildering joy to the enthusiasm of the hour? All Jerusalem is aflame with Messianic hope and with wild acclaim of the King in the midst. Who are the apostles not to join blindly in the shouts of “Hosanna to the Son of David”….“Blessed is the kingdom that cometh”? The Exciting Impulse

Jesus did not enter Jerusalem in triumph as a mere creature of circumstance: He deliberately furnished the exciting impulse which touched off the popular demonstration. It was evidently part

of a deep-set purpose of the Master. He always kept full command of His campaign and refused to allow others, whether friend or foe, to dictate or even announce prematurely the course He followed. He continually met the circumstances that arose, as seen in the preaching of a sermon upon the topic some eager questioner raised, or the healing of some unfortunate sufferer who sought Jesus. He parried the thrusts of His enemies and checked the movements of self-seeking friends. His course at the time of the feeding of the five thousand has some elements of yielding to the ardent desires of the multitudes so long as they were in harmony with His spiritual program. It has also the decisive element of flat rejection of their attempt to make Him a worldly Messiah. Jesus started across the lake to avoid the crowd and secure privacy to instruct and comfort His disciples, who were thrilled by their evangelistic triumphs and shocked by the sudden news of John's death. Jesus yielded to the entreaties of the multitude who ran around the end of the lake seeking further instruction and miracles of healing. He used the triumphant hour to show His divine power in an amazing fashion as He fed the five thousand, but He immediately checked the attempt of the Zealots to take Him by force and make Him King. Thus He gained the desired privacy in the time spent in the boat with the disciples and on the mountain top with God, and He granted the desires of the multitudes in so far as they harmonized with His mission of redemption. The triumphal entry was the second and final climax in the popular movement which Jesus inaugurated. The lines of comparison with the climax of His Galilean ministry are numerous and very evident. The absolute control which Jesus exercised over this final climax of His ministry is even clearer than when the crisis arose in Galilee. Since no one could foretell what Jesus would do, everything was tense with excitement and expectation. He had not even made any prearrangements with the owners of the colt He intended to ride. He selected two disciples and commanded them to go over to the neighboring village of Bethphage and do an extraordinary thing: they were told exactly where they would find an ass and her colt tied in front of a house which was situated where two roads met or in a curious bend in the road (so the Greek text of Mark 11:4 indicates). They were not told to go into the house and ask permission to take the animals, but to untie the animals and take them without asking permission. They were then to give explanation to those who questioned them: "The Lord hath need of him." Not even the disciples knew, at first, what Jesus intended or the significance of His action (John 12:16). It was impossible for Peter or any of the apostles or the owners of the colt, who were evidently disciples, to report thoughtlessly what Jesus was about to do. No one knew. Jesus proceeded in exactly the same fashion in arranging for the upper room. He directed His disciples to go into the city, enter a certain street, and as they entered it at the proper intersection, they, at that very moment, would see a man walking along the street with a jar of water on his head — a man whom they were to follow. As he entered a house, they were to ask for the use of the upper room with the majestic declaration that the Lord intended to keep the Passover there. Thus did the King even in the very arrangements that were made reveal His divine authority and miraculous insight. The Motives of Jesus

Although Jesus brought it about that He entered the city in such startling Messianic acclaim, yet His purpose was not selfish ambition or vain display. The triumphal entry cannot be separated from the crucifixion, even as the latter cannot be separated from the resurrection. Jesus was deliberately coming up to Jerusalem to give His life as a ransom for the sins of mankind; it was God's will that the sacrifice should be made in such a public manner that the attention of the world and of the ages should be concentrated upon it. He was not to be assassinated in a dark street or

done to death in secret. The proof of the resurrection was to be made incontestable by the fact that the attention of the nation was to be concentrated upon the crucifixion. The triumphal entry threw down the gauntlet to the wicked leaders of the nation in such fashion that they not only brought about His death, but that they turned the nation upside down in the effort to disprove the fact of the resurrection and silence or destroy the people who proclaimed it. Thus the historic facts which are the foundation of the Christian gospel were tested in the most severe and terrible manner which the devil could invent at the very outset. Thus those in succeeding centuries, who, not having seen were yet to be asked to believe, should have the most complete and unshakable basis for their faith. The Spiritual Character of the Entry The triumphal entry was the prelude to the climactic teaching of Jesus in the furious days of discussion that followed in the temple. By this means Jesus sought to break the bonds of false tradition and false leadership which enslaved the nation. He earnestly sought to save the Pharisees and Sadducees themselves from the bondage of the devil. In addition to throwing the spotlight upon these discussions so that no one could ever forget them, the triumphal entry gave Jesus a unique opportunity to reveal again the spiritual character of His mission and program. This may not be evident at a glance: the idea of Jesus deliberately bringing it about that He should ride into the holy city amid the triumphal praise of uncounted thousands who excitedly hail Him as the Messiah seems to be just the opposite of the humble spiritual program which Jesus had promulgated. A closer study, however, shows that even in the hour of triumph, with the eyes of the nation upon Him, He pursued the same spiritual course that He had in the homes of the sick and the outcast as He taught and ministered. He was to be seen meeting “triumph and disaster” and treating “those two impostors just the same.”

Although the triumphal entry stirred selfish followers to false hopes, it did not stir Jesus to false speech or action. Here as everywhere else there is seen the absolute perfection of God Himself in the person of His Son. It gave dramatic opportunity to contrast the worldly and the heavenly, and to show once and for all that He would not barter His spiritual program for anything the world might offer. The ancient world was not unaccustomed to triumphal processions. Kings and military leaders had been accorded triumphs in every nation. Witness Pompey or Julius Caesar riding in a gilded chariot through the streets of Rome surrounded by famous legions in their armored might and followed by thousands of captives in chains carrying the rich booty of another war of conquest. Contrast with this the Son of God riding into Jerusalem on a young colt, the foal of an ass, surrounded by followers who sang of peace and of God’s coming kingdom. Jesus of Nazareth was riding into Jerusalem not to destroy His foes, but voluntarily to give His life to save them and all others who would accept God’s mercy. Verily Caesar in all his glory was not arrayed as this One who came with the purity and simplicity of heaven. The Colt

Only Matthew informs us that two animals were procured. He was particularly interested in recording this historical incident because it fulfilled so exactly the prediction of Isaiah and Zechariah. John points out the fulfillment of the prophecy, but he quotes it freely and mentions only the colt. Mark and Luke mention only the colt and record the significant statement of Jesus that it was “a colt tied, whereon no man ever yet sat.” Gould insists that this is a false report by Mark and Luke since Jesus would not have described the colt thus. According to the presupposition on which this objection rests, Jesus would never have declared Himself the Son of God and the Saviour of the world! Gould holds that the fact that the colt had never been ridden was an undesigned coincidence discovered and connected later with the incident by the writer. What a

strange, futile, helpless gospel, modern skeptics would write as they try to cut and trim history to fit fancy! “Historical realism” is the high-sounding title the modernists like to use to dignify their aberrations, but it is only skeptical unreality without any historical basis except their own imagination. Here a little, and there a little, they would remove the historic details that show the majesty and deity of Jesus, and thus they reduce Him to purely human stature. The same miraculous insight that enabled God’s Son to know where the animals were and that their owners would grant Him the use of them, enabled Him to know what manner of animals they were. The critics try to claim that Jesus had made previous arrangements with the owners, but there is not the slightest suggestion of this in the text. The writers do not state that it was a miracle, even as they do not usually declare this; they merely state the facts and allow the reader to accept or reject the inevitable implication according to his faith or unbelief. The arrangements for securing the colt also rested on the miraculous insight of Jesus. He was accustomed to use this method whenever there was occasion to reveal His deity. What greater occasion than at the triumphal entry? Mark and Luke place as strong emphasis upon Jesus’ deliberate choice of an animal whereon no man had ever sat, as is later placed upon the tomb in which no man had ever yet been laid.

Reasons for the Choice

Matthew pauses to answer the natural question as to why Jesus should have chosen such an animal. The action of Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecy. Jesus was not proceeding thus because the Old Testament had predicted it and He was seeking deliberately to fulfill the predictions, but because God was directing His conduct even as He had centuries before foretold the event. Some hold that Jesus chose this animal because by this choice He made public claim to be King. They cite the case of Absalom (2 Samuel 18:9) riding on a white mule as part of a public declaration of rebellion against his father and of royal honors for himself. But none of the evangelists record that Jesus rode on a white mule; the color of the animal is not mentioned; it was simply a colt, the foal of an ass. This was the poor man’s beast of burden. It was not the animal of war, the horse, but it was even the humblest of the animals of peace. The prophecies quoted by Matthew seem rather to indicate that although the Messiah is to enter Jerusalem riding in triumph, His meekness is to be indicated by the lowly animal which He is to ride. Matthew says the disciples “brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their garments; and he sat thereon” (Matthew 21:7). Although he does not make clear which animal Jesus rode, the three other writers state that He rode the colt. Strauss made a great play on the obscurity of Matthew’s description, claiming that he suggests the ridiculous proposition that Jesus rode both animals at once. The statement of Matthew declares that Jesus “sat thereon” (i.e., on the garments — the noun last mentioned); the colt is the last mentioned of the two animals and is therefore the one to which he naturally refers. Allen, urging the Two-source Theory, declares that Matthew in copying from Mark was “not quite careful to make the details harmonious. The Lord could not ride on both animals, and there was no need, therefore, to place clothes on both” (Commentary on Matthew p. 220). But Professor Allen is not quite careful to make his comments harmonious. Mark has nothing to say about the mother of the colt; so how could Matthew have introduced it from Mark? The reason for the disciples’ action in placing their garments on both animals is apparent: they did not know which animal Jesus planned to ride.

Why Two Animals? The reason for two animals being brought is as apparent as why two disciples were sent after them. It was a very bold thing they were asked to do, and the two could help to

confirm the testimony that was to be given when their conduct was challenged. As for the colt, it would be much more tractable if accompanied by its mother. This was not a matter of moment in respect to Him who could command the wind and the waves to obey His will, but it would be of assistance to the disciples in performing their mission. Moreover, when one studies the prophecy in the Old Testament, the way both animals are mentioned makes it particularly fitting that both should be present here. This part of the prophecy is not to be dismissed as mere Hebrew parallelism, for the writer could have used some other angle of emphasis in the second line of the couplet. The entirely incidental manner in which both animals are at the gate of a home at the exact time needed, a fact which Jesus knew by supernatural knowledge, indicates the guiding hand of God's providence bringing about the fulfillment of that which He had predicted. The King Comes

While Jesus was acting with the primary purpose of doing the will of God, everything which He did had both purpose and effect in view. There was always the objective of leading men to faith in Him and to eternal salvation. No matter how humble the animal He rode at the triumphal entry, the very fact that He rode while all the others walked made clear His declaration of royalty to the nation and to the ages. The crowd instantly recognized this and proclaimed it with ecstatic joy. Jesus had continually made the veiled claim to Kingship, although He had refrained from making any clear public announcement. Gibson points out that even such a seemingly humble declaration as "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven" implies that Jesus is King. When the people tried to offer Him the crown after the feeding of the five thousand and were planning to take Him by force and make Him King, He refused it for their conception and motives were worldly. Now, however, the time has come to make clear to the nation His claim. In spite of the fact that it will immediately precipitate the crisis which will lead to His death, the declaration of divine Messiahship must be made. It was not vain show or worldly display on the part of Jesus. Both the Old Testament predictions and the Gospel narratives make plain the humility of Jesus. He coupled with this claim to Messiahship such a bold revelation of the spiritual character of His Messiahship as to encourage the people to accept Him as the Christ and to change their conception of what the Christ should be. The Carpeted Highway The crowd was in a frenzy of delight not merely because Jesus was deliberately entering the Holy City where the national leaders had publicly decreed His arrest if anybody would report His whereabouts, but because He was riding into their midst in triumph! They made a carpet for Him to ride upon from their cloaks (the gala attire of the great festival), from the branches which they broke off the nearby trees, and from palm branches. These last grew in the hot Jordan valley and probably were brought up the highway with them or were furnished by the multitude which rushed out from the city to meet the concourse of people descending the Mount of Olives. In 1Ma 13:51 Simon was accorded a triumphal entry into Jerusalem in which palm branches were used. Revelation 7:9 shows that to carry palms was a "mark of triumphant homage to a victor or a king." The branches of palms and of willows were waved at the Feast of Tabernacles in the processional recitation of Psalms 118:1-29. Because of this some critics, with customary perversity, have attempted to argue that this must have been the Feast of Tabernacles and that the Gospel narratives are in error in affirming that this was the Passover; but the citations from 1 Maccabees and Revelation are sufficient to show that palms could have been used at any time in welcoming a victorious hero or a king. The Catholics still carry palm branches on the Sunday before Easter, which they call Palm Sunday; in countries where they are unable to secure palms, they use willows. The Two

Crowds

During the day which Jesus had spent in Bethany the crowd accompanying Jesus from Jericho had scattered to their respective lodging places. The exciting news which they spread caused others to join them as they surrounded Bethany on the day after the Sabbath. Many probably had camped at Bethany. At the triumphal entry there were two distinct multitudes that joined. One surrounded Jesus at Bethany when He sent for the colt; these seem largely from Galilee for they took a particular pride in announcing that in their midst was “the prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee” (Matthew 21:11). A second throng came out of the city to join those who were already at Bethany (John 12:12, John 12:13). In such a time when the whole nation converged on the capital, a continuous stream of new arrivals must have been in evidence. By the time the procession arrived in the city, everybody within its limits was stirred to inquiry (Matthew 21:10).

Independence of the Accounts The four-fold account of the triumphal entry offers powerful evidence of the independence of the narratives. The intricate maze of varying details, points of interest and emphasis that is found in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John defies any sort of analysis that points to interdependence or origin from common “sources,” or any analysis that attempts to destroy the essential unity and truth of the accounts and to prove that they are contradictory. Zealous Form Criticism enthusiasts find in this section the same sort of distressing dilemma as the hunter who is suddenly confronted by an angry porcupine which he is compelled to approach and to attempt to seize. A multitude of differences in detail, minute and deadly, face the critic who argues (1) that Matthew copied from Mark, Luke from Mark and Matthew, or (2) that Matthew copied from Ur-Mark and Q, and Luke from all three, and that John used the three preceding Gospel narratives. Only John gives the chronological note that dates this triumphal entry “on the morrow” which may mean after the arrival at Bethany or after the anointing by Mary or both. Only Mark gives the chronological note that places the triumphal entry as to the time of day: he states “it being now eventide” as the procession finally entered the temple and Jesus looked around on all things. Why did the others omit this pointed notation, if they were merely copying? Such differences offer no real difficulty in regard to witnesses or writers who record facts and events from an independent viewpoint. As to the time of day, Andrews supposes that it was about noon when Jesus left Bethany and hence by the time the vast crowd had reached the temple area, it was late in the afternoon. Other scholars suppose that He did not leave Bethany until the middle of the afternoon and that He arrived in the temple shortly before sunset.

Relation of the Accounts

All four accounts make plain that the procession started from Bethany (Mark and Luke mention both Bethany and Bethphage; Matthew mentions only Bethphage). The first three carefully record the details of how the colt was secured; john does not mention this, but summarizes “Jesus, having found a young ass.” John was familiar with the other Gospel accounts (everybody admits this), but his knowledge of what they had said did not lead him to copy — he rather refrained from repeating thrice-told details and abbreviated such in order to record new facts. Both Mark and Luke record the words of Jesus that the colt He was asking them to bring was one “whereon no man ever yet sat.” Critics would seize this as indicating Luke had copied this phrase from Mark, but immediately the sharp point of the omission of this phrase in Matthew halts their progress. And what a significant difference this is! Mark, according to their theory, is supposed to have

represented Jesus as merely a heroic man, or at least to have kept subdued any intimations or declarations of deity, whereas Matthew is supposed to have written later and to have exaggerated and invented to make Jesus the Son of God.

Exceedingly embarrassing to such a theory is the fact that it is Mark who records and Matthew who omits “whereon no man ever yet sat”! Critics attempt to argue that Matthew copied in confused form the statement from Mark: “And straightway he will send him back hither,” which they interpret to mean a promise of Jesus to return the colt shortly and which they declare Matthew interpreted to mean an assurance that the owners of the colt would straightway send the animal desired. Such a contention is without foundation, for they cannot even prove that Jesus in His original instructions did not give assurance to the apostles that the owners would grant the use of the animal and also assurance to the owners that it would be returned, in which case the two writers are reporting different details of the command. Mark is very explicit in describing exactly where the colt would be found, and it reminds one again of the probability that Peter (who directed the writing of Mark according to early Christian scholars) was one of the two disciples who were sent to secure the colt.

Fulfillment of Prophecy

Both Matthew and John call attention to the fact that Jesus’ action fulfilled Old Testament prophecy, while John’s reference is brief and his quotation free. Only Matthew records the fact that two animals were brought and pointedly shows how this fulfills in amazingly accurate fashion the exact prediction of the prophet. Allen claims that “the editor” (of the Gospel of Matthew) deliberately prepared the reader for the prophecy by “inserting” into the record an account of the mother of the colt. In other words this is not history, but pure invention in order to make the readers believe that the prophecy was thus fulfilled to the letter. And we are asked to believe on the mere ipse dixit of a critic that a Gospel writer, who urges truth and righteousness in the highest degree man has ever known, himself bolsters his appeal for truth by lying without limit! The Shouts of Praise A study of the parallel passages will show in what interesting fashion the reports of the plaudits of the crowd vary. Evidently some of the people shouted one thing and some another; and yet all had the same general content and purpose. “Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest” (Matthew 21:9). “Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed is the kingdom that cometh, the kingdom of our father David: Hosanna in the highest” (Mark 11:9, Mark 11:10). “Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest” (Luke 19:38). “Hosanna: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel” (John 12:13). What diversity of detail amid such unity of testimony! Jesus is being hailed as the Messiah, the King, the Son of David; the kingdom is being acclaimed; the praise of God and the fulfillment of His purposes declared! The word “Hosanna” is primarily a prayer rather than an acclamation: “Save now.” It came to mean an exclamation of praise, “Hail.” It seems to mean here a prayer that the Lord will grant His blessing upon the Messiah in the midst and upon those who have associated themselves with Him; a prayer that the expected glory of the Messiah may now be accomplished. “Hosanna in the highest” may mean a prayer that God will save them and bring them into the blessings of the highest, i.e., heaven; or if the word is used as an acclamation, it may mean, “Let those in the highest heaven rejoice!” It would, if the latter meaning be correct, be similar to the joyful cry of the angels when Christ was born, “Glory to God in the highest.” In the cry, “Blessed is he that cometh

in the name of the Lord," the verb must be supplied in the Greek and it may be either imperative or indicative: "Let the Messiah be blessed" or "The Messiah is blessed since He comes in the name of the Lord." The mention of the kingdom in Mark's report, and of the title "King" in the reports of Luke and John, makes absolutely clear that the people were hailing Jesus as Messiah and King. It is impossible for any critic to maintain that Jesus was not declaring Himself as the Messiah in accepting this homage. The people were expecting Him to restore the lost glory of the reign of David. They were permitted to hail Him as King, even though they did not understand clearly His spiritual mission. Jesus mingled instruction of the most dramatic character with His acceptance of their acclaim. The enemies of Christ were quick to seize upon the triumphal entry to bolster their charges before Pilate a few days later that Jesus claimed to be a king and was in fact a rival of Caesar. Luke reports the remarkable new element of praise: "Peace in heaven." Plummer suggests that this is a paraphrase of "Hosanna in the highest": "Heaven is the abode of God, and there is peace there because man is reconciled to God, or perhaps because peace is now prepared for man in the heavenly kingdom" (Commentary on Luke, p. 448). Evidently those who were crying aloud the praise of Jesus in terms of "Peace in heaven" were the more spiritually minded among the multitude, and there must have been many of these. If the meaning of the cry is "Let the peace that is in heaven be upon the earth," then here is another parallel to the song of the angels (Luke 2:14). Zechariah 9:9, Zechariah 9:10 says "He shall speak peace unto the nations." The apostles and intimate disciples would have known the facts about the song of the angels at the birth of Jesus and this may be their joyous cry taken up by the crowd. Some of the shepherds may have been present also. To these disciples it would mean: "Now has come the supreme moment of which the angels sang at His birth"; to an excited and worldly minded element in the crowd, bent on starting a bloody revolution against Rome, it would introduce the thought of peace as God's most precious gift rather than war. After all, even those who plan war look forward to ultimate peace.

Use of the Old Testament

Quoting from Psalms 118:25, Psalms 118:26, the people sang the praises of the Messiah. Some hold that this Psalm was written at the laying of the foundation stone of the second temple or for the dedication of this temple. Others claim it was written for the Feast of Tabernacles celebrated after the return from captivity (Ezra 3:1). As they saw Jesus about to enter the city in triumph, their praise found a natural expression in the words of this Psalm which was used at the Feast of Tabernacles (and as some hold at the Passover, also). At any rate they were accustomed to the words of the Psalm, and the fact that they broke forth in unison thus at the triumphal entry is no more surprising than for a congregation today to begin to express their joy in some familiar Christian hymn. John specifically informs us that the disciples did not understand at the time that the course of Jesus was fulfilling Old Testament prophecy in such amazing fashion, so we are not to search in Zechariah 9:9 and Isaiah 62:11 for the meaning of the shouts of praise. A close study of these wonderful Messianic passages will help us, however, to appreciate the way in which Jesus fulfilled the predictions. Notice the emphasis in Zechariah on the spiritual character of the Messiah's mission, His justice, saving power and humility, and the sharp contrast between the ass, the animal of peace — and the horse, the animal of war. Zechariah 9:10-12 contains most beautiful and impressive material, especially Zechariah 9:12, "Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope." The entire sixty-second chapter of Isaiah is full of thrilling Messianic

predictions.

Luke’s Account

Luke has recorded some nine chapters of immensely important material practically all of which is found only in his narrative. The triumphal entry marks the close of this new material as he proceeds to narrate, as do the others, the climactic events of Jesus’ ministry. He omits the account of the supper in the home of Simon the leper, while recording sayings and incidents not found in the other narratives. The most important addition of Luke in regard to the triumphal entry begins in Luke 19:37. He tells that the crowd was mingling testimony to the miracles of Jesus with the cries of praise. He notes the important move of the Pharisees to quiet the multitude and forestall the triumphal entry of Jesus, and the response of the Master to them (Luke 19:39, Luke 19:40). The scene of Jesus weeping over the city and His words of anguish and dreadful warning are found only in Luke (Luke 19:41-44). Luke also states that the bystanders who questioned the apostles (Mark 11:5) were the owners of the colt (perhaps bystanders first objected and then the attention of the owners was called to the apostles); and that the tumultuous outburst of the multitude occurred just at the crest of the Mount of Olives as they were about to start the descent into the city.

Cumulative Effect of the Miracles The fact that the crowd was strongly moved by many people who had been healed and who now added their testimony to the supernatural power of Jesus, shows that there was a powerful element present who testified from spiritual motives. John verifies this declaration of Luke in his own way by declaring: “The multitude therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb, and raised him from the dead, bare witness” (John 12:17). Bernard claims that there is a discrepancy between Mark and John because of the different motives described as exciting the enthusiasm of the people, but John merely states an additional and specific source of excitement. It is not hard to imagine the force of the testimony of the man born blind, the lame man who had been healed at the Pool of Bethesda, blind Bartimaeus and his companion who had just been healed at Jericho, and Lazarus who had recently been raised from the dead. The kingly claims of Jesus as He rode in triumph were supported by the testimony of those who had been healed; this was both natural and inevitable.

Diverse Elements

There must have been other elements in the crowd besides the spiritual group of disciples headed by the apostles. The Zealots, who had been filled with excited dreams of the fulfillment of their plans to start the rebellion against Rome that would free the nation, had undertaken to capture Jesus’ movement at the climax of the Galilean campaign. When He fed the five thousand, they were so enthusiastic in their support that they swayed the multitude to the effort to take Jesus by force and make Him King. Jesus had thwarted them by dismissing the crowd and sending His disciples across the lake in the boat while He went into the mountain to pray. By walking on the water He rejoined the disciples at a moment when they desperately needed His help and at the same time left the Zealots camping in vain on the eastern side of the lake. The Sermon on the Bread of Life preached the next day at Capernaum broke up definitely the attempt of the Zealots to capture His movement, even as it ended His popularity in Galilee: He was not the type of Messiah the worldly minded multitudes wanted.

It cannot be doubted that these political fanatics, bent on military action, were present in the throng at the triumphal entry. There is nothing definite in the narrative to indicate this, but the whole background and setting of the scene would indicate it. These two elements in the crowd undoubtedly reacted upon one another: the spiritual, to purify the crude fanaticism of the Zealots; the worldly minded, to give false impetus, motives, and objectives to the nobler element of the crowd. In between these two elements there must have been that large and uncertain portion which is always present in a great crowd — the people who do not think much, do not believe anything very strongly, or stand fast against much opposition. Inasmuch as they were swept along with the enthusiasm of the hour the same reasons, which caused the collapse of Jesus' Galilean campaign, caused the people to turn away from Jesus a few days after the triumphal entry: they were dismayed at His refusal to use His power to defend Himself and at the calm continuation of His purely spiritual program. During the days of furious combat which followed the triumphal entry, the tide of popular favor was held breathlessly in an even balance with the multitudes supporting Jesus up to the moment of His arrest, but turning with a mighty rush toward the Pharisees to be on "the winning side" under the propaganda of the hirelings whom the hierarchy sent forth among the crowd. Since He permitted Himself to be taken by His enemies, there was nothing that His disciples could do. An evil minority which is desperate and unscrupulous often thus wins its way even when the vast majority of the good people observe with horror the course of events. Thus did such a magnificent display of devotion swiftly change into opposition or despair. Nothing is quite so fickle as the affections of an excited multitude. The Pharisees' Challenge

There was a fourth element in the crowd at the triumphal entry: the omnipresent enemies of Jesus, plotting, heckling, desperately seeking to stay the rising tide. Only Luke tells us of their effort to silence the mighty paeans of praise: "And some of the Pharisees from the multitude said unto him, Teacher, rebuke thy disciples. And he answered and said, I tell you that, if these shall hold their peace, the stones will cry out" (Luke 19:39, Luke 19:40). The work of the Pharisees, busy with their hostile propaganda among the crowd, had been in evidence at Jericho in the efforts to silence Bartimaeus and in the criticisms of Jesus for eating in the home of Zacchaeus (Luke 18:39; Luke 19:7). Now in desperation they approach Jesus with a demand that He silence the multitude, for the moment they had dreaded most is at hand: Jesus is actually permitting the crowds to hail Him as Christ and King; He is moving toward the temple area and they foresee the glory of a triumphal entry — something must be done to stop this tidal wave descending upon Jerusalem. All they can think of doing or dare attempt is to protest to Jesus and to demand that He rebuke the disciples. Whether this means the apostles were especially leading the demonstration or the whole multitude is classed as "disciples" in this protest, we cannot tell. Nothing could be more magnificent than the reply of Jesus as He solemnly warns that there is nothing which can silence this outburst of praise for the Messiah. It is God's will! If the people should become so utterly blind and deaf as not to realize or declare the presence of God's Messiah, then the very stones would cry out. What a rebuke is this: the very inanimate stones have more intelligence, devotion to God, faith, love, and gratitude than the Pharisees! Lange supposes Jesus refers to the crashing of the stones in the fall of Jerusalem: "the stones crying out," but this is a mystical interpretation which is rather doubtful. The motive of the Pharisees in their objection was of course selfish as they fought desperately to retain their control on the nation, but they were entirely too shrewd and subtle to have based their protest to Jesus upon their own unbelief in Him and their determination to thwart His triumph and destroy Him. They probably based their protest upon an appeal to fear — the fear that such a rash

affair as this would be likely to engulf the nation in another futile and bloody outbreak against Rome. They may have made this evident by a significant gesture at the Tower of Antonia as they cried: “Teacher, rebuke thy disciples,” for the Roman soldiers armed for instant service to put down the slightest attempt at revolt among this rebellious people must have been watching with the closest attention this strange cavalcade descending the Mount of Olives. The Lament over Jerusalem

“And when he drew nigh, he saw the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, when thine enemies shall cast up a bank about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall dash thee to the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation” (Luke 19:41-44). Is there to be found elsewhere in all literature such a dramatic contrast as this? The multitude wildly hailing the King and proclaiming the approach of the kingdom — the Messiah pausing at the brow of the mount as the first view of the city is seen and weeping over the utter destruction of Jerusalem which is to be the direct result of their blind rejection of the Son of God! Jesus was not misled by the enthusiasm of the hour; He could read the hearts of friend and foe, and the events of the future. The Greek verb is very strong; it indicates “wailing and sobbing.” It is impossible to determine at all times whether or not Jesus chose to use His miraculous foresight and anticipate His course and its results. But it seems that this scene is entirely spontaneous as He looks upon the holy city and bursts into tears and utters these tragic words of condemnation and lament.

We should remember that Jesus was not weeping over His fate, but theirs: His thoughts were not of His death, but of the terrible fate of the city. Instead of these resounding shouts and songs He could hear the shrieks and groans of the dying as the fierce Romans destroyed the city. Thus, in the most inimitable fashion Jesus chastens His friends for the worldly praise that has not yet realized the purely spiritual character of His kingdom and warns His enemies of the terrible fate that awaits those who fight against God. On the way up from Jericho, Jesus had paused to issue a warning to those who were expecting “the kingdom of God was immediately to appear” — a warning that was couched in The Parable of the Pounds. This acceptance of regal honors as He rode into Jerusalem must have seemed to some to be contrary to the spiritual warning He had just before issued. The apostles, also, must have been struggling hard to forget the terrible predictions Jesus had made of His death at the hands of His enemies. Suddenly in the midst of this glorious celebration which seemed to be sweeping straight toward a material Messiahship, Jesus wept over the holy city doomed by its own unbelief. Thus Jesus tempered false hopes and dreams and sought to call His disciples to the spiritual kingdom which He was to inaugurate. “There is much in the triumphal entry which tells of royalty. There is also something which adds, ‘My kingdom is not of this world” (Godet).

117. Chapter 4 - The Cursing of the Fig Tree; Second Cleansing of the Temple

Chapter 4 - The Cursing of the Fig Tree; Second Cleansing of the Temple Matthew 21:12-22;Mark 11:12-25;Luke 19:45-48;Luke 21:37,Luke 21:38 Proofs of Kingship

Interwoven in the most intricate and vivid pattern with the claim of Jesus at the Triumphal Entry to be King are the inimitable proofs of His claim. The proof is not set forth in any logical argument, but arises out of the very sequence of events. The majestic presence of Jesus Himself, and the whole cumulative force of His ministry furnished a background of proof which could not be overlooked. While there must have been a host of those in the midst who had been healed or who had seen Jesus work miracles, the crowd talked most about the proof furnished in the recent resurrection of Lazarus. The miraculous foreknowledge which He showed in summoning the animals and the thrilling gesture of kingliness with which He asserted His need of them, gave timely and powerful evidence. His prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem, spoken as the sight of the unbelieving city moved Him to tears, added further proof of the same kind. Friends by their acclaim and enemies by their protests showed that they realized He was claiming to be King. Both were unconscious tributes to the power of the accompanying proof. The ignoring of the claim by the Roman authorities does not constitute a denial; it only shows that their investigation of His ministry had revealed that His was not a political or military organization, but purely a spiritual movement. When Jesus arrived in the temple it was late in the evening, and Mark informs us (Mark 11:11) that He “looked round about upon all things” and “went out unto Bethany with the twelve.” Nothing very kinglike about such procedure, one might imagine, but a look from Jesus could be the source of the greatest joy, grief, or terror. Inasmuch as the Jewish leaders had gone back to their merchandising in the temple in defiance of His early rebuke, the look of Jesus as He walked about the temple and observed what was being done in the Lord’s House, must have been significant of dreadful things to come. The day following the triumphal entry saw Jesus offer further proof of the claim He had just made: the cursing of the fig tree, which made a profound impression upon His disciples; the cleansing of the temple, accomplished in the presence of the nation and in the face of the bitter resentment of the leaders of the nation. After assuming control of the temple in a flaming attack upon the corrupt management of the Sadducees (aided and abetted by the Pharisees), Jesus answered in devastating fashion their challenge of the authority over the temple which He had assumed. He then proceeded to close this day of control in the temple by offering further proof of His deity and a gentle example of the Messiah’s reign by healing the sick and maimed that came to Him for help.

Differences in the Accounts

Luke omits the detail of time that the cleansing of the temple did not occur until the next morning after the triumphal entry. Both Matthew and Luke simply present a summary of these exciting events which accompanied the triumphal entry, a summary which is exceedingly brief in Luke concerning the cleansing of the temple and does not mention the cursing of the fig tree. Matthew

records the fact that the cursing of the fig tree occurred in the morning after the triumphal entry, but he condenses this account also and it is only Mark who records that the discussion over the collapse of the tree did not occur until the following morning. All three tell of the custom of Jesus to go forth each night to Bethany and to return in the morning for teaching in the temple. This solves the problem as to why the disciples did not see and discuss the withered fig tree as they came forth from Jerusalem that evening: the winding road around the Mount of Olives was regularly used in climbing up to Bethany and the shorter, steeper road leading straight down from the crest was the usual means of entry to Jerusalem from the east. Entering and leaving the city by these different roads, they did not pass by the fig tree on their return trip in the evening.

Why Hungry?

If Jesus had spent the night in Bethany in the home of Lazarus or of some other disciple, it is perplexing to contemplate the fact that we find Him hungry as He goes into Jerusalem early in the morning. Some suggest that Jesus had left Bethany before time for breakfast, but this does not fit the solicitous care of His devoted friends there nor the fact that He was hungry and His disciples not. In Galilee the pressure of His campaign had sometimes been so great that He did not have time to eat (Mark 6:31). The disciples had shown distress at Sychar because Jesus was so engrossed in His work that He would not eat with them (John 4:31-34). Was there any time in Jesus' ministry when the burdens were as heavy as now just before the crucifixion? Had the spiritual struggles so encompassed Him that He had had no inclination to eat until suddenly this beautiful fig tree in full leaf came into view? The only other place where it is ever recorded that Jesus was hungry is in the wilderness when He fasted until the point of collapse was near. Jesus may not have been in the home of friends the night before, but out under the stars praying to God. Forgotten is His hunger once He is in the presence of the barren fig tree and the opportunity to teach a great spiritual lesson to His disciples. The Foreknowledge of Jesus The question as to the hunger of Jesus and the purpose with which He approached the tree raises the further problem as to whether Jesus knew that the tree was barren before He came to it. Jesus had the power of miraculous insight into the hearts of men, the state of affairs at a distance, the very course of the future. He could have known without coming to the tree that it was barren, but it seems that He accepted the ordinary limitations of the flesh except where there was some occasion to exert His miraculous power. The statement of both Matthew and Luke concerning the hunger of Jesus suggests that Jesus did not use His miraculous power until He came to the tree, while the emphasis upon the great lesson which Jesus taught in cursing the tree suggests that He did have this in mind as He approached the tree. To analyze the mind of Jesus is beyond our power or province; we simply cannot answer such a question with certainty. Two-source theorists contend that Matthew in copying from Mark removes the suggestion of limitation of Jesus in the words "he came, if haply he might find anything thereon" (Mark 11:13). The theory, however, runs into two snags in the omission by Luke of the phrase emphasizing the universal element in which he was especially interested: "for all the nations" (Mark 11:17); and in the absence from Matthew of the note of time in Mark 11:11. If Matthew and Luke were copying from Mark, instead of writing independently, why did they omit these? The Miracle

Matthew states simply that the fig tree was by the wayside, while Mark states that Jesus saw it "afar off," which probably means that it was by the road side, but seen afar off as they walked down the road toward it. The record of Mark is particularly vivid as he writes: "And he answered

and said unto it." The tree had been, as it were, addressing the world and making false claims by a gorgeous foliage ahead of season; Jesus answered these claims with the curse He pronounced upon it. Mark also has the comment: "And his disciples heard it." This at once emphasizes the fact that the disciples were actual witnesses of the entire miracle, and it suggests the staggering impact upon the disciples of the strange words of Jesus. The characteristic brevity of the narratives leaves untold the exact impression upon the disciples. Since they had heard Him address both the wind and the waves when the storm on the sea had imperiled their lives, the recollection of this would have checked any thought of incongruity in Jesus' addressing the tree. Amazed beyond measure, however, at what they had heard Him say to the tree, their gaze must have been drawn to the tree on the next morning as it came into view. Showing the wonderful discipline of the group, the disciples did not question the course of Jesus at the time, but on the next morning the burning questions and reflections found a voice as Peter exclaimed in excitement, "Rabbi, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered" (Mark 11:21). To speak of it now would not be to question the propriety of Jesus' conduct, since the condition of the tree had already justified Jesus' words. Matthew records the fact that the tree withered away immediately, and the condition in which they found it in the morning justifies his record. Mark in recording the fact that on the next morning they observed the condition of the fig tree says that it was "withered away from the roots" (Mark 11:20). Trees do not wither away naturally from the roots, but from the branches; the tips of the branches and then the limbs becoming dead, and finally the trunk yielding to the onslaught of a storm. This tree collapsed, the trunk, the limbs, and smaller branches all alike sinking in a crumbled mass under the curse of Jesus. This change was not so sudden that the disciples hurrying on with Jesus into Jerusalem saw it at the time, but by the next morning the process was complete and the entire tree was withered away from the roots up.

Radical Attacks This miracle has been the center of concentrated attack by radical objectors. They argue: (1) The inherent improbability of "nature miracles" since they are so plainly contrary to the observed course of nature as to emphasize the innate improbability which resides in the miracle. Examples of "nature miracles" are: changing the water into wine, stilling the tempest, feeding the 5,000 and 4,000, walking on the water, and cursing the fig tree. (2) In the "healing miracles," since they are works of benevolence, the gracious spirit of Jesus is evident, but here it is held Jesus shows exactly the opposite type. (3) Furthermore, they maintain that there is no adequate reason for any of these miracles: the production of the wine was not urgently needed, the walking on the water was not necessary; and the cursing of the fig tree is especially contrary to the genial temper of Jesus. They represent Jesus as being moved by purely selfish feelings when His hunger was left unsatisfied: He lost His temper and cursed an object without will or intelligence.

Rejoinders To these objections the following rejoinders (to be found, in part, in Parabolic Teaching of Jesus, by A. B. Bruce) are offered: (1) Granting the existence of God, a nature miracle is no more difficult to perform or believe than any other kind. The world is ruled by a Person, the Creator of all, not by mere natural laws, which are no more than an observed uniformity in the operation of nature; in other words, the way God usually works. A miracle is God working in an unusual way, bringing about results which would not have been achieved by the natural processes of nature. This kind of objection to nature miracles really leads straight to the denial of the existence of God. This miracle, like all others, rests upon the testimony of competent witnesses. It is in the same category with any other fact of history. (2) The denial of any benevolence in turning the water into

wine shows a failure to realize the critical embarrassment of the host at the wedding feast. The stilling of the tempest quieted the fears of the bestormed disciples who felt that death by drowning was at hand. The feeding of the 5,000 and the 4,000 showed mercy on persistent and famished multitudes. The walking on the water gave timely aid to the disciples who were caught in another fierce storm and full of distress over Jesus' refusal to let the multitudes make Him king. We shall see a deep purpose of Jesus in cursing the fig tree. The whole proposition that these miracles are invalid because no benevolent purpose is seen, overlooks the fundamental purpose of miracles — to give unquestionable proof that Jesus is what He claimed to be, the very Son of God. It argues that the needs of the body might properly be ministered to by Jesus, but the needs of the spirit do not demand or deserve such help. In other words, the body is more important than the spirit! There is not the slightest evidence that Jesus lost His temper or was moved by selfish emotions in cursing the fig tree. His real object was to teach a great lesson to His disciples and to the world: a lesson which reveals Him as the Son of God and the futility of professions of faith without works, of pretense without product; and which reveals also the mighty possibilities of faith.

Why Curse a Tree A further attack upon this miracle is that the proposition of cursing an inanimate object which could not hear, or understand, or obey as if it were a responsible agent, is an absurdity. The answer to this is quite simple: the tree obeyed. It would indeed be absurd for us to curse a tree, or to talk to wind and waves, but for the Creator this is not a valid objection. In the light of the deep purpose which Jesus had and the amazing result which He achieved, the action of Jesus is not only intelligent, but profoundly impressive. In reflecting upon the fact that Jesus spoke to a tree, we should remember that comment of Mark's: "And his disciples heard it" Through their testimony all the ages have heard it, marveled at the divine power of Jesus, and earnestly sought the meaning of the lesson He taught. Was the Curse Immoral? The critics make a great play upon the statement of Mark "for it was not the season of figs" (Mark 11:13). They claim that it was really immoral to curse a fig tree because it did not have fruit, when it was not the season of figs. A little study of the trees and fruits of Palestine would have saved them from such folly. The figs appear before the leaves on a type of fig tree common in Palestine. This tree evidently was of this type, else the whole scene has no meaning at all. The fact that it was of this variety is made quite clear by both Matthew and Mark in recording that Jesus cursed the tree because it had leaves but not fruit, when taken in conjunction with Mark's statement that it was not yet the season of figs. This tree was undoubtedly in a sheltered place where it put forth leaves ahead of the general season, for it stood out on the landscape in a marked way. The fact that it had leaves and no fruit and was cursed by Jesus because of this, implies the type of fig tree it was. An inhabitant of Palestine would have no difficulty in immediately seeing the point. Mark's purpose in stating briefly" for it was not the season of figs" was certainly not to suggest that his beloved Lord was irrational or immoral in cursing a fig tree for not having fruit when it was not yet time for figs. But narratives emphasize the fact that the tree was in full leaf and imply that it should have had fruit. Mark's purpose in his added note was to uncover completely the dramatic character of the incident. In a land where thousands of fig trees line the fields and roadways, it was possible in the proper season quickly to satisfy hunger. Here is one tree, however, standing out in solitary splendor, proclaiming its fruit, but possessing none. Its solitary character helps to symbolize the Jewish nation — ahead of all the world in opportunity to know and accept the Messiah, proclaiming Him the Christ the day before and about to crucify Him a few days later — foliage but no fruit. "Let there be no fruit from thee henceforward forever." He actually pronounced this curse on the tree

and the tree was actually withered, but His object was more than merely to curse the tree. The tree standing there in showy display suddenly became the symbol of the Jewish nation, full of empty praise of Jesus at the time of the triumphal entry, but with no real fruit. Jesus also issued thus a solemn warning of the fate of the disobedient. The disciples may have wondered at the manner in which He kept permitting His enemies to scorn and persecute Him and now to plot His death. They had seen Jesus work so many marvelous miracles, none of which was destructive in character with the exception of the destruction of the swine that followed the miracle of casting out the demons from the Gadarene demoniacs. They may have begun to wonder whether Jesus had the power to destroy His enemies at a word, as the benevolent miracles would seem to indicate. Here, right on the eve of His surrender of liberty and life to the brutal assaults of His foes, they see Him use His power to destroy at a word. They never forgot it. Later on, it must have helped them to believe as they reflected how Jesus could have swept all His enemies off the earth at a word. This miracle proved it. How timely was this aid to their faith! There is no word, however, of this purpose in the narratives. The only thing that suggests it, is that Jesus did not immediately explain His purpose in cursing the tree. He left them to meditate and wonder at His words and led them in this mood into the presence of His enemies waiting to bring about His death. The next morning in discussing with His disciples the withering of the fig tree, Jesus did not mention this angle of the miracle, but concentrated their attention on the necessity and the power of faith. The Discussion with the Disciples

Matthew represents the whole group of disciples as asking an amazed question, while Mark makes clear that when they spied the tree in ruins Peter was the first one to cry out in wonder. The rest must have immediately joined in similar exclamations and questions. “How did the fig tree immediately wither away?” does not question His conduct; it rather seeks the process by which His power has brought about such a startling change. They were on the Mount of Olives and “even if ye shall say to this mountain” seems quite readily to refer to it, but this is a current hyperbole to refer to uprooted mountains. Zechariah 14:4 comes to mind as we contemplate this saying. A figurative meaning — achievements as difficult and wonderful as moving mountains — seems apparent since neither Jesus nor His disciples ever moved any mountains and the need for such a miracle is lacking. The promise that they will receive whatever they ask in prayer, believing, carries the limitations of a spiritual character — the outlook and object must be in harmony with faith in Christ. Mark makes plain that the main thing they are to ask in prayer is forgiveness for sins and shortcomings, and the main obstacle to the answer to such requests is the refusal of the worshipper to forgive his fellowmen. Since the disciples might put a violent construction upon the miracle which they had just witnessed as they proceeded into the tragic days ahead, this humble reminder of the necessity for keeping forgiveness in their hearts should save them from a vindictive spirit.

Cleansing of the Temple

Between the cursing of the fig tree and the discussion of its collapse there is the day spent in the temple, a day which is especially memorable because Jesus again drives the motley crowd of traders out of the temple. As before, His whole attitude must have been tremendously dramatic and awe-inspiring. His denunciation is much more severe this time as He openly charges that they had made the House of God a den of robbers. Jesus quotes from Jeremiah 7:11 and Isaiah 56:7. The former denounces the wicked character of the people worshipping in the temple and the false

trust of Israel in the temple; Jesus now applies this to their misuse of the temple and their misconduct in the temple. The passage from Isaiah affirms the holy character of the temple, the necessity for righteousness in the lives of the worshipers, and the share which the Gentiles who accept the Lord will have in the temple. Mark especially brings out the quotation from Isaiah with the strong hope it sets forth for all the world: “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations” (Mark 11:17). Plummer, who is inclined to accept the Two-source Theory, admits that there is strong evidence that Luke never saw the Gospel of Mark. Luke was writing to the Greeks; Mark also had a world-wide objective, which is usually named as Rome. It would be expected that Luke would be interested in giving details such as indicate salvation for the Gentiles, but he says simply: “a house of prayer” and does not record the striking phrase “for all the nations.” Plummer asks: “Would he (Luke) have omitted this if he had had Mark, who preserves it, before him?”

Effects of the Cleansing The bitter malice and smoldering hatred which the Jewish leaders felt toward Jesus became more fierce and deadly as they found themselves compelled to endure the humiliation of His triumphal entry and His bold challenge of their conduct of the temple. The chief priests (Sadducees) and the scribes (the coterie of scholars who headed the Pharisees) “sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, for all the multitude was astonished at his teaching” (Mark 11:18); “and they could not find what they might do; for the people all hung upon him, listening” (Luke 19:48). This interesting picture of the enrapt multitudes listening to Jesus shows how the hypocritical leaders had to act quickly and use their hirelings to confuse, mislead, and browbeat the crowds before they were able to bring about the crucifixion of Jesus. It also explains their great delight when they received the unexpected offer of help from Judas Iscariot. The desperate and deadly conflict with the undercurrent of violence among the leaders suppressed the natural enthusiasm of the people for Jesus. To a nation hoping for a political Messiah to lead them against foreign foes and free the nation from foreign bondage, the triumphal entry seemed to offer the strategic moment for some concrete movement in this direction. When Jesus, instead of inciting to revolution against the political government, made a telling assault upon the religious leaders with their flagrant and unbridled rapacity in the temple, He was reviving in the minds of the people the spiritual ideals and atmosphere which the temple was given to promote and was seeking to turn them from worldly aims to heavenly objectives. It gave the Jewish leaders, however, opportunity to send out waves of subtle propaganda against Christ as utterly inadequate for the Messianic needs of the hour. When Jesus drove out the profiteers from the temple court, he welcomed the helpless and the suffering. As He healed the blind and the lame and taught the crowds, a great demonstration was given of the true spiritual purpose of the temple and of the divine power back of His assumption of authority over the temple. The Children in the Temple

We do not hear much about the place of the children in the Old Testament worship or even their place in the worship of the New Testament Church. Somehow the repeated references to the children in the ministry of Jesus grip our hearts. To share the glories of the triumphal entry had been a heart-throbbing experience for the children. The enthusiasm of youth often causes children to shout aloud their joyous acclaim after the demonstrations of older people have subsided. Seeing Jesus take charge of the temple in this startling fashion and not being old enough to realize the tragic character of the conflict which was in progress, the children were not afflicted with the excessive prudence and watchful caution which kept the older people silent now; and loving Christ

in such intense fashion, they knew no fear and cried out for joy again and again: “Hosanna to the Son of David!” (Matthew 21:15). Jesus might not be the kind of a Messiah that conniving, corrupt, political leaders desired, but He satisfied the longings of the hearts of the children. The Jewish leaders sought to silence this acclaim of Jesus as the Christ which was so dangerous for them in the breathless crisis. To their bitter question of protest: “Hearest thou what these are saying?” Jesus replied with another quotation from the Old Testament: “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou has perfected praise.” The excitement and confusion of the last two days had swept away their control of the multitude to such an extent that they did not attempt to silence the children by a direct command. Knowing that Jesus could quiet them with a word, they at least could make plain that the blame for the present crisis rested upon Jesus. Since Psalms 8:2 represents God as filling earth and heaven with His glory and using the mouths of babes and sucklings as the means of silencing the false accusations of His enemies, it would be hard to imagine a more appropriate use of the passage than Jesus made in His reply. The Messiah found true praise in the utter simplicity and sincerity of the hearts and the unquenchable enthusiasm of the voices of little children who had no selfish ambitions to lead them astray and no fear of wicked rulers to silence them.

118. Chapter 5 - Mythical Interpretation and Form Criticism

Chapter 5 - Mythical Interpretation and Form Criticism Origin of Mythical Interpretation

Although the efforts to reduce the miracles and much of the other historical data of the New Testament to the status of myths are fantastic and utterly devoid of any foundation save mere literary theories, the fact that the mythical interpretation has been adopted and is being propagated with such zeal by so many who hold positions of power in the educational world, compels consideration of the validity of their position. The mythical interpretation is usually said to have been born as a part of the atheistic movement intertwined with the French Revolution and the publication of a work by C. F. Dupuis (1794) in which he tried to prove that all primitive religions were evolved from a system of astral mythology originating in Upper Egypt. But it might be added that the Christian scholars of the early centuries dueled with pagan philosophers like Celsus and with unbelieving Jews who attempted to brush the Gospel accounts aside as mere myths. The Talmud itself is lined with horrible and grotesque distortions which the venom of Jewish unbelief concocted as a line of factory-made myths about Christ to be used in combating the historical accounts of the New Testament and in asserting that the latter were myths. The Apocryphal Gospels contain all sorts of perverted imaginations of ignorant writers among the Christians who attempted to exalt Jesus by creating mythical accounts in His honor, especially concerning His childhood. The denunciation of these Apocryphal Gospels as “poisonous” by the Christian scholars of the early centuries shows that the primitive church did not provide favorable growing ground for myths. They had historic facts upon which to rest. The church which was established upon the basis of public proclamation of the historic facts by competent witnesses, by its very devotion to the truth, to noble living, and to the most democratic enlightenment of all through the proclamation of the gospel, stood as a solid barrier against the creation of myths. It was not until the thirteenth century, when the dark ages had wrested the Bible from the hands of the common people and a corrupt hierarchy exploited them for personal aggrandizement, that the Apocryphal Gospels began to have any vogue among Christians. Even today, about the swiftest and most practical manner to explode the mythical interpretation is to place the accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John alongside the piously perverted cartoons to be found in the Apocryphal Gospels. The Apocryphal Gospels prove that there were ignorant and misguided people associated with Christianity in the second and third centuries who attempted to create romantic additions to the Gospel narratives. The fact that these romances were steadfastly rejected by the church is illuminating testimony to the whole historic foundation of Christianity. Only those who wear a blindfold are unable to tell day from night. The second great figure in the modern attempt to interpret the Gospel accounts as myths was D. F. Strauss (1808-74) who admitted such a person as Jesus had once lived, but held that the New Testament accounts about Him were so mythical that practically nothing certain could be learned about his life. His Life of Jesus appeared in German in 1835-6 and was translated into English by George Eliot in 1846. In his final publication of the work, Strauss abandoned the theory that the Gospel accounts were developed from poetic myths and held they were deliberate falsifications by the writers. Strauss was followed by Baur

(1809-82) who started out to prove that the originators of Christianity did not create it out of any Messianic expectations of the Old Testament, but rather inserted their own creations into the ideas presented in the Old Testament. He ended by denying that such a person as Jesus of Nazareth ever lived. Rudolf Seydel published in 1882 and in following years, a series of works in which he branched out in a new direction by trying to show that the accounts about Jesus in the New Testament were derived by the authors from Buddhist myths. J. M. Robertson published in 1900 a work entitled Christianity and Mythology in which he attempted to build a fantastic structure of myth built upon myth: Asiatic and European myths combined with early Hebrew myths. Professor W. B. Smith of Tulane University created a mild sensation in America when he published in 1906 a work which followed the same line set forth by Robertson and maintained that “Jesus” is the name of a “Western Semitic mythical god.” P. Jensen, a German Assyriologist, Professor Drews of Karlsruhe, A. Niemojewski, and Fuhrmann are other names in the mythical school who wrote in the first decade of this century.

Thorburn’s Reply The literary theories of this whole group of critics have been carefully examined by T J. Thorburn in his volume: The Mythical Interpretation of the Gospels (1916). Thorburn is a modernist, but he crushes the extreme left wing and their mythical interpretations with a collection of learned data from Greek, Buddhist, and Egyptian or Persian legends which contradicts the claims of the mythical interpreters and with citations from the New Testament to prove that the mythical interpreters did not even pause long enough to learn what it teaches before they started on their wild chase through pagan legends to show that the writers of the Scripture copied from them. The Triumphal Entry An excellent place to test the accuracy of the data which the mythical interpreters submit and the validity of their conclusions, is the triumphal entry as described in the four narratives. J. M. Robertson claims that the New Testament account is pure myth invented under the influence of a Greek myth about Bacchus or Dionysus (Greek and Roman names respectively for the god of wine) riding two asses across a marsh, which in turn was invented by the primitive Greek mythologists under the influence of the sign of zodiac called Cancer, so named because the sun seems to be riding two constellations of stars that look like asses. Thorburn describes this attack by Robertson as one of the “most conspicuous, and, at first sight, as the most plausible” of the literary theories which the mythological group presents. Robertson is not willing to admit a single item of credible history in the New Testament account of the triumphal entry, but that it is only “an old myth pseudo-historicised.” The whole method of procedure of the modernists has been fastened in the pillory in the delicious satire of C. S. Lewis in The Screwtape Letters. He says: “The Historical Point of View, put briefly, means that when a learned man is presented with any statement in an ancient author, the one question he never asks is whether it is true. He asks who influenced the ancient writer, and how far the statement is consistent with what he said in other books, and what phase in the writer’s development, or in the general history of thought, it illustrates, and how it affected later writers, and how often it has been misunderstood (specially by the learned man’s own colleagues), and what the general course of criticism on it has been for the last ten years, and what is the ‘present state of the question” (p. 139). It is not difficult to understand, in the case of account of miracles in Scripture, that the atheistic turn of the skeptics leads them to search with such bitter malice and such reckless fancy amid all the pagan myths in the world for some slight similarity of details which would give them a start in spinning out their literary theories which charge plagiarism and falsification by the New Testament writers. When they attempt to deny a plain historical account such as the records of the triumphal entry, however,

the desperate excess of their bitter hatred of whatever the New Testament records is amazing. The suggestion of C. S Lewis is that one would have to conclude from their method that no sort of historical event could have happened in ancient times; everything would have arisen from the imagination rather than human conduct. The Myth Theory Destroyed In his careful rebuttal of J. M. Robertson's theory as to the triumphal entry account's being a work-over of pagan myths, Thorburn proves that the Greek myth was falsified by the mythological critics, since it does not say that Bacchus rode on two asses, but only upon one. Therefore, the Greek myth could not possibly have had any connection with the sign of the zodiac, the Cancer. The Poeticon Astronomicon of a writer named Hyginus (c. a.d. 4) is shown to be the source upon which Robertson rested and is quoted verbatim by Thorburn as saying Bacchus came across two asses and caught one of them so that he rode across the marsh without getting wet. The two stars, gamma and delta, Cancri, in the body of the Crab were named by the astronomer Ptolemy "the two asses"; the luminous patch between the two stars was called the "Manger"; thus, Robertson declares that when the sun is in the midst of the zodiacal sign, the Cancer, it seems to be riding two asses, which stirred the imagination of the Greek mythologists to conjure up the myth about Bacchus. Thorburn in a learned discussion about the zodiac and astronomy shows that at about the time of Christ, the sign of the Crab was not reached until the end of June, whereas the triumphal entry occurred in the spring (April) in the vernal equinox when the sun was in Aries, another sign of the zodiac. Thus the astral phenomenon could not possibly have suggested the Greek myth or be connected with the New Testament account.

Thorburn points out it is an inaccurate translation which says: "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass" (Matthew 21:5), thus making it sound as if the Messiah would ride two asses in the triumphal entry. Both in the Hebrew text of Zechariah 9:9, and in the Greek text of Matthew in which the prophet is quoted, the proper translation is "Even a colt the foal of an ass." But at this point, Thorburn falls into the ditch with his critics, by charging that Matthew (and Robertson, in imitation of Matthew) misunderstood the prophecy of Zechariah and thought he said the Messiah would ride two asses into Jerusalem. This is the original charge of Strauss, one of the earliest members of the mythical school, and has been clearly exploded long ago. Thorburn perversely argues on the basis of Matthew 21:7 to make out his case: "And they led the she-ass, and the foal (to Jesus) and placed their cloaks upon them, and he sat upon them." Thorburn attempts to follow Robertson and Strauss in saying that the pronoun "them" refers to both animals, whereas the immediate antecedent, "cloaks" is plainly the reference Matthew intends. Thus both the a.v. and a.s.v. translate "and they set him thereon"; "and he sat thereon" (on the garments). The disciples put their garments upon both animals because they did not know which animal Jesus intended to ride; Matthew indicates that it was actually the colt upon which Jesus rode. His quotation of the prophecy (Matthew 21:5) and his mention in Matthew 21:7 of the colt, suggest this: "the ass and the colt." Mark, Luke, and John state clearly that Jesus rode the colt. Not only Strauss and Robertson, but even Thorburn, actually expect us to believe that Matthew declared Jesus to have ridden like a circus performer on two animals at once as He entered the city in triumph. Thorburn labels the proposition of Jesus' riding two animals at once as "a gross and palpable absurdity to every thoughtful person" and in the same breath charges that Matthew is the author of such an absurdity. Not only is his charge gratuitous, but Thorburn flatly contradicts his own argument at this point for he already has argued at length the Hebrew text of Zechariah 9:9 and Greek text of Matthew 21:5 to mean "upon an ass, even upon a

colt the foal of an ass." This whole fantastic attack was based upon Strauss' original mistranslation of the passage.

Buddhist Myth Theory The labored effort of Franke to connect the New Testament accounts of the triumphal entry with a Buddhist myth is also cited by Thorburn. The myth describes the entry of Buddha Dipankhara where the people swept a pathway, the gods strewed flowers on the ground and spread branches of coral tree in the way, and men carried branches of various kinds of trees, and the Bodhisattva Sumedha spread his garments in the mire so that the Buddha could walk upon them, and all the gods shouted "All hail." One would think from such an effort to show that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John copied from this Buddhist legend, that a triumphal entry was an unknown thing in the Greco-Roman world, or any other part of the world. It would have been more plausible to have suggested the New Testament writers manufactured the account from the triumphal processions of Roman Emperors at their capital, but the differences are almost as sharp here as in the comparison with the Buddhist myth; no golden chariots, no prancing horses, no helmeted soldiers, no thousands of captive-slaves such as a Pompey or a Julius Caesar would feature. In the Buddhist myth there are only the most vague similarities: garments, tree branches, and a shout of triumph. There is no mention of sweeping a pathway in the New Testament accounts; nor of flowers, coral tree, or mire; not to mention — no participation by "gods." It is just too bad for Franke's theory that angels are not mentioned as sharing in the triumphal entry of Jesus; he certainly would have claimed this a parallel to the Buddhist subordinate "gods" in their part of the Buddhist myth.

Pagan Syncretism The syncretism by which so many pagan religions have adopted various historical events and teachings of Christianity and woven them into their own pagan myths is so well known that it should deter any scholar with a regard for his reputation from promoting any such theory as Franke suggests. This process goes on today before the very eyes of Christian missionaries as Buddhist priests seeing the power of Christian hymns, seize and pervert them to their own pagan use: "Buddha loves me, This I know, For the Pitakas tell me so." The Buddhist myths are, to use the language of James Orr, "ageless and formless." The hostile critics who roam around in such pagan territory seeking some means of attacking Christianity are perpetrating a colossal bluff when they try to date these myths and the writings that record them. Early Christian tradition declares that the apostle Thomas went to India and preached the Gospel. The Christian message proclaimed in India in the early centuries undoubtedly brought about the same sort of procedure we see today when Buddhists take over historic facts and teachings of Christianity and change them into Buddhist myths. No scholar can offer evidence that the present copies of the Pitakas, which set forth the teachings of Guatama Buddha, resemble very much the original form in which these myths started, any more than they can date the myths. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are straight historical documents by eye-witnesses and their associates written within 25 years (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) or 65 years (John) of the events to which they testify. To classify historical documents such as the New Testament presents, with Buddhist myths, is to reveal the absurd and unscrupulous lengths to which the enemies of Christianity will go. The seizing and perverting of the facts of the Christian gospel, as amid the darkness of heathenism the Buddhists wove distorted fragments from the Gospels into their pagan myths, is actually illustrated in documented history amid the broad daylight of western civilization. The case in point is the rise of Mohammedanism. Professor G. F. Moore, of Harvard, the foremost authority in the field of the

history of religions, whimsically remarked: “Mohammed copied the Koran bodily from the Old and New Testaments. The only time the Koran differs from the Bible is when Mohammed misunderstood what the Bible said, which was exceedingly frequent.” A glance at the Koran will show how the Biblical history was changed and interwoven with Moslem legends. The mythical interpretation of the Gospels is a diabolical dreamcastle of unbelievers inhabited by phantom ogres, a structure which crashes in ruins at the slightest contact with the hard surface of actual history presented in the New Testament. The process has been three-fold: (1) the revelation by God to man; (2) the preservation of this revelation by noble men; (3) its devolution by the base and corrupt men.

Why No Flowers? An interesting side-issue which enters through this study is the proposition as to why flowers were not used in the triumphal entry of Jesus. The picture in the Buddhist myth of flowers being strewn in the path the Buddha Dipankhara was to traverse is nothing more than the universal usage at times of acclaim and rejoicing. Triumphal marches are almost as old and as universal as man himself and the use of flowers on such occasions, the common procedure in the ancient as in the modern world. Why do we not read of flowers at the triumphal entry? If flowers had been used in profusion at the triumphal entry, would not this have been recorded by the narrators? If flowers had been available, would they not probably have been used? If the triumphal entry had been foreseen and planned by the multitude, would they not have been able to secure flowers? The answers to these questions seem affirmative. There are over two thousand varieties of wild flowers growing in Palestine, more than in any equal amount of terrain in the world. During the rainy season, both mountain and desert are a riot of color, but the end of the rainy season brings swift death to the flowers under the scorching rays of the sun. Occupation and cultivation of the land limits the amount of wild flowers, a limitation which increases toward centers of population. Since wild flowers wither immediately, cultivated flowers are better for celebrations. Because of the dry season having withered the wild flowers and because of the location of the triumphal entry, it is probable that wild flowers were not available. Because of the impromptu character of the celebration, cultivated flowers could not be secured in time. The absence of any record of the use of flowers at the triumphal entry is a most convincing historical item. What fiction writer or inventor of myths could possibly have omitted “flowers”?

Greek Mystery Religions In recent decades the bent of the mythical enthusiasts has been toward Greece and especially the Greek mystery religions. But this has proved a futile search in a barren field so far as any success in finding any factual evidence upon which to rest their freakish theories. The reader does not need the promotional description of the author by the publisher of The World Bible to the effect that Mr. Ballou is “an editor, a short-story writer, and a literary consultant,” to realize the nature of the criticism of Christianity which his volume offers. Of a much more scholarly nature are the many-sided discussions of radical writers in the anthology published by T. S. Kepler in 1944: Contemporary Thinking About Jesus. The analysis by such radical scholars as Guignebert, McCown, Lietzmann, and Cadoux of the problem as to whether Jesus is myth or history is of one piece with that of most of their comrades. They admit the historical existence of Jesus, but deny the historical accuracy of the New Testament accounts. The World Bible by Robert A. Ballou (1944) is a typical continuation of this line of attack upon Christianity with constant insinuation that lays the New Testament alongside Buddhist myths and other pagan myths. The absurd extent to which the mythical interpreters go in undertaking to set up some line

of parallel, however attentuated the comparison may be, with pagan myths is well illustrated in a study entitled: “The Greek Mysteries and the Gospels” by Slade Butler (The Nineteenth Century and After, March, 1905). Mr. Butler follows the lead of B. W. Bacon and others in supposing that the ministry of Jesus lasted one year, instead of the more than three years clearly set forth in the Gospel narratives. Then he tries to place the triumphal entry alongside the processions of the celebration of the mystery rites at Eleusis in Greece. Those about to be initiated from novices to higher grades in the mystery religion were accompanied by great crowds to the temple. All that Mr. Butler is able to present as parallel is a pagan temple instead of the temple of God in Jerusalem, the entrance of great crowds, and the fact that each of the initiates carried a vessel which contained various fruits given as a votive offering in the temple. Mr. Butler seizes the word “vessel” and tries to tie this up with the declaration of Mark that Jesus forbade any one to carry a vessel through the temple area. Thorburn points out that Mr. Butler did not even read the supposed evidence carefully enough to see that the Greek words are entirely different. The Greek word used in the account of the mystery religions is kernos, which meant a large earthenware dish with hollow spaces in the bottom to hold fruits to be offered in the temple. Mark 11:16 uses the word skeuos, which may mean any sort of vessel or implement, even the sail and tackle of a ship. Jesus was forbidding the use of the temple area as a short cut as people went through carrying the burdens of commerce. This was a part of His sweeping condemnation of the management of the temple when He cleansed it. The “vessels” in Mark 11:16 were not carried by followers of Jesus and had nothing to do with the triumphal entry. Thorburn concludes: “The two stories, indeed, are utterly unlike except for the reference in each to vessels of some kind” (p. 175).

Slade Butler attempts to connect the account of the cursing of the fig tree with the Greek mystery religions because the latter tell of a certain sacred fig tree at Athens where the processions of those performing mystic rites were accustomed to stop and offer sacrifices. Again Thorburn shows the cursing of the fig tree did not occur during the triumphal entry, but on the morning after. It was not any sort of mystic rite Jesus was performing at the fig tree. Such a suggestion is so farfetched as to emphasize the fantastic character of these vague comparisons. Robertson undertakes to connect the use of a whip by Jesus in cleansing the temple (this was the first cleansing, John 2:15, John 2:16, which Robertson characteristically tries to charge is a confused and mislocated account of the cleansing at the triumphal entry) with the fact that “in the Assyrian and Egyptian systems a scourge-bearing god is a very common thing on the monuments.” But a whip has been the universal implement used in driving animals among all peoples and there is not the slightest hint in the New Testament of the whip being used as any sort of symbol of authority in the worship of Jesus. A series of replies to the extreme Christ-myth school, which argued that such a person as Jesus never lived, has been published in a succession of books: The Historical Christ (1914) by F. G. Coneybeare; The Historicity of Jesus (1912 and 1923) by S. J. Case; Jesus the Nazarene-Myth or History? (1926) by M. Goguel; Did Christ Really Live? (1933) by H. G. Wood.

Form Criticism

There is a strange parallel in what has happened to the Two-source Theory and to the mythical interpretation. The Two-source Theory becoming super-inflated by the unceasing pressure of hot air has exploded into the fragments of Form Criticism; the effort to reduce Jesus to a myth has suffered from the same type of inflation and has disintegrated into countless fragments. Instead of claiming that such a person as Jesus never lived, the critics now proceed to set aside this or that

miracle or event as history and to claim that the history' of the Gospel narratives is hopelessly interwoven with the myths. Lietzmann ("Jesus' Relationship to History" in Kepler's Contemporary Thinking About Jesus, p. 192) declares what happened as the historic basis of the legend that Jesus entered Jerusalem in triumph was that Jesus became exhausted from His long journey from Galilee and borrowed an ass on which to ride, and that unscrupulous writers later invented from this the myth of the triumphal entry with the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 as their inspiration. Thus, there is the same division among the critics here as in the case of the virgin birth: one group attempts to derive the New Testament record from pagan legends; the other holds that the New Testament account was invented from a study of Isaiah 7:14. The two schools destroy each other. The real reason why they repudiate the New Testament records as "inconceivable" is that they do not believe in God. Since God is merely a mental concept, the mental concept limits what could happen! Their attack on the account of the triumphal entry seems rather the result of force of habit; they must assail the miraculous foresight that Jesus showed in securing the colt and its mother, the miracles He worked after entering the city, and the clinching fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9. It is this last feature which evidently causes them to attack the account of the triumphal entry. They feel they must reduce it to myth or admit a clear-cut Old Testament prophecy fulfilled in the life of the Messiah. The extreme critics who deny that Jesus ever claimed to be the Messiah naturally are compelled to deny the historical verity of the New Testament account concerning the triumphal entry.

Historical Foundation

It should never be overlooked that this whole mythical attack, like the Two-source Theory, was constructed upon the theory of nineteenth-century infidelity that the Gospels were written in the latter part of the second century. Now that actual manuscript evidence, joined with internal evidence and the testimony of early Christian writers, has compelled even the radical scholars to admit that the Gospels were written in the first century', both theories are absolutely untenable. The Two-source Theory has been shifted over into the multiple sources of Form Criticism. The effort to show such a person as Jesus never lived has been generally abandoned in the renewed attempt to label as myths any historical matter in the Gospel which would controvert their theories. Not even when they try to claim the Synoptics were written about a.d. 70-80 can they escape the deadly fact that thousands of eye-witnesses of the ministry of Jesus were still alive at that time and that their presence would have prevented the falsification of facts into myths. When we recall the overwhelming evidence that the Synoptics were written a.d. 50-60, the force of the presence of a multitude of competent eye-witnesses delivers the coup-de-grace to the mythical interpretation. Furthermore, sealing up the evidence is the fact that the apostle John (still an eye-witness writing in a time when other witnesses would have been living) wrote toward the close of the century of the things which he had seen and heard and upon which he was ready to stake his life. Thus while the Synoptics are only separated from the history they record by a mere twenty-five years, a gap of a third of a century lies between the Synoptics and John, and the critics can not even upset the historical testimony of John! "That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life (and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you (1 John 1:1.).

Added to the solid historical basis of the New Testament narratives is the whole bulwark of human history since the time of Christ, which is left without explanation if Christ be a myth. Whence came the church and Christian literature, institutions, art, influence? The Christ-myth school is in precisely the same position as the atheist, who is left with the universe on his hands and no intelligent explanation as to how it came into existence. He can not deny the world in which he lives, actually exists, but he can not explain how it came into being. So with the Christ-myth fanatic. Moreover, the less extreme myth-advocates who admit that Jesus lived but try to theorize that the Gospels are a compound of myth with some history are in the same desperate strait jacket when they try to explain the existence of plain matter-of-fact statements which, in a process of myth accumulation, could never have entered the narrative or survived the myth-method. Observe such a declaration as Matthew 24:36, “But of that day and hour knoweth no man,” plainly limiting the foreknowledge of Jesus; the unbelief of His own brethren and of the apostles themselves in moments of wavering; whence came these?

Schmiedel admitted certain pillars of truth in the Gospel narratives in the form of statements which are derogatory to Christ in the sense of expressing human limitations or His failure to win others to faith in Him. All the rest was open to suspicion as myth-product, according to Schmiedel. But “Schmiedel’s pillar passages” themselves are as unexplainable for the myth enthusiast as is the universe for the atheist or the very existence of Christianity for the Christ-myth school. As a matter of fact, the whole defense of the historicity of the New Testament is welded solidly to the cross itself. What inventive genius would have conjured up such a death? As the death of Christ is the heart of the gospel, so it is the central basis for the historical verity of the gospel records. That history has a way of verifying itself finds its supreme demonstration in the Christian gospel, the New Testament records, and the history of the church. The gospel of redemption by the death of God’s Son is such a mysterious compound of earthly humiliation and heavenly glory that no one but God could have originated the pattern; none but men directly inspired of God could have predicted its details centuries before they were enacted, or have recorded in such unique documents the history of that supreme epoch when “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”

119. Chapter 6 - Jesus and the Pharisees (Religious, Moral, and Political Issues)

Chapter 6 - Jesus and the Pharisees (Religious, Moral, and Political Issues) The Situation

Having been utterly humiliated by Jesus' bold act in cleansing the temple, the hierarchy had to do something in order to recover their leadership. Whereas they had been publicly declaring their intention of arresting Jesus, they now suddenly found themselves placed on the defensive. Since the multitudes were so enthusiastic in His support, they did not dare to arrest Jesus. In the face of His surprising assumption of authority in entering the city in triumph and in cleansing the temple, they could think of no other scheme to attack His popularity than to demand a public demonstration of His right to take charge of the temple, which according to the Old Testament law was given into the hands of the priests. Although the Pharisees and Sadducees joined in this challenge, the main burden of attack throughout this day of furious discussion rested with the Pharisees, who by reason of their devotion to the Old Testament were in a better position to challenge Jesus than were the worldly and unbelieving Sadducees. The Debate The current of hectic debate during this "Great Day of Questions" is outlined by Plummer as follows: (1) A Personal Question (The Sanhedrin asking the authority of Christ; Christ's counter question about the authority of John's baptism); (2) A Political Question (The Pharisees and Herodians asking about tribute to Caesar); (3) A Doctrinal Question (The Sadducees asking about the resurrection); (4) An Ethical Question (The scribe asking about the greatest commandment); (5) A question about the Christ (Jesus asking about Psalms 110:1-7). In addition to these questions, Jesus delivered to the multitudes three parables in quick succession elaborating upon His reply to the demand for proof of His authority: (1) The Two Sons; (2) The Wicked Husbandmen; (3) The Wedding Garment. Following the period of questions, Jesus delivered His blazing denunciation of the sins of the Pharisees During a lull in the day's combat, Jesus sat by the treasury and commented especially upon the gift of a poor widow. Jesus' final public message to the nation "the Sermon on the Significance of Life and Death" (John 12:20-50) closed His public ministry. Their Rejection of God In the very moment that the chief priests and elders were challenging Jesus' authority for cleansing the temple and thus implying that He was rejecting the authority which God had established in the Old Testament law, these evil leaders were showing their own scornful rejection of God. They had done this, first, by turning the temple court into a means of financial gain for themselves instead of keeping it dedicated to the worship of God as He had commanded them. Again, they were rejecting God because the Old Testament law and the prophets had predicted the coming of the Messiah and commanded all the faithful to hear and heed Him. This the rulers deliberately refused to do in spite of all the miraculous proofs He had given of His deity. The Two Questions In demanding His authority for taking the management of the temple out of their hands they asked two questions: "By what authority doest thou these things? And who gave thee this authority?" The implication is that they expect Him to answer the first question by affirming He is the Christ, just as the people all about have been publicly proclaiming. Anticipating such a reply they attempt, by attaching a supplementary question, to compel Him to affirm publicly

His deity. Instead of assailing their evil management of the temple as a means of replying to their attack and instead of quoting from the Old Testament concerning their obligation to accept the Messiah as Lord of all (both of which He did later in the day), He publicly forced them to admit that they had been rejecting God's message to the nation through John the Baptist. In their scramble to escape the embarrassing spotlight which Jesus had placed upon them in cleansing the temple, they had sought to cover up their confusion by an attack upon Him. They are not allowed to escape so easily, for Jesus turned the light right back upon them by throwing on the screen the photograph of their wicked past — their jeers, defiance, and hostility to John the Baptist. They had been trying to create the impression upon the nation that they were right in rejecting Jesus on the ground that all the great scholars could not be wrong in their conclusions concerning Him. The Baptism of John

"The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or from men?" Two questions are matched against the two which they have asked. Baptism was such a concrete, vivid, impressive act they could not avoid His question about John by asking "What teaching?" and then beclouding the issue with fine distinctions. Moreover, the baptism of John had been an innovation. Since nothing like it had been commanded in the law, the same acute issue was faced: Did John have the right to set up an institution for the forgiveness of sins when the Old Testament plainly declared the sacrifices in the temple were to be offered for that purpose? Only on the ground that John was a prophet directly inspired to speak for God, as had been the case with Moses when he gave the law, was John justified in doing this. Whether their decision as to a reply resulted from an immediate, covert, desperate exchange of ideas by looks and whispers or by withdrawal and lengthy consideration, their public reply which was awaited by Jesus and the multitude left them utterly discomfited. They refused to answer the question as to whether the authority of John's baptism was from heaven or merely from men, but their refusal constituted the most humiliating kind of confession. And in thus admitting that they dared not answer the dilemma (their hypocritical statement, "we know not," was too thin to deceive any one), they showed that the nation knew, and they did not dare deny, that John had been sent with a message from heaven.

Jesus had answered their question with a question because He had already made repeated and explicit declarations covering the ground of their question as to His deity and authority. They were not willing to be convinced and hence did not deserve further assurance. By a question which was much more effective than a mere affirmative reply, Jesus really answered their question and at the same time revealed to the multitude the revolting hypocrisy of the Pharisees John's main thesis was that all should heed the Christ. The whole force of his ministry and testimony was to direct the nation to Jesus as the Christ. Thus the proof of the Pharisees' rejection of God in the person of His Son was made plain to all in a manner that the leaders did not dare to deny. The manner of Jesus' reply made very pointed reference to their hypocrisy. They had said: "We know not"; Jesus now replied: "Neither tell I you." This means: "Yes, you do know, but you are too cowardly and corrupt to tell the truth you know. I simply refuse to answer because it is unnecessary. You have already answered your own question."

John's Authority

Gould contends that the question which Jesus raised was whether "authority is communicated externally and through regular channels" or "if it comes inwardly and is attested by its fruits." He

holds that John's authority was purely a matter of his inner consciousness and had no external proof. This is the customary modernistic line of attack upon miracles as proof of divine truth and divine authority. It is true that John did not work miracles, but he made miraculous predictions which were subject to speedy testing (the immediate appearance of the Messiah: "In the midst of you standeth one"). He pointed Jesus out as the Messiah to his disciples and in so doing John called to their minds the miraculous proof which sealed the identification: the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. The tremendous miracles which Jesus worked to prove the truth of His claims became necessarily credentials of the truth and authority with which John had spoken. Thus, Jesus by citing the Pharisees back to the question of John's authority concentrated attention upon the proof of His own divine authority in His whole miraculous ministry.

Parable of the Two Sons The answer to the Pharisees, devastating though it was, now was made more potent by a series of parables which revealed clearly the character and motives of His enemies. We sometimes forget that Jesus did not permit the Pharisees to ask all the questions. He had answered their first challenge with a question. Now he follows with parables, the first two of which are really questions. The answers given by the Pharisees were in the nature of sentences of condemnation passed upon themselves. Nothing could possibly enrage the pious Pharisees (who lost no opportunity to show their horror and contempt for the common sinners, the publicans and the harlots) more than to have it said that they, for all their pious pretenses, were farther away from God than these notorious sinners. This Jesus now affirmed before all by relating a simple parable of a father and two sons; one of whom promised to go and did not, the other refused to go, but later repented and went. Jesus asked the Pharisees which of the two sons really obeyed his father and they had to respond, the one who finally went. Jesus then delivered this fiery blast: "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye saw it, did not even repent yourselves afterward, that ye might believe him" (Matthew 21:31, Matthew 21:32). Not only had the Pharisees rejected God's commands, warnings, and promises through John when he first appeared and set the nation ablaze, but the actual results of his preaching in the reformation of the lives of the most outrageous sinners had not influenced the hypocritical leaders to give belated obedience. In a manner characteristic of the self-complacence of our unbelieving generation, the criticism has been made of this parable that Jesus should have added a third son who readily agreed to obey and actually and promptly carried out his father's orders, in order to represent "us." This is typical of a philosophy which would deny the reality and punishment of sin. The two sons represent the two types of humanity: the one, disobeying and then repenting and obeying; the other, promising to obey, but actually failing to do so. A third son who promised at first to obey and actually did so would represent some of mankind as sinless, which is not true to life, with the exception of Jesus. The parable was kept brief and simple with the fewest possible elements so that it traveled like a barbed arrow straight to the hearts of the hearers. Even though the picture presented in the parable was so simple and true as to be clear to all, yet the objective was so veiled that the Jewish leaders, when suddenly faced with the problem as to which son was most obedient, passed judgment upon themselves before they knew it. In all the fury of this combat there is the most delicate, underlying element of appeal, even to these corrupt and deceitful leaders who are plotting to slay God's Son. The verb in the present tense, "are going before you into the kingdom of God," suggests that the kingdom is about to be instituted. Those who have obeyed the

preaching of John and have accepted Jesus as the Christ are leading the way into the kingdom when it shall directly he established. The highway is pointed out and a gentle appeal to walk therein is added by the words of Jesus: “go into the kingdom of God before you” and “did not even repent yourselves afterwards.” It was getting late, but it was not yet too late. The Parable of the Vineyard The Parable of the Vineyard and the Wicked Husbandmen was then delivered as a further blast at these hardened sinners who claimed to be so righteous. A householder with great expense and labor planted a vineyard; set a hedge to protect it from animals; built a tower for watchers to protect it from marauders; and dug in the solid rock a winepress to assist in harvesting. Then he let it out to husbandmen who thereupon took possession as if they had created this paradise and refused to return to the owner any of the fruitage, even though one messenger after another was sent by the owner. Finally, he sent his only son, hoping they at least would heed him; instead, they killed him that they might have no rival for the ownership.

Jesus turned again upon the Pharisees with another of His crucial questions asking what, in their opinion, the lord of the vineyard would do in such a situation. Since they had started the questioning and had dodged the first question Jesus had asked them, since they claimed to be the learned scholars of the nation and had sought to overthrow Jesus in public discussion, they could not keep on saying, “We do not know.” Again, therefore, they were forced to pass sentence upon themselves: “He will miserably destroy those miserable men, and will let out the vineyard to other husbandmen.” The first parable had been directed to the leaders with the multitude listening in. This second was a direct appeal to the multitude since the leaders had sneeringly rejected the implied offer of pardon and hope in the first parable. They would not even yet repent, and in this second parable there is a fierceness of God’s wrath wreaked upon those who reject and defy Him. Moreover, they must have anticipated that this second parable was being directed against them, since the first had suddenly been turned upon them with such staggering force. Inasmuch as there was no way for them to escape, they were forced to listen in as He delivered this second parable to the people. Thus they found themselves forced to give the inevitable answer to the question which was placed before them at the close. The Parable inIsaiah 5:1-7 The setting of the parable and the burning denunciation of wicked ingratitude reminds one of the similar parable in Isaiah 5:1-30. The vineyard in the parable of Isaiah is the nation itself (Isaiah 5:7), which is barren and useless even after all the wealth of effort and attention God has given to it. In the parable of Jesus the vineyard is the privileges of the Old Testament revelation which have been bestowed upon the Jewish people — the husbandmen who refuse to return to God the portion of the fruit that is His due (obedience and faithfulness). Some scholars claim that in Isaiah the leaders of the nation are not mentioned: the whole nation is condemned; while in the parable of Jesus the leaders in charge of the nation are condemned, and the vineyard is not destroyed, but is transferred to more faithful stewards. They argue that in earlier times the nation deliberately chose its course which led to captivity, but now it was being led astray by false teachers and leaders. False leaders, however, had been in action as much in the Old Testament times as now, and the people have the right to choose their own course now as much as then. It is true that at the close the Pharisees “perceived that he spake of them,” but it is clear that the entire nation, if it follows their leading, is under the same condemnation: “The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”

Although this parable ends with the fierce wrath of God being turned upon rebellious man, there is even in this parable the same strain of emphasis upon the mercy of God as well as His justice. The husbandmen were not dispossessed and punished when they refused the fruits due at the request of the first messenger. Another, and still another, are sent as God in His long-suffering mercy and kindness pleads with men to repent and turn from their wicked ways. The differences in the personality and approach of the messengers and the circumstances might be expected to bring favorable reception at last, but the husbandmen only grow more insolent and defiant. The climax of sending His own Son to plead with those who had mistreated His servants is the most touching presentation of God's love and mercy. Here is another answer to their first challenge of His authority. God's Son is in the presence! How terrible the swift vengeance of God's wrath will finally be! This parable warns the leaders and reveals to all that He knows the plans to kill Him, that He will not resist them now or seek to save Himself, but that God in the final day will pronounce judgment which these wicked men themselves are forced to declare will be just.

Luke adds two interesting details to our knowledge of this exciting scene. An ejaculation of horror, "God forbid," and a searching look which Jesus gave the leaders add considerable color to the scene. The exclamation is taken by some to refer to the terrible punishment which they are suggesting; others hold that it refers to the unspeakable conduct of the husbandmen in killing the Son Himself. The two thoughts may have been inseparable in the minds of the speakers and the exclamation may have been the inadvertent outcry of the leaders or the deep-seated protest of a multitude which is still favorable to Jesus.

Further answer to their original challenge is now given in two quotations from the Old Testament which predict the rejection of the Messiah by the Jewish nation and the punishment that is to result. "By whose authority?" Verily, they shall find out when it is too late, if they do not heed these repeated warnings and appeals. The rejection of the stone (the Messiah) by the builders (the Jewish leaders who claim to want God's kingdom established) and the glorious consummation when God makes this rejected stone the head of the corner introduce another figure into the midst of the explanation of the parable, but the same line of thought prevails. Jesus followed the quotation with the application of the parable and then closed with the further quotation concerning the "stone." This picture of the Jewish leaders attempting to construct a building (the Kingdom of God), rejecting the cornerstone which is the key to the structure of the whole building, and then finding themselves unable to fit the stones together because they have discarded the very stone (Jesus) which can hold the building together, becomes all the more impressive when we realize that it is a quotation from Psalms 118:1-29, the very Psalm from which the multitude had quoted at the triumphal entry. The very next words in the Psalm are: "Save now [Hosanna], we beseech thee, O Lord. . . Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." With what breathless awe must the crowds who had just quoted this Psalm in praise of Jesus, have now heard its preceding phrases quoted by Jesus in condemnation of His enemies! And is there another subtle appeal to the rulers to repent and pray: "Save now"? In the last quotation the figure of a person stumbling over a stone and breaking his bones is from Isaiah 8:14, Isaiah 8:15 and that of a great stone falling upon a person and grinding his body to dust is from Daniel 2:34, Daniel 2:35, Daniel 2:44. The Jewish leaders were stumbling over the stone (Jesus) which seemed to block their selfish, worldly path; they would fall over it and break their bones (destruction of Jerusalem). In the final day of judgment the stone would fall upon them and destroy them (eternal condemnation in hell).

Magnificent is the use which Jesus makes of the Old Testament in this debate with the scholars who claim to be its exponents, as He weaves together in a new form the parable from Isaiah about the vineyard and the unbelieving nation with the three Messianic passages which picture the Messiah as a stone, rejected and bringing destruction to the unbelieving. The effect of the parable on the leaders was to infuriate them, for while they did not understand all its details and meaning, they could plainly see the tremendous indictment it brought against them as rejecting and fighting against God. Awed and thrilled, the people watched the terrific struggle helplessly, but the effect on them is suggested by the fact that their reverence for Jesus prevented the leaders from arresting and slaying Jesus: “They feared the multitudes because they took him for a prophet.”

Radical Attacks on the Parable

Jülicher, Loisy, and others assail this parable as the invention of Christians attempting to harmonize their belief in the Messiahship of Jesus with his death. They claim it is an effort to give an explanation — a religious one — to His death. Denny sharply replies to them with two major contentions: (1) Christians inventing such a parable to explain the death of Jesus would never have propounded a parable which left the Son dead, but would have made vital use of the resurrection. The parable implies the resurrection and ultimate triumph of Jesus through the introduction of the two quotations (Psalms 118:1-29 and Daniel 2:1-49), but inventors would not have been satisfied with a veiled reference like this. (2) The early Christians in the period when Jülicher supposes this parable to have been invented were not so much troubled about the death of Jesus (the resurrection and the gospel plan of redemption had made this clear) as they were by the proposition of the gospel being brought to the Gentiles. Christians would not have invented a parable which flatly predicted that the Kingdom of God would be taken from the Jews and given to the Gentiles (Matthew 21:43). As a matter of fact, the date of writing of the Gospel narratives entirely precludes the radical assumption of the invention of such a parable and its publication as having been delivered in the temple on the eve of Jesus’ death before a vast multitude of people. Any such invention would have been immediately exposed by the enemies of Jesus and disowned by His followers who had been present. Denny maintains that this is not a parable but an allegory, on the grounds that an allegory is not true to life and depends for its existence merely on the things illustrated. He holds that the account of the husbandmen and the Master is not true to life and never would have occurred in real life. But in what way is the account not true to life? In the ingratitude and cruelty of men? How about the record of history? Is not the account of the punishment of the wicked husbandmen in accord with life? Let the Pharisees themselves testify on that point with their sweeping reply passing judgment on the men. While the details of the parable are sharply dramatic, they are generally true to life as it has often been enacted. One might as well say that the life story of the Old Testament prophets and of the ministry of God’s Son is “not true to life.” The Scripture itself declares the account to be a parable.

Basis of Christ’s Authority The fact that Jesus, when challenged to defend His authority, referred to John the Baptist and the Old Testament does not mean that His authority is not absolute and final. He had repeatedly declared His deity and, by affirming and proving that He always spoke and did the things which God directed, He had made known the direct character of His contact with God. His concentration of this discussion upon the authority of John the Baptist was not to bolster His own claim to divine authority, but to reveal the infamy and rebellion against God of which the Pharisees were guilty. Weaving in a marvelous pattern the scarlet thread of tragic predictions from

the Old Testament concerning the unbelief and disobedience of the nation and the death of the Messiah, He again was not attempting to rest His authority upon that of the Old Testament. He was rather showing to all that the Pharisees not only had rejected God in rejecting John the Baptist, but they were now rejecting the very Old Testament which they had claimed to defend in their original challenge. The unity and wonderful harmony of God's revelation through all the prophets and John the Baptist and now finally in His Son were placed in profound contrast with the continuous rebellion which they confronted. The Parable of the Wedding Garment The last of the three parables by which Jesus gave crushing emphasis to His answer as to His authority seems at first sight to be an anti-climax. It should be remembered, however, that this last parable reaches out with a strong reference to the listening multitude. Jesus has taken the offensive from the Jewish leaders in this phase of the discussion, but there is still a strong undercurrent of appeal and warning as well as denunciation. One of the fascinating characteristics of the parables of Jesus is seen in the many possible applications which confront the reader and stir his conscience. In this contemptible man who profaned the wedding feast of the King's Son with his vile, working garments, was Jesus depicting the shallow devotion of listening multitudes who had hailed Him as the Messiah, but had no idea of sacrificing too much of their own convenience in His service? At any rate, there is a tenderness of appeal in this parable and an emphasis upon the great joy of the kingdom lost by those who reject the invitation or who do not equip themselves to share its glory, which gives a touching glint of pathos in the midst of the fierce denunciation. Even to these hypocritical fiends who are plotting His death, Jesus still gives gentle intimations of mercy, if they will but repent.

There is a subtle thread of connection between this parable and the Old Testament where God is the Bridegroom and Israel the bride. Here Jesus is clearly set forth as the Son of the King and as the Bridegroom. The identity of the bride vanishes in the swift march of the parable to its central teaching. The double invitation pictured in the parable is true to the customs of the East and is variously explained as referring to the prophets and John, and to Jesus; or the invitation given by Jesus and later on by the apostles. The introduction of the "city" of the rebels which is to be burned by the King sharply presents a further prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem. How many of those who heard this fearful warning of the parable were reminded of His prediction of the doom of the city at the time of the triumphal entry?

Both the relatively good and bad were invited, and those who had been noble and those who had been very sinful alike realized their destitute appearance and attired themselves in the wedding garment provided by the King — all of the guests, except one complacent man who was without regard for his own filthy attire and without reverence for the King or gratitude for His merciful invitation. Gibson holds that the man without the wedding garment represents not the man who fails to add righteous living to his acceptance of Christ, but the hypocrite in the church whose moral failure is known only to God. He holds that there was no visible difference between the man and the other guests: "he lacked the invisible garment of righteousness" and only the King knew it. But it does not follow that the other guests had not observed the man's lack of preparation from the mere fact that this is not discussed in the parable or that they had not compelled him to leave. They may have been absorbed in their own affairs, but even when they noticed his condition and, perhaps, urged him to secure the wedding garment, they would have lacked the authority to drive him out and would wait for the King's judgment in the matter. The fact that the wedding garment

represents the life of obedient righteousness does not suggest that we earn our salvation by our fidelity. The guests were not present because they had on wedding garments, but because of the gracious invitation of the King. The punishment is thought by some critics to be too harsh in the light of the offense of the man; so easily does man undertake to assume the prerogatives of God. The violation of the hospitality of the King was as great by the man who brazenly refused to show appreciation of the occasion and to prepare himself for it as by those who scorned and rejected the invitation. This seems to be directed at the fickle crowd who had cried “Hosanna” and were soon to shout “Crucify.” If their acceptance is only selfish, half-hearted, and hypocritical, they must suffer the same fate as those who reject from the first.

Pharisees and Herodians The united attack of the Sanhedrin having failed, the separate groups now undertook to entrap Jesus. Matthew notes that the Pharisees chose some of their disciples to make this very clever attack — the leaders too often had been in collision with Jesus and had revealed their venomous attitude. For this new venture they needed fresh leadership which had not yet been involved in the struggle and hence could piously pose as earnest seekers after the truth, deeply perplexed by conscientious scruples. Brilliant young students of the Pharisaical school would have been chosen. Leaders of the Herodians were brought in to join in the assault. The Pharisees and Herodians who were natural enemies allowed their desire to kill Jesus to overcome their partisan hatred. We would have expected that the Pharisees would have called in the Zealots, since they were the ones who were most bitter against paying tribute to Rome and would have been best fitted to raise the hue and cry against Jesus amid the multitude if He should declare in favor of such payment of taxes. Perhaps the Zealots were still wavering toward support of Jesus, hoping He would show signs of a more militant policy. And the Pharisees may have felt perfectly capable of turning the multitudes against Jesus, if He should declare that tribute should be paid to Caesar, while the Herodians, sycophants of Herod’s court, would have been in a position to assist in the charge of treason with the Roman governor, if Jesus should declare that tribute should not be paid. The Trap The Pharisees framed their question in such a setting of piety and flattering praise that it makes particularly vivid and effective the Greek verb used to describe their treacherous plot. The verb “ensnare” has the root idea of catching an animal in a trap or net. They felt that they had everything so skillfully arranged on a hair-trigger that there was no possibility for Jesus to escape. He must say either “yes” or “no”; either way gave them a ruinous charge to make against Him. As a matter of fact, at the final trials of Jesus, even though they knew their charge was false, they did charge before Pilate that Jesus had forbidden to pay tribute to Caesar. Had it been true, they would have been able to make an elaborate case, presenting witnesses and urging the crime of treason against Rome.

Hypocrisy

Plummer says of the honeyed words of praise with which the Pharisees attempted to cast their net about Jesus: “The falseness of those fulsome compliments in their mouths stamps this as one of the most dastardly of the attacks on Christ.” When one contemplates what they said, he finds that these enemies again have furnished a concise and impressive tribute; it was unintended, and made hypocritical by the infamy of their real thoughts and purposes. Here are the elements in their tribute: (1) that Jesus was a true man; (2) that He taught the way of God in truth; (3) that He had no fear of any person; (4) that He was not influenced by the wealth, power, fame, or other possessions of His hearers in His presentation of the truth. Every one of these is a significant,

though inadequate, tribute to Jesus, and the exact opposite of each affirmation is true of these corrupt hypocrites who were attempting to ensnare Him. The whole ministry gives abundant proof of the truth of His teaching and the perfection of His character which they appear to affirm. His courage had been shown repeatedly in His denunciation of the powerful leaders of the nation. This fact these very enemies now note. In any estimate of the courage of Jesus there is apt to enter the thought that since Jesus was the Son of God and all-powerful, His advantage was so enormous that the quality of His courage is impinged. It is a strange fact that everywhere we turn in the earthly ministry of Jesus, it is His death which is its central fact and which gives the peculiar meaning to everything else which He said and did. It is the very fact that Jesus voluntarily permitted His enemies to slay Him which makes His courage real to us. The mysterious combination of the human and the divine in Jesus is always the key to His unique character. The Taxes

Two general types of tribute were paid to Rome: taxes and customs. For the collection of taxes, levied with the assistance of the Sanhedrin throughout the eleven districts of Judaea, the Roman procurator was responsible. Herod Antipas and Philip were responsible for the taxes in their respective tetrarchies. Much of these taxes was spent upon the upkeep of roads, harbors, public buildings, and the governments. The remainder was sent on to Rome. The right to collect customs having been purchased by senatorial corporations in Rome, these taxes were collected by them through the commissioners and the horde of publicans they employed. Customs included export and import duties, bridge and harbor tolls, market taxes, tax on salt and many similar duties. While the system of collection was full of corruption and the publicans notorious for extortion, the Romans in general had a genius for government and maintained their dominions most efficiently. They preserved law and order, permitted remarkable freedom of local rule and worship, and built such highways and buildings as have resisted the march of time in an astonishing way. The Question Inasmuch as Israel was not subject to a foreign power when the law was given and this phase of the national life was not discussed in the law, there appeared the necessity for a ruling from the great teachers of Israel upon the subject of tribute to Caesar. Israel’s disobedience to God had repeatedly brought about such a situation in the history of the nation. Israel’s history offered something in the nature of precedents, but since the law gave no ruling upon it, it was more a question of being loyal to the nation than of being loyal to the law.

First Reply In His first reply Jesus, by tearing the mask of hypocrisy from them before the entire multitude, showed that their flattery had no more effect upon Him than their threats. “Why make ye trial of me, ye hypocrites?” Had He waited until He had solved their problem, this might not have been so plain to the crowd. Their clever wiles were parried by His forthright denunciation of their treacherous character. After showing all that He saw through their base conduct, He proceeded to demolish their trap. The question has been asked as to why it should have been necessary to send for a denarius. Even though the temple tribute was paid in the Jewish coin such as the shekel or half-shekel, yet some of those in the crowd may have had in their possession a Roman denarius (sixteen and two-thirds cents). It is not indicated as to whether some one had to go out in search of the coin. From the money changers, who had been driven from the temple, such coins could readily be secured. It is probable that there was no difficulty in securing the coin. Since the right to coin money is one of the elemental attributes of a government, the Romans permitted the Jews to coin their own money and refrained from putting the image of Caesar on the coins they

circulated in Palestine during the early days of the conquest. This was a concession to the Jewish objections to images and image worship based on the law of Moses. What the Romans had refrained from doing, Jewish quizlings had undertaken. Herod Antipas, for example, had flooded the country with coins on which he had placed the image of Caesar. This was an act of flattery to the emperor. A number of these coins have been recovered. They carry the inscription TI CAESAR DIVI AUG F AUGUSTUS (Tiberius Caesar of the divine Augustus, the son Augustus). The Trappers Trapped The Jews were unable to object to His demand that they produce a denarius because they had raised the question, had asked for information, and were accustomed to use the coin in payment of tribute. Once it was in their possession they could not escape the deadly force of His question as to whose image and superscription it carried. “O answer full of miracle” is the description applied to the words of Jesus. “You have publicly declared that the coin belongs to Caesar, pay to him what belongs to him.” Very skillfully Jesus corrected their question: “Shall we give tribute to Caesar?” “No, pay it; you merely are paying for value received.” They said, didomi — give”; Jesus corrected it to apodidomi — “pay.” The coin represented not merely the authority of Caesar and obligation to him, but all the benefits which resulted from Roman organization, law and order, security of person, facilities of transit, and other like assets of civilization. The Fundamental Principles The declaration that they were to render to God the things that are God’s is the crowning word of the reply. It rules all else. It implies that we must not render to Caesar the things that are God’s. Human governments are ordained of God in the sense that He wills law and order to prevail, the innocent to be protected, the wicked to be prevented from destroying all that is noblest and best. The twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans might well have the caption: “Render unto God the things that are God’s”; the thirteenth chapter then would carry the title: “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s.” No real conflict existed between the two at the time, since the Roman government permitted complete freedom of worship. When the days came that the Romans, in a frenzy of corruption and hate, turned upon the Christians to compel them to worship Caesar and deny Christ, then the Christians, true to this marvelous, all-inclusive word of the Master, refused to render unto Caesar the things that belong to God. Earnest Christians in Russian prison camps, where they have been sent because they refused to join the Kremlin in its campaign to destroy Christianity and to inaugurate a bloody campaign of world conquest raise their voices with the first-century martyrs: “We will not render to Caesar the things that are God’s.” Pathetic in its emphasis upon the empty shell instead of the living soul within is the repeated cry of so many world-famous commentators from America today urging over the radio that we must convert the communist nations to “democracy.” Have we forgotten the Christian heritage which gave birth to American democracy and which alone can sustain the life of democracy anywhere? Can we only talk of the things that are Caesar’s? Have we utterly forgotten the things that are God’s and that give meaning to all variant forms of government, parties, and systems of rule — if they be worthy to exist? No democracy deserves to endure save one that owns Christ as King. “Our fathers’ God to thee, Author of liberty, To thee we sing. Long may our land be bright; With freedom’s holy light, Protect us by Thy might, Great God, our King.” There is no such thing as an absolute democracy. We live under a monarchy with our Creator and Lord as King. It is when we forget this, seek to please ourselves, and deny God’s authority and way of life that we face anarchy and chaos. “Render unto God the things that are God’s.” The answer of Jesus is not only marvelous because it answered so uniquely the needs of a very critical moment, but because it is broad enough to meet the needs of all times. A narrower definition might not fit in

some cases, but the reply of Jesus was couched in such terms and on such a fundamental basis that all questions of religious and political obligations, of freedom, of separation of church and state, and all similar problems find their inevitable solution within its compass. The attempt of godless governments to prevent the Christian from rendering to God the things of God, and the attempt of politico-religious organizations to seize political power and prevent the Christian from rendering to Caesar the things of Caesar are alike excluded. When such situations arise, the individual must walk in the light of the teaching and the life of Jesus.

Aftermath

Klausner, in his perverse way, claims that the downfall of Jesus and the turning of the multitudes away from Jesus started here and was the result of His refusal to repudiate tribute to Caesar. But the refusal of Jesus to yield to the ambitions and ideas of the worldly minded Zealots and those who followed after them had been fought out in Galilee at the feeding of the five thousand long before. There is no indication of any great change in the popular situation after this clash with the Pharisees in Jerusalem. The people rather marveled at the wonderful reply He had given. His enemies, utterly humiliated, began to work with more feverish hate and zeal as they poisoned the minds of the people against Him. The failure of Jesus to use His miraculous power to defend Himself and destroy His enemies and thus to proceed as a worldly Messiah such as the worldly minded demanded was interwoven with this refusal to start a rebellion against Rome. Incited by demonic leaders the rabble turned upon Jesus at the last, but the refusal of the Master to turn from a spiritual to a political movement did not begin on this final day of His ministry.

120. Chapter 7 - Jesus and the Sadducees (The Future Life)

Chapter 7 - Jesus and the Sadducees (The Future Life) Prevailing Unbelief

We are living in an age in which the belief in the life after death is being widely doubted and denied. This is to be expected in an atheistic age, for the belief in the future life is the necessary corollary of a belief in God. Atheistic groups have seized the government of nations and seek to destroy the very remnants of those who still cling to the Bible. Investigations reveal that in our own country at least forty per cent of the young people in our colleges are turning to atheism under the strong pressure of atheistic professors. Preachers, supposed to be Christian, disavow belief in the future life, although questionnaires show that the percentage of preachers who deny the existence of hell is larger than those who deny entirely the life after death! What more timely topic than to consider “The Teaching of the Bible Concerning the Future Life”? The Christian Gospel The Christian is the salt that is to save a dissolute world from utter corruption; he is the light set on the hill to shine out and save the world from despair. Now is the time for Christians everywhere to obey the command of their divine Lord and preach the gospel. The belief in the future life is the very crown of glory which adorns this gospel. To preach the gospel in an age like this requires not merely an intimate mastery of the teaching of the Bible, but also of the grounds on which it rests. The Logic of History The universality of the belief in the life after death has always been a convincing argument. Even the most degraded savages have had their conception of the future life. It seems rather strange to hear so many voices of doubt raised in an age so boastful of its intellectualism, its culture, and its own infallibility. But reflection upon this leads one to doubt the wisdom and worth of this generation rather than the truth and value of belief in eternal life. The more one studies this present generation and perceives its vaunted egotism, its shallow reasoning, its stupid prejudice, and its polluted morals, the more one is inclined to cling to the anchor of hope which has sustained the Christian through the centuries.

View of the Atheist

Those who question the teaching of the Bible in regard to the future life are divided into various groups. First, there is the outright atheist. Many sermons have been preached on “The Search for an Atheist.” The thought of the sermons has been that such a person does not exist. It is said that deep down in the heart of the so-called atheist there is still the latent faith in God, smothered, but sure to break into a flame when misfortune or death comes. The speech of Robert Ingersoll at the grave of his brother, when he could almost “hear the rustle of angels’ wings,” is often cited. Likewise the dying statement of Voltaire that if the devil had ever had a hand in anything, it had been in his attacks on the Bible. But it is perhaps more than anyone can affirm with assurance that every one who has denied the existence of God and the future life has sooner or later recanted. It is better to rest on the declaration of the Bible without qualifications: “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.” (Psalms 14:1). J. J. Allen, famous editor of Kansas, tells of a young Russian guide, a college graduate, who ridiculed him, as he was touring Moscow, because he frankly admitted that he still read and believed the Bible. He finally asked her where she expected

to go when she died. She replied, “Into fertilizer.” The Humanists’ and Modernists’ Positions The humanists who reduce God to a mere idea seem to be in utter confusion concerning the future life. Although they use a variety of phrases and illustrations and still talk about “eternity” as they do about “God” the impression most of them make is that they believe in annihilation. Modernists who are not so extreme center their attacks on the Old Testament to prove that the future life is not taught there. They hold the most a person can affirm is that only vague statements appear in the later books. This theory has been so widely disseminated that quite frequently preachers who think that they believe the Bible proclaim that the future life is not taught in the Old Testament but only in the New Testament. They think they are exalting Christ and the New Testament by so affirming, but the truth is they have merely consciously or unconsciously adopted a modernistic theory without examining its basis or implications. That they also attack Christ will become evident as we analyze His reply to the Sadducees. It is the purpose of this chapter to examine both the Old Testament and the New Testament to determine the general outline of teaching concerning the life after death, with especial emphasis upon the question as to whether the Old Testament actually teaches the future life. The Modernists’ Presupposition The presupposition which underlies the modernists’ denial that the Old Testament teaches the future life is their theory as to the development of the Old Testament. They deny that it is revealed of God and affirm it is merely man’s gradual discovery of what is therein affirmed. In support of this they dissect various Old Testament books, such as the Pentateuch and Isaiah, and whenever they find a statement or teaching which their theory of evolutionary development of the Old Testament supposes could not have prevailed until a late period in the thinking of the Jews, they immediately declare this passage is by some later writer, J, E, D, P, or a second Isaiah. A free use of the evolutionary shears enables them to cut up the Old Testament and rearrange its contents so as to make a gradual development throughout of the idea of a life after death. Thus they slyly attempt to prove one presupposition by another presupposition, and depend upon their solemn use of big words and scientific terms to prevent the reader from discovering the hoax.

Professor Kirsopp Lake, the famous humanist of Harvard, was urging in his class one day this theory that the Old Testament does not teach the future life. A student spoke up and said: “But, Professor Lake, what about the time when the spirit of Samuel returned and talked to Saul before the battle where the latter was slain?” After a moment’s hesitation, Professor Lake responded: “Well, if that is in the Old Testament, I will have to admit that it teaches the future life, but have not the critics been able to cut that passage out?” A More Moderate View

Professor A. C. Knudson, of Boston University, who is not so extreme in his modernism, has published a book entitled, The ReligiousTeaching of the Old Testament. He has a chapter on “The Teaching of the Old Testament Concerning the Future Life.” He does not attempt to cut out the passages that affirm such a belief, he tries to rub them out, to insist that these passages do not really represent the belief of the Jews of the time. At times he resorts to the dissection of books to relegate certain statements to a late period. The Christian believes the Bible to be inspired of God. The miraculous proof it offers sustains its claim. That the teaching concerning the future life should be more clearly and emphatically presented in the New Testament than in the Old Testament is to be expected, for the new and final revelation is superior to the old, and it was Christ who “brought life and immortality to light” But that the Old Testament does not teach the future life is the theory of unbelievers like the Sadducees in the time of Jesus and the modernists of today. Any one who

has become confused upon this topic should read repeatedly the discussion of Jesus as to whether the Old Testament teaches the future life in Matthew 22:23-33 and the great review of this problem in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Heathenism and the Old Testament

Professor Knudson quotes several authors on the question as to why the Old Testament has so much less to say on the future life than the religions of Egypt, Greece, and other nations. Professor Salmond declares the Old Testament to be below the standard of other religions of ancient times, “less tolerable than the Greek, less ethical than the Egyptian, less adequate and certain than the Persian. These had a more special mission than can be claimed for the Hebrew faith, in the preservation and transmission of the truth of a future life.” Kant, the German philosopher, held that, because of this lack of emphasis on the future life, the Old Testament lacks a genuinely religious character. His compatriot, Schopenhauer, calls the Old Testament on this basis, “The rudest of all religions.”

Reply to the Accusation A sufficient answer to all this unfavorable comparison of the Old Testament to the heathen religions of the times is the reminder that it is not how much, but what is said on a subject that counts. Read the endless, silly ideas advanced by these pagan religions. Visit the tomb of Tutankhamen, filled with the rations and decorations prepared for the dead king. Is the religion of Israel inferior to that of Egypt because the Old Testament is not filled with instructions about burying food and gold chariots with the dead for them to use hereafter? Professor Knudson claims that ancient Hebrew graves have been unearthed in Palestine that contain such primitive preparations for the future life. But if this be so, it only proves again what the Old Testament continually relates that the Jewish people at times deserted the true faith and became contaminated by the false religions about. Professor Knudson cannot find any passage in the Old Testament which instructs that such physical equipment be provided for the dead. He argues at great length that the Jews generally accepted the crude practices of their pagan neighbors concerning the future life, such as ancestor worship, citing Deuteronomy 26:14; Jeremiah 16:7; Psalms 106:28; Hosea 9:4; Ezekiel 24:17; Leviticus 19:28; Leviticus 21:5; 2 Samuel 15:30. A reading of these passages will show the absolute absence of proof; they warn against excess of mourning. Psalms 106:28 condemns Israel for having joined the heathen in the wilderness in “sacrifices of the dead,” but such a reference, together with those that warn Israel against the practice of witchcraft in regard to the dead, shows that the teaching of the Old Testament plainly recognizes the life after death, and warns the Jews against the false heathen practices concerning it. The critics who argue that the Old Testament does not teach the future life until a very late period, when the Jews had borrowed the idea from their heathen neighbors, are in desperate straits trying to explain the amazing difference between the teaching of the Old Testament and that of the surrounding pagan nations. Some suggest that the reason the future life is not emphasized more is the “strong sense of solidarity” which held the nation immortal. They say, “The Messianic hope rendered unnecessary the belief in personal immortality.” But this falsifies the facts as to the Old Testament teaching and as to the natural and inevitable longings of the human heart. The Messianic hope was one that the individual was to share. Professor Toy holds that the lack of teaching on the life after death is due to the lack of constructive imagination on the part of Semites; the Jews knew nothing of drama or metaphysics. In other words, if the Jews could have seen one or two Greek plays, it might have occurred to them that life after death

would be desirable! Another explanation of this difficulty seems to have been overlooked: that it may be caused by a lack of eyesight on the part of the critics. If Israel had to borrow the belief in the future life from pagans, why not in Egypt? Why wait a thousand years to learn it from Persia?

If the Bible is what it claims to be, then the belief in the life after death is not the discovery or invention of man but was made possible by the revelation of God. The translation of Enoch shows that God, early in the history of the race, was revealing to man the reality of the future life (Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5). Pagan nations perverted and debased this revelation into the absurd and fantastic ideas and customs they developed. The gradual, divinely-planned unfolding of God's revelation from the Old Testament to the New is reasonable and most effective. If God had inspired the preliminary messengers, the prophets, to reveal all the truth, then there would have been nothing for His final, supreme Messenger, His own Son, to make known. It is most appropriate that the revelations concerning the future life in the Old Testament should have been subdued and veiled in order that the Son of God might be the One to bring life and immortality to light in its fulness.

Evidence from the Old Testament

What evidence does the Old Testament bear that the writers who led and molded the faith of the nation believed in the future life? What evidence that God was revealing to His chosen people in His own way and time the glories of the beyond, drawing them away from the foolish and degrading teaching of the heathen and leading up to the natural climax of the revelation in Christ? (1) Actual cases of resurrection of the dead (1 Kings 17:22; 2 Kings 4:35; 2 Kings 13:21). (2) Actual cases of translation where the individual did not die, but was translated by God (Genesis 5:22-24; 2 Kings 2:11). The modernists argue that these cases do not mean that the people would be led by them to believe in a future life. How so, unless we presume the Jews were a nation of imbeciles? (3) Actual case of reappearance of Samuel, after his death, to talk with Saul (1 Samuel 28:12-19). (4) Definite declarations of belief in future life.

After David's extravagant mourning on the ash heap during the illness of his child, as he prayed for forgiveness and for the child's life, his servants feared to report to him the death of his child, and were astounded at the calmness with which he heard the news and ceased his mourning. His statement is a classic for all time: "But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me" (2 Samuel 12:15-23). David's statement does not mean annihilation, for his whole conduct was that of hope instead of despair. And his repeated declarations voice his faith in the future life.

Overlooking the Evidence

Professor Knudson overlooks the above incident. He quotes four Psalms (16, 17, 49, 73) as teaching vaguely (16, 17) or definitely (49, 73) the future life, but claims they are all of late origin. His theory compels him to hold that no clear statements of the future life were made until about the Maccabean period, when the Jews could have had time to learn this from the Persians. The apostle Peter did not feel compelled to trim the Old Testament to fit the theory of evolution, for on the day of Pentecost he made the teaching of the Old Testament on the future life one of the central points of argument in his sermon as he quoted David as saying in Psalms 16:8.: "Thou wilt not leave my soul unto Hades, Neither wilt thou give thy Holy One to see corruption" (Acts 2:27).

He declared that David was predicting the resurrection of Jesus.

Just to show that the belief in the future life underlies the whole Old Testament, and to take a Psalm which nobody denies is written by David, read the famous twenty-third Psalm: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil He does not say “into the valley,” but “through the valley.” Death was not a destination to him, but a thoroughfare. He was traveling through the valley and on to the heights of glory beyond. Hear him as he closes: “And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.” The Resurrection and Judgment

Many other passages might be quoted, such as Ezekiel 37:1-14; Isaiah 14:9; Isaiah 25:8; Isaiah 26:19; Isaiah 53:10-12; Isaiah 66:24; Daniel 12:2. The last passage is particularly interesting: “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” Critics hold that this teaches man is “immortable” — he may achieve immortality, but he is not by nature immortal: some will be raised and some annihilated (not raised). But this would mean that man may achieve the resurrection by either pre-eminent righteousness or pre-eminent wickedness! Ewald holds the “many” means all Israelites as contrasted with the heathen; Charles and Knudson hold it means “the pre-eminently good and bad in Israel.” But the next verse makes quite clear that all the wise and noble are to be raised to a blessed existence, and it immediately follows that all the wicked shall also be raised, but to everlasting punishment. The Old Testament Answers Doubters The fact that a number of Old Testament writers argue the question of the future life and state both the position of doubt and of faith does not alter the fact of what the Old Testament teaches. For the point is not that some verse may be quoted from Job or Ecclesiastes or Psalms which expresses doubt as to the life after death, but the question is: To what conclusion did the author come in the end? It is futile to quote the earlier expressions of doubt in Ecclesiastes. What does he say is his conclusion after he has considered the whole range of human pleasures, doubt, and despair? “Man goeth to his everlasting home, and the mourners go about the streets: before the silver cord is loosed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, and the dust returneth to the earth as it was, and the spirit returneth unto God who gave it ... This is the end of the matter: all hath been heard: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:5-14). It is true that Job ponders the side of doubt as he asks, “If a man die, shall he live again?” (Job 14:14). But hear his conclusion: “But as for me I know that my Redeemer liveth, And at last he will stand up upon the earth: And after my skin, even this body, is destroyed, Then without my flesh shall I see God” (Job 19:25, Job 19:26). The same is true of the Psalms.

What Did Jesus Teach? A question of supreme interest is: What did Jesus have to say on the teaching of the Old Testament as to the future life? The skeptics of His day rendered a negative verdict as today. But hear the Son of God as he tore apart the flimsy argument of the Sadducees: “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God” (Matthew 22:29). No better comment could be written across the face of many modern books on this subject, written by men who claim to be scholars.

Death

Every factor which gives to death a tragic finality multiplies the emphasis upon the life after death. The surrender of life's tasks to which we have been passionately devoted, the parting with those whom we love more than our own selves, the increase of physical ills climaxed in the end of earthly existence — all of these focus the attention of every thoughtful person upon the problem of life after death.

Avoiding the Issue

It is impossible to evade the issue. Every day brings its inescapable reminders in our own lives or in the lives of our friends. That gay and gallant maxim, "Life begins at forty," reminds one of the frantic search of another cavalier generation for the fabled fountain of youth. It may be shouted forth in a defiant shriek or whispered with wistful pathos — what can it avail for a generation which has forgotten God? We may laugh and say that life does not really begin at birth, but at "forty," but is not death stalking the trail as we utter our brave banter?

We may refuse to think about death. We may put off for a time the inevitable hour. We cannot ultimately avoid it. "God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." God decreed man's death, but man caused death to befall the race: "Thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment."

Facing the Issue The very darkness that enshrouds death causes the brilliant glow of heaven to shine all the brighter. The certainty of death is matched by the certainty of life after death. The universality of death prepares the race to understand and appreciate a universal gospel of redemption that opens the gates of heaven to every person. No one is prohibited from entering except those who refuse to prepare themselves to live forever with God. The sinfulness of man which brings death is overcome by the righteousness of Christ who died for our sins and was raised from the dead for our justification. In magnificent language the apostle Paul declares man's obligation to prove his appreciation of God's mercy by living each day "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). The life after death is determined as to its content by the life before death.

Position of the Sadducees

It may seem incredible that the very religious leaders of the nation who ruled in the holy temple and directed the destinies of the nation should have become so corrupt and worldly that they themselves did not believe the Old Testament by whose authority they were in power. If, however, one will study the pages of church history or glance at world conditions today, it will not seem so incredible. The Sadducees not only denied the plain teaching of the Old Testament as to the reality of life after death and the existence of angels, but they also made the propagation of their unbelief a chief objective in life. For this reason they were enraged at Jesus. Miracles of resurrection performed by Him, calm and profoundly touching sermons assuring men of the glories of heaven, earnest warnings that all men must prepare to meet God in the judgment day and answer for the deeds done in the body — all were considered a personal affront to them. Their skeptical philosophy was the measure of a man s life; facts were blindly pushed aside and warnings went unheeded as they rested on the supposedly logical processes of their own

reasoning.

Collision withJesus

They made a fatal mistake, however, in attempting to meet Jesus in public debate on the proposition. They were so sure of their rational processes and conclusions that they felt Jesus would be helpless to answer their dilemma. When Jesus tore their foolish argument to shreds and showed the folly of their position, did they repent and turn in obedience to God and the Old Testament they had been supposed to obey? They did not. They merely shut their eyes and ears and went on to murder Jesus. When Jesus rose from the dead, and when the empty tomb, together with the fearless unimpeachable testimony of the apostles, proved that Jesus had been raised from the dead, did these corrupt hypocrites who ruled the temple surrender their opposition to God and His Word? They did not. They went on to try to murder and destroy those who were testifying to the fact of the resurrection. And yet some people say there is no such place as hell!

Force of Their Conduct

These disbelievers in a life after death furnished by their own infamous conduct a compelling argument for the future existence. To live in a world full of physical and spiritual realities, a world where order and design are everywhere evident — to live in such a world as ours and not to believe in a God who created, governs, and maintains all, is not rational. To believe in a God who is the Creator of all and not to believe in a life after death, a judgment day when we must answer to God for our conduct, a heaven and a hell where rewards and punishments are meted out is not rational. The most irrational of all people are the so-called “rationalists” — the Sadducees and their offspring! Fortunately, we are not left to the processes and conclusions of human reason alone for the basis of our belief in a life after death. We have a revelation from God! Through prophets and apostles, but supremely through His own Son, God has brought life and immortality to light. Only those who prefer darkness to light need stumble in doubt. Their Argument The dilemma which the Sadducees considered so unanswerable was this: Seven men in heaven fight over one woman because all had married her (each brother in turn marrying the childless widow after the death of the preceding brother in accordance with the Old Testament law), and all had died childless. None could make a claim to have her in heaven as his wife which the other six brothers could not dispute. Jealousy, bickering, hatred, and what have you! All this in heaven, supposing there could be such a thing as life after death! With what cleverness and self-assurance the Sadducees asked their question: “In the resurrection, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife.” The Solution The answer of Jesus was so simple and was spoken with such absolute authority that it made their position most ridiculous: “When they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage.” And how did Jesus know this? See how He calmly affirms His deity at every turn as He speaks with the authority of God. He did not say He “thought” there would be no marriage in heaven, nor that He guessed, nor that He could answer their problem by supposing, nor that He had been forced to conclude. “Never man so spake.” He declared the facts as He, God’s own Son, Anew them to be. The reply of Jesus was delivered not only with this amazing assumption of complete knowledge and absolute authority, but He paused first to administer a rebuke to these skeptical, hypocritical leaders of the nation. These were the famous men of the nation, posing as such great scholars that they not only knew the Old Testament, but they even knew better than the Old Testament. “Is it not for this cause that ye err,

that ye know not the scriptures, nor the power of God?" Their Unbelief

First, Jesus made clear the proposition that the Old Testament plainly taught the life after death and that the Sadducees had been so enamored of their pagan philosophy and skeptical conclusions that they had neglected to study the revelation that God had given. Or was this a more subtle way of saying that they had rejected the Word of God: "Ye know not" suggesting "ye believe not"? Furthermore, they did not know the power of God; they supposed that God would be compelled to continue in heaven the relations of earth and did not take into account that God would be able to make heaven more blessed than earth.

If you will analyze almost any objection a skeptic raises, you will see this answer of Jesus fits it. They discount the power of God, which is another way of saying that they deny the existence of God — they only talk of a superman and confer on him the title "god." The Existence of Angels

While Jesus was rebuking the Sadducees for their unbelief in the life after death, He deliberately introduced the angels and thus delivered a second rebuke to these unbelievers. They were notorious for their denial of the existence of angels. Take up the Old Testament and see how often there is a specific declaration of the appearance of angels to men. Reflect on how often the Sadducees had to cut out of the Old Testament that which it categorically affirmed. Verily, the modernists are not very modern!

Jesus' reference to the angels was very appropriate, not merely as a rebuke to His hearers, but also as illustrating the nature of the future life of men and women. Jesus did not affirm that personality will be destroyed, nor that future recognition will be lacking. We will still be the same persons, conscious of our identity, cognizant of our past experience on this earth (Luke 16:25), able to recognize one another and communicate with each other. We shall be like the angels in that death will never end our blessed life in heaven; marrying and giving in marriage and establishment of separate homes, which is God's plan for the preservation of the human race in this world where death reigns, will no longer be necessary or fitting. Instead of many families and many homes, there is to be in heaven just one family, the family of God, just one home, our eternal abode. To be the children of God and to enjoy His fellowship will so far surpass anything we have known in this world that all human relationships will be completely subordinated. The Narrow Gate In fact, Jesus plainly warns that no one will ever enter heaven except those who have loved God so much more than they have loved their dearest relatives in this world that in comparison they would seem to hate father, mother, child, or their own lives (Luke 14:26). Most of our difficulties in contemplating the nature of heaven and the life after death arise from the failure to realize the power of God and the kind of love and devotion we are expected to have for Him.

Other Objections

It might well be asked if any other objection to the reality of the life after death has presented itself to the mind of man during the centuries — an objection which has more force than that which the Sadducees offered. It is most interesting to notice how close to the heart of all the difficulties which have tantalized the reasoning and imagination of man through the years was this objection which the Sadducees brought to Jesus. Our relationships with one another in this world lead us into many difficulties, chief of which seems to be the contemplation of how it will be possible to be happy in heaven when we realize that some of those who have been most precious to us in this

life are not in heaven, that they, because of their defiance and rebellion against God, have been condemned into hell. The answer to this problem is exactly the answer that Jesus gave to the Sadducees. If this troubles us, we do not realize the power of God, nor do we possess that overshadowing love of God which we should have in our hearts. In the one great family of God there will be no temptation, sin, sorrow, or death. In heaven, God shall wipe away every tear from our eyes. We may not understand how from our present low point of vision, but from the heights of heaven we shall know as we are known and shall understand. The Old Testament

Jesus affirmed from His own infinite knowledge the conditions that heaven will offer; but He also patiently turned back to the Old Testament to prove from its pages that God had made known of old that there is to be a future life. Thus every shadow of excuse is to be taken away from the Sadducees if they continue in their unbelief, and the multitudes listening in awed silence to the debate will be strengthened in their faith.

After answering the puzzle about the seven husbands and one wife and pausing to press it home that there are angels in heaven even as there is a resurrection, even though the Sadducees denied both, Jesus offered just one passage from the Old Testament to prove that it teaches the future life. And what an extraordinary passage it is! Ye blind leaders of the blind, hear His words! “But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” Not invented by man, not learned in Egypt, Greece or Persia, but “spoken unto you by God.” And as if to meet the critics of the twentieth century, He does not quote Daniel, Isaiah, or the Psalms; He quotes from the words of God to Moses, recorded in Exodus 3:6. No room for late development of ideas! His argument is this: Abraham has been dead many years, also Isaac and Jacob; but God does not say to Moses, “I was the God of Abraham” (while he was living, but not now), but, “I am the God of Abraham” ; he is alive now, for a dead person who is no longer in existence can have had a Creator, but he can not have a God. It is as if Jesus said: “Approach the Old Testament where you will, and scratch the surface; you will find the life after death implied, if not stated.”

Testimony in the Epistle to Hebrews

Like most problems which concern the Old Testament, the question as to its attitude toward the life after death finds a sublime discussion in the Epistle to the Hebrews. One might well write across the magnificent eleventh chapter the title, “The Teaching of the Old Testament Concerning the Future Life.” It reviews the first glimmer of hope in Abel’s obedient sacrifice, the translation of Enoch, the faith and hope of Abraham. “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Hebrews 11:13). By its emphatic study of the word “pilgrim” which Abraham used, Hebrews analyzes his faith. It pictures Abraham standing by the grave of Sarah and solemnly affirming that he was a pilgrim (Genesis 23:4). A pilgrim is a traveler with a destination. So with Abraham in his sojourn in Palestine: he dwelt in tents and kept looking for a permanent city. It was not Ur of the Chaldees, for the way was open to return there. “But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city” (Hebrews 11:16).

Hebrews pictures Abraham with uplifted knife, about to kill Isaac, in obedience to God's command. How was this possible? Because Abraham believed that death did not end all, but that God would be able to raise Isaac from the dead. What strong faith was this in the future life! The faith of Isaac and Jacob as they died and the specific command of Joseph "concerning his bones" all are cited. The critics who cite this longing of Joseph to be buried with his fathers as proof that the Old Testament leaders counted the geographical location of burial more important than righteous living ought to be given the first prize for intellectual confusion. It proves this much, however, that Joseph was looking forward to a blessed life hereafter, or why any command "concerning his bones," that his body should be taken with the Israelites to Palestine? Moses' hope in "the recompense of rewards," which was to offset all his sacrifice and suffering for the Lord here on earth, receives great emphasis. Special mention is made of the fact that "women received their dead by a resurrection: and others were tortured, not accepting their deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection (Hebrews 11:35). The Old Testament thus was God's message to Israel to clear their minds of the confused and false teaching of pagan nations concerning the after life and to prepare the way for His final and complete revelation in the New Testament. The second coming of Jesus, the end of the world, the judgment of men according to the deeds done in the body, the separation of the righteous from the wicked, the blessed life of the redeemed with God forever, the eternal punishment of the wicked — all this has tremendous emphasis in the teaching of Jesus and the whole New Testament. The resurrection of Jesus is the keystone on which all this is builded. It is the very type of our resurrection. It contains a double miracle: not merely the rejoining of the soul and body of Jesus, but the final translation of this earthly body into the heavenly at the time of the ascension.

Paul's Teaching Concerning the Resurrection Of this mystery Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians, when he seeks to explain the fact that, although the Christian is to expect a resurrection, he is not to expect to have in heaven exactly the same body as on earth. People were disturbed at Corinth with the question as to "how are the dead raised? and with what manner of body do they come?" Paul illustrates by the grain of wheat planted in the ground. It is the same grain of wheat and it is not the same grain of wheat which comes forth. We see different kinds of flesh here: beasts, birds, fish. This should illustrate God's power to give us a heavenly body according to His own will. "This corruptible shall put on incorruption." We shall preserve our identity. We shall be like Him when we see Him as He is. "These that are arrayed in the white robes, who are they, and whence came they?...These are they that come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:13, Revelation 7:14). In this blessed hope let us live and die, for death is but the beginning of life, unending and blessed, for those who follow the Son of God.

121. Chapter 8 - The Teaching of Jesus Concerning Hell

Chapter 8 - The Teaching of Jesus Concerning Hell Luke 19:27;Matthew 21:41-44;Matthew 22:7,Matthew 22:13;Matthew 23:15,Matthew 23:33 Warnings in the Debate The fierce controversy of this final day of Jesus' public ministry brought forth warnings of the endless punishment of the wicked in hell. All the teachings which Jesus had given on this subject furnish a dark background for these warnings. As Jesus approached the city, the Parable of the Pounds had been delivered with the objective of calming the excited anticipations of the over-enthusiastic Zealots. It ends with an ominous warning to the wicked leaders who were plotting His death. "But these mine enemies, that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me" (Luke 19:27). So spoke the King in the parable. At the close of the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, the Pharisees found themselves pronouncing their own doom. The pointed question of Jesus as to what action the Lord of the vineyard should take toward these wicked husbandmen, who had despised his repeated offers of mercy and who had murdered his messengers and even his Son, brought forth from the Pharisees the reluctant response: "He will miserably destroy those miserable men, and will let out the vineyard unto other husbandmen, who shall render him the fruits in their seasons (Matthew 21:41). In the Parable of the Wedding Feast, the wicked men rejected the invitation to the marriage feast of the King's Son, and tortured and murdered the messengers the King had sent with his gracious invitation. "But the king was wroth; and he sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned their city" (Matthew 22:7). The final condemnation of the insolent man who had refused to wear the wedding garment was reminiscent of all Jesus had said on former occasions concerning hell. "Bind him hand and foot, and cast him out into the outer darkness; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 22:13). In the burning denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees, Jesus said of the fanatical proselytes of the Pharisees "Ye make him twofold more a son of hell than yourselves" (Matthew 23:15). In the final climax of the denunciation Jesus declared: "Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell?" (Matthew 23:33). The Mystery of Death The mystery of what lies beyond the grave is in every age and, sooner or later, in every life the object of the most intense interest and reflection. Some may try to avoid consideration of such a subject, but the hard facts of life have a way of thrusting it into the foreground with an irresistible gesture. God has seen to it that the wages of sin is death; and the fact of death is so undeniable, so omnipresent, so inescapable that while a person in thoughtless days of youth or in the midst of good health and prosperity may fend off consideration of the future life, the time must inevitably come when he can no longer avoid it. Although some may contemptuously brand such a statement as a trite commonplace, yet death somehow refuses to be a commonplace when it becomes a personal matter. When Adam and Eve were driven forth from the Garden of Eden and from the tree of life, they must have meditated deeply upon all that was to be experienced in that fateful warning: "Thou shalt surely die." As they looked at the crumpled form of Abel lying cold in death, they must have shuddered in anguish and wonder at what this thing called death could mean. Nor has man through all the intervening centuries found it possible to avoid such reflections. The imaginations and speculations of man concerning the future life not only fill all the pagan religions of earth, but

even in Christian circles with the divine light of God's revelation in our hands, men are continually tempted to speculate and to exalt their imaginations above the revelation of God. The Importance of the Theme The deliberate selection of the fate of the wicked in eternity as the subject of study seems so very unpleasant that we may need to remind ourselves that we are sent to preach a gospel of salvation and that the very elemental proposition of salvation is that there is something from which we are saved as well as something to which we are saved. If we need to supplement such a conclusion with hard facts of life we will not have to go far to find the results of sin in life and the stark reality of death itself staring at us and warning us of something more terrible than mere physical destruction which lies beyond the grave. Since the subject is so distressing, for this very reason we are tempted to avoid it and should brace against such a betrayal of our commission. In exactly the same measure that those who are defying God's offers of mercy would like to forget about hell, they need to be warned in the same spirit which our Master used — He who knew whereof He spoke.

Those Who Avoid the Topic of Hell

It is characteristic of man's folly that when he insolently casts aside God's gracious revelation of mercy and salvation and undertakes to concoct "a new gospel" to suit what he conceives to be the desires and needs of people about him, the very first thing which he does is to throw out the proposition of hell or future punishment of the wicked. He undertakes to create a "pleasant message," and he indignantly retorts to objections: "Why should not the gospel be pleasant?" Of course this is natural; this is drifting with the tide and following the course of least resistance. But a gospel that is to have power must be a gospel that deals with facts instead of fancies, and the man who tries to remove hell from the gospel simply shuts his eyes to the facts of the world all about him. Man's rebellion and sin against God is not pleasant. That is a fact — an unavoidable, supremely important fact. Man's suffering as a result of his sin in this world is a fact and a very unpleasant one. It cannot be overlooked. A gospel that is to have power or to deserve the title "good news" cannot shut its eyes to the facts, else it is only a cruel delusion. A gospel that is to have power in the presence of death must be a gospel which gives assurance from God Himself of what follows death. Man cannot pierce the veil. Of what value are our guesses? The fundamental question is: What has God revealed to us?

Radicals Who Deny the Existence of Hell A great deal of confusion has arisen in the minds of many Christians as to the doctrine of hell. This has resulted largely from the modernistic attacks on the teaching of Jesus upon this subject. It is natural that those who ridicule the teaching and claims of Jesus should especially concentrate their opposition upon the proposition of eternal punishment, since the continual warnings of Jesus confront them in their hostile attitude. It seems strange that so many preachers should be found in American pulpits who do not believe either in heaven or hell; many of them do not even believe in the existence of a personal God. They preach "a social gospel" for the reform of society. A questionnaire among all the Protestant preachers in Chicago indicated that fifty percent did not believe in a heaven and that seventy percent did not believe in a hell. The larger percentage of skeptics concerning the latter subject shows again how people like to believe what is pleasant and to disbelieve what is unpleasant. Having surrendered any divine foundation for their convictions, they wander about in a darkened wilderness of their own creation. Since they have shut their eyes to the facts and the proofs of the gospel, they seem blind also to the facts of life about them. It is not surprising, with so many blind leaders of the blind

in places of leadership in the nation, the darkness of unbelief and misery that accompanies such hopelessness should increase.

Sects Which Deny Eternal Punishment A further source of confusion on this subject is to be found in two sects which are fanatical in their denial of the eternal punishment of the wicked. Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh-day Adventists maintain this idea and advance the same arguments with very intensive use of tracts. It is little short of amazing how many people who once believed the simple New Testament gospel have allowed themselves to become bewildered and led astray by these tracts. These two sects argue strongly for the Bible as the Word of God and fill their tracts with appeals for sound doctrine and with claims that this is the very teaching of the Scripture which they are advocating.

Effect of the Propaganda The thinking of Christian people on the subject of hell has been caught in the pressure of "pinchers" — a steady pounding of skeptical preachers and writers on the one side, and of misguided but well-meaning fanatics on the other. The result has been so extensive among people who do not know the Scripture and do not think very deeply into that which they hear and read, that it is a very appropriate time to examine the New Testament on the question and to focus attention on the subject as to what does Jesus say and what do the apostles say concerning the fate of the wicked in eternity. The general view underlying this double propaganda is that annihilation is the fate of the wicked. Both the modernists and the two sects mentioned above come to approximately the same view on this point, although approaching it from opposite angles and with different arguments for the logic of their conclusion. Modernists who go so far as to deny the existence of heaven and God completely blot out any sort of future existence for anybody, not merely for the wicked. The two sects place strong emphasis on prophecies, such as Malachi 4:1-3, which is full of figurative language. "For, behold, the day cometh, it burneth as a furnace; and all the proud, and all that work wickedness, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith Jehovah of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch….And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I make, saith Jehovah of hosts" (Malachi 4:1, Malachi 4:3).

One of the best known evangelists of the Seventh-day Adventists carried on an evangelistic campaign in Cincinnati for many months during 1940, speaking daily in Emery Auditorium, one of the largest halls in the city, and also over the radio at noon each day. Over and over again he quoted these two verses from Malachi and then used them to try to destroy the plain teaching of Jesus about hell. The emphasis was upon the statement that the wicked would be burned up like stubble and would be ashes under the feet of the righteous. The argument was advanced continually that while the wicked would be cast into hell, they would immediately be annihilated, and that the only ones to suffer eternal punishment would be the devil and his angels. Now this reduces the proposition of hell as far as man is concerned (and the Bible was written to guide and warn man — not the devil) to nothing more than death — a second death, but nothing more than death, for many people die by burning in this world, and if all there is to the repeated warnings of Jesus concerning hell is just death, nothing more than annihilation, just what are we to think of Jesus? What did He actually say about hell? If He did actually declare that there would be an eternal punishment of the wicked in eternity and no such thing as everlasting suffering in hell awaits them, then was Jesus ignorant of the facts? or did He practice a cruel deceit upon the world, predicting something not true? What sort of Christ is left for those who hold this view?

Current of the Argument

Those who turn back to read this paragraph from Malachi will notice the highly figurative character of much of the prophecy. Why take the burning just exactly like stubble and the ashes literally and not take the righteous walking on the ashes literally? And how about the second verse which joins the two? Shall the righteous act exactly as the “calves of the stall” that “gambol”? Is such an interpretation of this passage a sufficient basis for denying the plain teaching of Jesus? Another interesting feature of this propaganda is that the modernists are accustomed to attempt to array the teaching of Jesus against that of the apostles and to argue against the validity of the doctrine in the Epistles because it cannot be duplicated in the Gospels, or in such sections of the teaching of Jesus as they choose to accept as binding. But in this attempt to deny the existence of hell, reversing the attack, the effort is continually made to array the teaching of the apostles against that of Jesus and to advance the claim that the apostles do not mention or emphasize the existence of hell as does Jesus. Our investigation is to cover the range of these two fields as to just what Jesus says about hell and what the writers of the New Testament have to say about it. When the effort is made to use Paul against Matthew and Luke on the doctrine of the virgin birth, on the ground that they carefully record this event and that Paul does not, the question immediately arises as to whether what he does say presupposes and builds upon the doctrine of the virgin birth. The same proposition confronts us in this inquiry concerning the eternal punishment of the wicked. A characteristic argument of this whole group is to affirm that Paul said that he declared the whole counsel of God, yet he never mentioned eternal torment. Are we to conclude that we are to accept what Paul says and reject as false what Jesus says? or to interpret away what Jesus says by the alleged silence of Paul? And is the statement true that in all the Epistles the doctrine is not found? Is Hell a Place or a Condition? A question that is often thrust into the discussion is this: “Is hell a place or a condition?” It is easy to become too specific and too dogmatic about matters concerning which we have no direct knowledge, and concerning which the Scripture is compelled to use much figurative language because matters far beyond our present knowledge are being described. But when it is insisted that hell is not a place but only a condition, this carries an implied denial of the survival of personality. In fact when those who hold that eternal punishment is only such in its effect and not in its infliction, that hell is not a place but a condition, that the fate of the wicked is simply annihilation, this is a flat denial of the immortality of the soul. All such people can maintain is that the soul is immortal — that there is only conditional immortality. The immortality of the soul has been from the beginning one of the fundamental tenets of Christianity. Is this now to be discarded? The proposition is urged: If hell is a place, where is it located? This, of course, is none of our business. This is God’s domain.

J. W. McGarvey delighted to quiz some new student about the location of heaven. The student would usually point upward and perhaps defend his location by the ascension of Christ or some such reference. Then McGarvey would gradually get the student to admit that if they both were at the moment in China and the same question and answer given, he would be pointing in exactly the opposite direction for the location of heaven. Then McGarvey would close the discussion by pointing out that God rules the universe and God will provide the place and the fulfillment of His promises in His own wisdom. It is not for us to be disturbed about such matters. The argument of the annihilationists is that since God is omnipresent, there could not be any place in the universe where a wicked person could be absolutely separated from His presence. This is manifestly

absurd. The power and presence of God is able to exert itself in the eternal punishment of the wicked as well as in the blessedness of the righteous.

“ Hades” and “Hell” As we open the New Testament to assemble the pertinent passages on the subject of hell, we are immediately met with the striking differences in translation in the Authorized and the American Standard Versions. Many passages which contain the word “hell” in the Authorized are found with the word translated “Hades” in the American Standard Version. “Hades” was coined by changing the Greek letters of the word over into English letters — transliteration instead of translation. This served the double purpose of enabling the translators both to discriminate between the Greek words Gehenna (“hell”) and Hades and also to allow the freedom in rendering the word “Hades” which its two meanings require. Hades (the Hebrew equivalent is Sheol) means (1) the grave or place of the departed regardless of whether good or bad, blessed or doomed; (2) the intermediate place of punishment where the wicked dead endure punishment such as Jesus described in the case of the rich man (Luke 16:22.). A good example of the use of the word with the former meaning is in Acts 2:27 : “Because thou wilt not leave my soul unto Hades, Neither wilt thou give thy Holy One to see corruption.” The parallelism of Hebrew poetry shows clearly that Hades is used here to mean the grave, and the declaration of Jesus on the cross, “Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise,” confirms the fact that Jesus was in that part of Hades which is the immediate place of blessedness for the righteous. The statement “And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:14) indicates the temporary character of this section of Hades where the wicked endure punishment. This place is called Tartarus in 2 Peter 2:4, where this word is used in the verb form. The a.s.v. translates: “For if God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell,” but offers the marginal note: Greek, “Tartarus.” The proposition as to whether Paradise is still in existence and will be the abode of the righteous until the judgment day or ceased to exist at the time of the ascension of Jesus, when he led the righteous dead to heaven with Him, has been a moot question among Bible students for many generations. A further interesting illustration of the change from the translation “hell” to “Hades” is in Matthew 16:18 : “and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” The American Standard Version thus transliterated the word exactly and the passage is variously interpreted with the two meanings of Hades (the grave shall not hold Jesus and prevent the founding of the church; or the forces of Satan, typified by Tartarus or that section of Hades where the wicked are, shall not overcome the church).

Figurative or Literal Fire? The casual reader of the two versions might get the conception that hell has been left out of the American Standard Version, but a careful study will show the close discrimination of the revisers only makes more clear and impressive the declarations concerning hell. Thirteen times the word “hell” is found in the New Testament — twelve of these which translate the word Gehenna, and the passage cited above where it translates the verb “to cast into Tartarus.” “Gehenna” is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew “Valley of Hinnom” — the deep, dark crevice in the mountain just south of the city of Jerusalem where the Canaanites had offered human sacrifice, burning their own children alive on the heated brazen image of Moloch. The Israelites had made this ravine the crematory garbage dump of the city where the refuse was kept burning. This is so plainly a figure of speech when Jesus speaks of “Gehenna” or “hell” that we are immediately confronted with the problem of just how much literal or how much figurative content is to be given to the interpretation. There always has been difference of opinion as to whether “the

lake of fire" and "the furnace of fire" is to be taken literally, but the conclusion is not to be avoided that the declarations of Jesus must either be taken literally as meaning fire or be taken figuratively to mean suffering a good deal worse than burning by fire, which is the worst physical suffering we know. There is no escape from the conclusion that Jesus is a deceiver, if He chose such dreadful language in which to reveal the eternal punishment of the wicked, when that language really has no significance. The proposition as to whether the fire is literal or figurative is an entirely different thing from the denial of the fact of hell and of eternal punishment. Because there are only these thirteen times that the word "hell" is used does not mean that the evidence is slight. One declaration from the lips of Jesus is all-sufficient for anyone who accepts Him as the Son of God. To number the times the word "hell" occurs in the New Testament does not at all exhaust the weight of evidence on this question. The assertion that Paul does not present the doctrine of eternal punishment is absolutely false; it will not bear the slightest investigation. Both Peter and John present the teaching, and the book of Revelation is very specific on the subject. The Pertinent Passages The first declarations on the subject from Jesus are found in the Sermon on the Mount — the very sermon which the modernists claim to exalt as the basis for religion and morals. But they start to pick it to pieces as soon as its teaching is presented! "And whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire" (Matthew 5:22). "And if thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell" (Matthew 5:29). A similar statement follows in Matthew 5:30. "And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). "It is good for thee to enter into life maimed or halt, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into the eternal fire" (Matthew 18:8); "into the hell of fire" (Matthew 18:9). The similar passages in Mark 9:43, Mark 9:45, Mark 9:47 and Luke 12:5 are particularly interesting because of the language which Mark quotes from Jesus: "It is good for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:47, Mark 9:48). The passages in Matthew 23:15, Matthew 23:33 and James 3:6 do not add any further descriptive phrases to the passages cited above. Of much more importance are passages in which the word "hell" is not used, but the doctrine of the eternal punishment of the wicked is clearly taught. "But the sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:12). "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:41, Matthew 13:42; cf. also Matthew 22:13). "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels….And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life" (Matthew 25:41, Matthew 25:46). "And the rich man also died, and was buried. And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame….for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment" (Luke 16:22-24, Luke 16:28). "These are they who are hidden rocks in your love-feasts when they feast with you, shepherds that without fear feed themselves...wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved for ever" (Jude 1:12, Jude 1:13). "If

any man worshippeth the beast and his image, and receiveth a mark on his forehead, or upon his hand, he also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is prepared unmixed in the cup of his anger; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, they that worship the beast and his image, and who so receiveth the mark of his name" (Revelation 14:9-11). "They two were cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone" (Revelation 19:20). "And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:14, Revelation 20:15). "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Revelation 20:10). "But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

Arguments of the Annihilationists

Such a number of explicit declarations of the eternal punishment of the wicked should be calculated to convince anyone who honors Jesus as the Son of God and who believes the Bible to be the Word of God. Of course, the radicals greet these statements with a loud guffaw. Their very unbelief, which is pointedly condemned by Jesus and the New Testament writers, causes them to turn in a fury upon these predictions of eternal torment. The antics of the so-called conservative annihilationists in the face of this evidence are something wonderful to behold. They try to persuade themselves that they are still believers even while denying this fundamental teaching of Christ. They argue that the only passage where eternal torment is explicitly declared is in Revelation 20:10, "They shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever," and they argue that the only ones declared to be punished thus are the devil, the beast, and the false prophet. Such a claim is an absolute contradiction of the passages quoted above, where it is continually affirmed that those who make common cause with the devil in this world shall share his fate in eternity. This from the lips of Jesus in Matthew 25:41. The annihilationists attempt to meet this by saying that the wicked are cast into hell with the devil, but that they are immediately annihilated, whereas the devil suffers on through eternity. This is a curious piece of imagination which contradicts many of the passages quoted above. Read again the passage from Revelation 14:9-11 where it is declared in the most explicit language possible that those who serve the devil are to be "tormented with fire and brimstone...; and the smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day and night." The language has such figurative coloring that we need to beware of dogmatic declarations as to the exact nature of the punishment, but the fundamental fact of eternal punishment of the wicked is so clearly taught that it is hard to see how anybody could possibly persuade himself he can deny this doctrine and yet be a believer. "Their torment" goes on for ever and ever. The annihilationists cannot even find an exit from their dilemma by affirming that the smoke of their torment goes up for ever and ever from the ashes which once were the wicked, for the very next words declare: "they have no rest day and night." "They" means they are still in existence; they have not been annihilated; they still can experience and realize no rest.

Case of the Rich Man and Lazarus The case of the rich man and Lazarus is one of the clearest passages, even though the punishment the rich man suffered was in Hades and only a beginning

of the final punishment in hell. The annihilationists try to meet this by saying: “A parable!” Just as they try to say concerning the quotations just analyzed: “The book of Revelation!” Does the book of Revelation teach falsehood instead of truth because it has much figurative language? Did Jesus not teach the actual truth when He used parables to make clear His meaning? Who says this is a parable? Jesus does not. In no parable recorded do we have the name of a person given as the name of Lazarus is given in this discussion of the fate of the rich man and Lazarus. If the wicked are not punished in eternity then Jesus was guilty of the most pernicious deceit in so representing the fate of the rich man. Here enters a twisted, perverted argument by the annihilationists who say this was Hades and not hell, and the wicked who die before the final judgment suffer such punishment, but the wicked alive at the second coming of Christ are immediately annihilated in hell along with the wicked who have been suffering in Hades. And they talk of justice and humane arrangements in this new program they arrange for the Lord on the judgment day! A person then is to be punished after death if he happens to have been born early in the history of the race, but not so if he entered life late in the existence of the world! And good Christian people to the right and left are being deceived by silly propaganda like this! This supposition of the annihilationists turns upside down the declaration of Jesus: “It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee” (Matthew 11:24). This certainly indicates degrees of punishment in hell, but the reason that the fate of Capernaum is to be worse even than that of Sodom is not on the caprice of time of birth, but on the justice of judging each man according to his opportunities. Much will be required of him to whom much has been given; great will be the punishment of those who have scorned the greatest of God’s gifts. A Decisive Declaration of Jesus

One of the most powerful declarations of Jesus closes the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew: “And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life.” He had just declared in Matthew 25:41 that the wicked were to be cast “into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels.” Again the cry, “Parable!” is raised, but Jesus does not say that it is a parable. And if the reality of eternal punishment and its eternal character is to be denied, then the reality and the eternality of life in heaven must be denied. The two are coupled together and exactly the same Greek word is used to describe the unending character of life for the blessed as is used for the punishment of the wicked. Objection is made that in this picture of the judgment Jesus does not outline the plan of salvation, but it is quite plain that Jesus could not have declared at that time the full gospel of redemption through His death and resurrection. It would not have been understood. Moreover, the fact is that Jesus represents Himself as the Judge of the universe in this passage and that the righteous and wicked are judged upon the fundamental basis of their attitude toward Him (service to one of the least has been service to Him and implies the gospel of redemption by Jesus). Some have even tried to suggest that this passage does not represent the end of the world and the judgment day, but some preceding judgment upon “nations.” This is most absurd, for not nations but individuals are blamed or praised, punished or rewarded in the scene. It is also a flat contradiction of the opening verses: “But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all the nations: and he shall separate them one from another” (Matthew 25:31, Matthew 25:32). We do not read of two comings of Christ at the end of time, but one great coming on the clouds of heaven, even as He ascended, and then the judgment of all the world.

Meaning of “Kolasis” The only other resort to escape from the plain teaching of the above passage is to operate on the Greek word translated “punishment” and try to show that kolasin means not punishment but death — annihilation — and that it is eternal in its effect, therefore, that hell is a condition and not a place, and that punishment is eternal in its effect, but not its infliction. Unfortunately for this argument the Greek verb koladzo is the word constantly employed by classical Greek writers like Xenophon for “punish” or “chastise.” The verb means “prune” or “cut off” in some passages, but it is not the word used of putting persons to death, only of punishing them. Eternal punishment is described as a second death, but it is an entirely different thing from mere physical death as we know it in this world; it is an unending, eternal death of punishment.

Barnes’ Discussion of the Word In commenting on Matthew 25:41, Barnes says: “...The main truth intended to be taught refers not to the manner of punishment but to the certainty and intensity of it….All the truth that Christ intended to convey appears to be expressed in the certainty, intensity, and eternity of future torment.” Commenting on the Greek word kolasin in Matthew 25:46 he remarks: “The original word here translated punishment means torment, or suffering inflicted for crime. The noun is used but in one other place in the New Testament — 1 John 4:18 : ‘Fear hath torment.’ The verb from which the noun is derived is twice used — Acts 4:21; 2 Peter 2:9. In all these places it denotes anguish, suffering, punishment. It does not mean simply a state or condition, but absolute, positive suffering; and if this word does not teach it, no word could express the idea that the wicked would suffer. It has been contended that the sufferings of the wicked will not be eternal or without end….The literal meaning of the word, aionion, expresses absolute eternity — always being ….The word used here is the same in the original as that used to express the eternal life of the righteous.” Barnes is one of the older commentators, but this does not alter the force of his citations of the use of the Greek words. It rather indicates that this attack on the doctrine of hell, which is being exploited as “a new idea” and “a new discovery of truth,” is really only another very ancient heresy which can be traced far back in the history of the church.

Gould’s View

Turning from older commentators to one of the more recent, The International Critical Commentary on Mark by Gould, we find some interesting comments on Mark 9:48 : “Into hell; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” Gould tends strongly to modernism, although there are some remarkably conservative passages in the book. He is not enough of a skeptic to deny the existence of hell or the reality of eternal punishment. He does attempt to argue that Jesus predicts natural rather than imposed penalties, but agrees it is actual, eternal punishment: “Of course, it is the soul that undergoes punishment, and the punishment consists in the forces that prey upon it and destroy it. Ho skolex auton — their worm; the worm, i.e., that preys upon the inhabitants of this dread realm….It is the permanence of the retribution that is expressed in these material figures. This is characteristic of natural penalties as distinguished from imposed penalties. Whippings and imprisonments are subject to limitations of time, but the wounds inflicted on the man himself by his sins, the degradation and deterioration of his being, have no such limitation. The worm that gnaws, and the fire that burns inwardly have no limits. They propagate themselves.” Thus, while Gould attempts to affirm natural rather than positive penalties, he does affirm eternal punishment. His assertion that positive punishment necessarily is limited by time needs examination.

Natural punishments are those arising inherently out of the wicked lives of the lost: privation of eternal happiness; the evil fruits of sin in the very character of the person; propensities to sin and evil passions now in full bloom, but unsatisfied and unsatisfiable; the company of the base and vile. James Barrie has the atheist, Gruickshanks, say, as he incites the elder of the church to revolt against the Little Minister, that it will be better playing cards in hell than singing psalms in heaven, to which Gavin Dishart grimly replies that there will be no card playing in hell. In other words, Dishart was turning into ready repartee the warning of Revelation 14:11 : “the smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day and night.”

Natural and Positive Punishment

Gould’s assertion that positive punishments are limited by time is a pure dogmatism and without support in the Scripture. The imagery which is constantly used in the New Testament certainly suggests positive punishment rather than natural, although the exact nature of what is meant by fire, the furnace of fire, and the lake of fire and brimstone we cannot now discern. There is some suggestion of natural punishment in the case of the rich man enduring the torments of Hades: “Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things: but now here he is comforted, and thou art in anguish….I have five….lest they also come into this place of torment” (Luke 16:25, Luke 16:28). Memory will be retained, as indeed the very survival of personality compels. Since conscience will be rectified, memory and conscience will light the fierce fires that burn within the soul. If this is true of that which is experienced in Hades before the judgment, how much more after God publicly justifies before all His judgment upon all.

Paul’s Teaching Concerning Hell The question as to whether Paul presents the doctrine of eternal punishment should be settled by the citation of such a tremendous declaration as is found in 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9 : “If so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you, and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not Cod, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might.” Instead of praying for the vengeance of God upon those brutal, godless men who persecute and destroy the innocent Christians, Paul calmly says that such judgment is in the hands of God: it is for God to decide if it be a righteous thing to afflict those who afflict the righteous. Then he issues the fearful warning that as surely as there is a God there is to be a judgment day and that men will have to answer for their lives. In that day when Christ shall come, it will be with terrifying power and the wicked “shall suffer punishment, even everlasting destruction.” The annihilationists try to evade this passage by claiming that the Greek word used here for “destruction” (olethros) really means the extinction of life. Upon this point McKnight says: “Everlasting destruction (olethros) properly signifies that extinction of the animal life which is called death; but is nowhere used to denote the extinction of the thinking principle. When, therefore, the wicked are said to be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, it cannot from that expression be certainly inferred that they are to be annihilated; but they are to lose the animal life, which some of them possessed who were alive on the earth at Christ’s coming to judgment, and which the rest regained by the resurrection of their body, in order that they might be judged and punished in the body.”

Meaning of “Olethros” This word olethros is very interesting. Liddell and Scott give the meanings as “ruin, destruction, death.” Notice they do not list “annihilation” as even a possible meaning. They also give its use “as a curse”: such as, “ruin seize thee.” “Loss” is given as one meaning: “by loss of money.” Most important is their rendering with classical citations in proof: “that which causes destruction, a pest, plague, curse.” Now if ever a word was fitted to convey the terrible import which hell contains, this word olethros which Paul uses is that word. The first light which comes upon the meaning of a word comes out of the context in which it is used. Notice the words associated with it in the above passage: “affliction”; “flaming fire”; “vengeance”; “punishment”; “eternal destruction.” The second source of light comes from the use of the word in other passages by the same author or by other authors in the Bible. Paul uses the word in the following passages: “to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Corinthians 5:5). The church at Corinth was commanded to withdraw fellowship publicly from the member guilty of the horrible sin of incest. They were publicly to deliver him over to the devil — not to annihilate the man, but in order that the continual suffering which resulted might lead him to repent, the spirit triumphing over the flesh which had been “destroyed” in the sense of affliction. Discussing the fate of the wicked at the second coming of Jesus, Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5:3 : “When they are saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction [olethros] cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall in no wise escape. The figure which he uses does not suggest annihilation at all, but agony of suffering. Again Paul uses the word in 1 Timothy 6:9 : “But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction [olethros] and perdition.” The verb rendered “drown” is buthizo — “to cause to sink.” The lust for earthly treasures causes men to sink into everlasting punishment. Again the use of the word fits the whole teaching of the New Testament. A further source of help in determining the shades of meaning in a word is the use which is given to the word in classical writers. This may not help, for the New Testament writers sometimes give a word a meaning which is peculiar, or one writer in the New Testament may give a particular shade of meaning to a word. But if the meaning given throughout the New Testament is the same meaning which the classical writers of Greek give, then the evidence is simply overwhelming.

“Oedipus Rex”

One of the most famous writers of Greek drama was Sophocles and perhaps the most famous of his tragedies is Oedipus Rex. So famous is it that the very word Oedipus has worked its way into English. The story is horrible in its details. An ancient king of Greece attempts to defy the gods and reject the warnings of the oracle; he is so confident of his own wisdom and might that he feels he can disregard all else. But he finds himself caught in a terrible maelstrom of events: everything he does turns into dreadful tragedy; every way he turns he finds himself sinking deeper into mire and misery; those associated with him suffer from the contact. A group of famous American scholars recently held one of those fascinating, round-table, impromptu discussions over the radio concerning this drama. It was the “Invitation to Learning” program. The focal point of their discussion was this: Why did not Sophocles have Oedipus commit suicide in the fearful denouement of the play? Why did he have Oedipus blind himself instead, putting out his own eyes? A variety of views was uncovered, but general agreement resulted on the main question: Oedipus had been so arrogant, so self-sufficient, so sure he did not need the help of the gods; it

was therefore particularly fitting that as everything collapsed in his little world, he should have put out his own eyes. The scholars all agreed that the punishment and the suffering were much more terrible by having to live on, blind and helpless, in the midst of the moral muck and mire which he had entered, than it would have been to have committed suicide and ended it all. In the light of our discussion of eternal punishment, it is of startling importance to find that Oedipus in his agony cries out, “I am the great olethros (ton megan olethron).” In other words, Oedipus is not saying that he is the great annihilation, but that he is the supreme example of endless suffering. Out of the midst of one of the most famous of all Greek dramas comes powerful evidence as to the meaning which this word carried. It fits perfectly with the use that Paul gives and is in harmony with the entire New Testament teaching.

Meaning of “Apoleia”

Exactly the same conclusion confronts one in the study of the other important Greek word apoleia. Paul speaks of “the son of perdition” (2 Thessalonians 2:3); the beast is “to go into perdition” (Revelation 17:8, Revelation 17:11). The verb from which the noun arises is apollumi and means “to destroy, to bring to nought, to put to death, to lose” ; in the middle and passive it means “to perish, to die, to be lost.” Sufficient for our discussion is the citation of the fact that this is the word which in both verb and noun forms is repeatedly used in Luke 15:1-32 describing the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the lost boy. In none of these cases was the object, the animal, or the person annihilated — they were lost. When the adjective “everlasting” is attached to the word “lost,” then again we come to the doctrine of hell. The Love of God

Certainly no man can find any pleasure in the discussion of such a theme; at least, a Christian cannot. We know that God does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked. He desires so greatly that all should come to repentance that He endured the agony of death itself in the person of His Son, sent to warn and to die to save lost men. And God has given us the most repeated and the most solemn warnings of the terrible fate that awaits those who defy Him. No friend of man is he who muddies the stream of revelation with vain, human speculations. No true humanity can rule the heart of him who, contradicting God’s truth and the horrible facts that await, attempts to assure his fellows that there is no such place as hell and no such thing as everlasting punishment. Love of God and man should lead us to shout from the housetops, as our blessed Master commanded, the warning of the awful fate of those who defy God. As we warn, we have God’s own gracious invitation to plead that men and women lost in the darkness of earth may yet find their way to the heavenly home, whence gleams the beckoning, eternal light of God.

122. Chapter 9 - The End of the Debate

Chapter 9 - The End of the Debate Matthew 22:34-46;Mark 12:28-37;Luke 20:41-47 The Greatest Commandment

Two questions closed the exciting encounter between Jesus and the national leaders: one question came from a Pharisee; the other, from Jesus. The motives of the Pharisee, who asked the question as to which is the greatest commandment in the law, are not clear. Matthew 22:34 indicates that the question was part of the general attack of the enemies of Jesus, but there was an air of fairmindedness and sincerity about this questioner which is most surprising. Since the Jewish rulers had been exposed as hypocrites and their plans to trap Jesus had failed, they were now glad to put forward a man of some integrity who really had a problem he sincerely desired to solve. If the arrangements for him to ask the question had all been made before the exciting events of the day started, the man, as he listened to the marvelous replies of Jesus, may have changed his own attitude during the course of the day's struggle. McGarvey says of him: "Never was a would-be captivator more completely captivated." The question represents a distinct anticlimax in the hostile efforts to overthrow Jesus, but it seems the only thing they can now think of asking. It is not clear what the Pharisees hoped to gain by this move unless it was the vague hope that Jesus might be entangled in some revolutionary statement against the law. They also may have hoped that the statement of the Scripture that God is one might arise so that Jesus' claim to deity might be contradicted. Matthew says that the lawyer was "trying" Jesus. The former efforts had been definite traps; this was more of a testing of the real depth of Jesus' mastery of divine truth and human life. Among the Pharisees there had been some who had dared to speak up in approval of Jesus' devastating reply to the Sadducees: "Then certain of the scribes answering said, Master, thou hast well said" (Luke 20:39). The favorable impact of Jesus' reply to the Sadducees upon this lawyer, who now asks a question, is recorded by Mark: "And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well..." (Mark 12:28). This question had been discussed widely by the Pharisees, and often had received frivolous replies typical of their hair-splitting system of religion. Even though all the law was binding, it was a matter of importance to attempt to analyze and determine which was the most central and significant command. In His denunciation of the Pharisees which followed (Matthew 23:1-39), Jesus condemned them for keeping the minute regulations of the law and neglecting the weightier commands. Jesus had discussed the question of the greatest commandment in the law on a former occasion (Luke 10:25-37) in a different setting. How frequently He may have discussed it in different sections of the country, or whether the lawyer's answer (in Luke 10:26, Luke 10:27) arose from his own study or from having heard of Jesus' teaching on the subject, we cannot tell. The Jewish scholars had perceived the magnificence and importance of the first of the passages (Deuteronomy 6:4-9), and the Pharisees had selected it as one of four passages which they wore on their phylacteries. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord" was the central proposition of the Old Testament as distinguished from the pagan religions of the world which were polytheistic. The oneness of God, His eternal and unchangeable

character, is the basis of all contact with Him, all progress in life, and all assurance for the future. The Greeks and Romans represented Jupiter and Juno (Zeus and Hera) at war with one another and Venus, Minerva, Apollo, and the other mythical gods as joining in the continued conflict to make the confusion more confounded. Chadwick says of the principle of God's unity: "It was the parent of the fruitful doctrine of the unity of nature which underlies all the scientific victories of the modern world." But above the invention of mechanical devices, it is the broad basis for the universality and the eternality of the Christian gospel which offers redemption from the one God to all men. Paul declares: "Is God the God of Jews only? is he not the God of the Gentiles also? Yea, of the Gentiles also: if so be that God is one" (Romans 3:29, Romans 3:30). The command to love God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength, introduces terms which are not mutually exclusive, but overlap. The "heart" is used in the Scripture to mean the whole intellectual and spiritual faculties — the understanding, the emotions, and the will. The "soul" is differentiated by some scholars from spirit : the soul is held to be the physical life, and the spirit, the divine or eternal element. But both Greek words used in the Scripture (pneuma and psyche) are defined in the standard lexicons as meaning both soul and spirit, and the two terms are generally synonymous in the Scripture. Passages such as Matthew 10:28 give the most profound contrast between soul and body. But Matthew 10:39 and Mark 10:45 show a context where psyche must be rendered "life" rather than "soul." In Matthew 16:25, Mark 8:35, and Luke 9:24 it must be rendered "life." But the very next verses in Matthew and in Mark find psyche translated "soul" in the a.v. While the a.s.v. has "life" in these verses, it is obvious that "life" is used with the eternal content inherent in the word. When discussing our love for God, both the versions render "with all thy soul" (Matthew 22:37 : Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27). Pneuma can mean "wind," "breath," or "spirit," but of the 285 times it appears in the New Testament, it is only translated "wind" once (John 3:8 — both a.v. and a.s.v.). Psyche can mean the "breath of life," "life," or "soul." Hebrews 4:12 is usually cited as a place where discrimination is made between "soul" and "spirit," but the passage may mean the dividing asunder which the Holy Spirit does is between the spiritual nature (soul and spirit) and the physical body (joints and marrow). The emphatic overlapping of terms in Matthew 22:37 and Mark 11:30 — "heart," "soul," "mind," and "strength," — fits completely the mysterious, inextricable, vital elements in human personality. "Mind" is not mentioned in the Old Testament passage. Its introduction here by Jesus emphasizes the intellectual faculties and the necessity for true and deep convictions. "Strength" joins together the might of heart, soul, and mind in the practical task of living and dying for the Lord. "Strength" emphasizes the function of the will as well as the actual achievements of the individual.

It is not hard to see why this is the first and greatest commandment: because of the pre-eminence of God Himself. He is the source of all goodness and virtue — of life itself. Love is the highest experience of man and the controlling impulse of life. The love of God for man is the noblest thing we know; the love of man for God, the noblest experience we attain. It is the foundation of all that is best in life. Love does not exhaust itself in thinking or feeling, but controls the conduct. Since the commandment emphasizes the whole realm of man's life as controlled by God and devoted to Him, nothing could come before this.

While we may wonder how the lawyer of Luke 10:1-42 came to associate Leviticus 19:18 with Deuteronomy 6:4-9, the very life as well as the teaching of Jesus perfectly combines and illumines these two fundamental commands. Religion, which comes before morals since morals rise out of

our knowledge of God and His righteousness, cannot be separated from morals. Morals without true religion is as barren as religion without true morals is base. The love of God is the perfect example, the source, and the directing power of our love for our fellowmen. Every man is expected to love himself, but he should love his neighbor as himself. The uniqueness of the teaching of Jesus was sensed even by His enemies: the meaning He gave to these two commands, especially the interpretation of the word “neighbor,” and the emphasis He placed upon them in saying that all the law hung upon these two, as a cloak hanging from a hook. All the law hangs from these two commandments, for the two cover the whole realm of religion and morals, the relation of man to God and of man to man. Everything else in the law can be arranged under these two headings. They all take their origin from these two basic principles. The man’s keen discernment and sincere desire to know the truth, which overcame any baser ideas or motives, enabled him to realize the magnificent depth of Jesus’ reply and to voice a noble reply as he repeated the commands and affirmed that the sacrifices in the temple were secondary to the actual, living devotion of the soul to God and one’s loving service to his fellow men. When we reflect upon the utter fury of the onslaught which was being made upon Jesus, the conviction and courage of this Pharisee in commending Jesus publicly for His reply become the more remarkable. How like the infinite mercy of God is the calm, gentle, forgiving response of Jesus: “Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.” The Final Question The Master now closed decisively the period of controversy by asking the most important question which could be asked then or ever. The questions they had asked had been significant; here was one that capped the climax. It not only constituted a direct attack on the position of His enemies, pressing the advantage now that they had failed in their attacks, so that the multitudes might see clearly how false and futile was their leadership, but it was also a further effort to save the Jewish leaders themselves. It sought to make them perceive the divine character of the predicted Christ and understand the deity of Jesus before they rushed on to destroy Him. He had just emphasized the oneness of God; He now sets forth the Father and Son as sharing the throne of heaven, and proves from the Old Testament that there is no contradiction between the oneness of God and the deity of His Son. The question “What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he?” has been the text of countless sermons on the deity of Christ. The use of the text has often been criticized as bad homiletics since the answer to the question was, “The Son of David,” whereas the answer of the sermon is, “The Son of God.” But the criticism is hardly well-founded, for the real heart of the question and the full answer was to prove to the Pharisees that David himself had predicted the Messiah would be more than his son — his Lord.

Since the Old Testament had made it clear by so many prophecies that the Messiah should be born of the line of David (2 Samuel 7:8-29; Isaiah 9:5-7; Isaiah 11:1-10; Jeremiah 23:5-8; Micah 5:2), the Pharisees were able to answer this question as readily as they had years before given answer as to the place of the Messiah’s birth (Matthew 2:3-6). In the Psalm of David which Jesus quoted, three words stand out significantly: (1) Lord; (2) Throne; (3) Enemies. The point of His question shows the profound emphasis which underlies the first of these: “The Lord (God) said unto my (David’s) Lord (i.e., the Christ). Now explain the use of this title ‘Lord’ when applied by David to his own descendant. How could the Christ be David’s son and David’s Lord?” The Old Testament is filled with unexplainable predictions, if one denies the deity of Jesus. This picture of the Messiah sharing the throne of God in heaven and bringing all His enemies underneath His feet furnishes a thrilling background to the dark plots of His enemies to crucify Him, and one that was calculated to make them shrink back from their desperate intentions. To all the ages it throws a

divine light upon the person of Christ and the divine character of the love which led Him to the cross. The declaration of the eternal reign of the Messiah by the side of God confirms the use of the title “Lord” and shows that the title was not misapplied by the speaker or misunderstood by Jesus as He quoted it.

“The Great Day of Questions” is usually considered the occasion when so many questions were asked of Jesus by His enemies. But it is worthy of note that Jesus asked more questions of them on this occasion than they did of Him. They were unable or unwilling to answer His questions. The answers they gave proved disastrous. Of the sixteen questions recorded in this debate, the Jewish leaders asked five, and Jesus asked eleven.

It is most interesting to see how the two questions they asked at the start of the debate, are answered over and over in the course of the discussion. Jesus took the position that since they refused to answer His question on the authority of John’s baptism, He was not compelled to answer their questions as to His authority and the One from whom it had been received. This was the impressive manner in which Jesus concentrated attention on their hypocrisy. But as the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen was delivered, Jesus plainly declared that He was the Son. He further showed that they themselves recognized this, deep-down in their hearts, even though they refused to admit it. The husbandmen are represented as saying: “This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance” (Matthew 21:38). Here is His authority and its source from their own lips. When they condemn the wicked husbandmen, they condemn themselves as in rebellion against God and seeking to destroy God’s Son. Their dreadful fate is, according to their own decision, justified. In the final parable of the Wedding Feast, it was the King’s Son to whose wedding they were invited. The implication of His deity is clear. The siege and fall of Jerusalem are depicted as the King sends armies to burn the city of the murderers. The final question of Jesus faces point-blank their original challenge. What authority? From whom? Is the Messiah declared in the Old Testament to be a supernatural Being? Does the Old Testament affirm that the Christ is to be the Son of God? Is He called “Lord”? Jesus presses them with questions which they refuse to answer. It may seem surprising that Jesus did not quote Isaiah 9:6 : “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” In this passage the Messiah is clearly declared to be God. But just as He had surprised the Sadducees with His quotation from the Pentateuch instead of one from the later prophets such as Daniel, so now He turns back to the Psalms of David for this basic assertion of the deity of the Messiah. It is a most appropriate quotation for this hour because it answers their questions as to His authority. David pictures the Messiah: He is addressed by God as “Lord,” and He reigns with God. He also introduces the enemies of the Messiah and predicts their doom.

123. Chapter 10 - Final Appeal to the Nation

Chapter 10 - Final Appeal to the Nation Mark 12:41-44;Luke 21:1-4;John 12:20-50 Calm Amid the Storm The debate of this final day of Jesus' ministry seems to have occupied the morning hours. At noon the people have returned to their homes for the noon meal. It was in this period of relaxation that Jesus sat by the treasury and watched the rich and the poor present their gifts to the Lord. The gift of the poor widow who gave her all drew from Jesus divine approval, even as it offered miraculous proof of His claims in His ability to read her heart and life. He knew that this tiny gift was all she possessed. He did not need to make an investigation of her circumstances in order to declare her financial status. Jesus set forth the principle that it is not how much a person gives to God, but how much he keeps for himself, which furnishes the actual test of generosity and devotion. The sacrificial giving of this godly woman Is a bright light shining amid the darkness of bitter hatred and murderous plots. This gem, which Mark and Luke have recorded for the ages, pictures a scene in the treasury which is the eerie calm in the center of the wild, swirling hurricane. It reminds the reader of the beautiful devotion of Mary of Bethany a few days before when she had anointed Jesus. The brief record concerning this poor widow stirs many questions we cannot answer. Now that she had given her all to God, where and how did she live until her further toil could earn means of living? She was sure God would see to that. Had she listened enthralled to the hours of fiery debate? Was this gift her own personal answer to the grand emphasis she had just heard Jesus place upon loving God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength? The Greeks Seek Jesus From the afternoon of this final day of Jesus' ministry we have the record of His last sermon to the nation. We have heard in America during recent years a number of eminent preachers speak on the theme: "If I Had Only One More Sermon To Preach." What would it contain out of a lifetime of study and effort? How would it be delivered? What effect would it have? Jesus knew and spoke. Like so many of His sermons it arose out of a startling event of the day. Greeks came seeking Jesus with that immortal request: "We would see Jesus." Jesus could be seen by all at this very time as He taught in the temple. Evidently they desired a personal meeting with the Master. Their careful and almost timid approach to one of the disciples who had a Greek name, Philip, and his consultation with another disciple who also had a Greek name, Andrew, suggest how extraordinary the request was. They might come into the Court of the Gentiles where undoubtedly Jesus was teaching, but might they hope He would talk with them? We are not told specifically of a personal conference with them, but this last sermon Jesus preached bears all the marks of an answer to their appeal and problems.

"The Significance of Life and Death" is the title usually given to this sermon. Could any more searching inquiry be made in one's last sermon? For some reason the request of the Greeks, as it was relayed to Jesus by His two disciples, deeply moved Him. Did their earnest search for the truth at His hands bring out in more poignant contrast the sin against knowledge with which He was surrounded in the temple among God's chosen people? Did their coming from afar like the wise men at His birth bring now the vision of a world so lost in sin and degradation, but about to find redemption in the supreme gift of life? How far these Greeks had come or at what cost, we do

not know. We naturally think of Athens, the great intellectual center, but they might have come from any part of the widely disseminated Greek population of the first century.

God's Answer The immediate, decisive response of Jesus to the appeal was: "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified" (John 12:23). That the unspeakable shame and suffering of His torture and death on the cross should be hailed as the hour of glorification, savors of heaven rather than earth. Jesus explains how this can be that His death is to be the open door to life. The grain of wheat planted in the earth offers illustration. The selfish hoarding of one's life is placed in the scales against the sacrificial surrender of life. Heaven offers the welcome of God. Jesus declares its gates open to all who serve Him. Deeply troubled in soul, even as he has just declared His hour of glorification at hand, Jesus prayed in the midst of His sermon. As in Gethsemane a little later in this week, He considers the fearful prospect before Him. He refuses to pray, "Father, save me from this hour," but rather affirms this is the very mission which has brought Him into the world. Bernard denies the appropriateness and hence the historical merit of the record of such personal meditation and petition in the hearing of the people, but it is in perfect harmony with the entire record of His life. It gives them insight into the tragic hours ahead and brings from heaven a miraculous confirmation of His claims. It reminds one of the touching prayer in the midst of His sermon on "John the Baptist and the Unbelief of the Nation" (Matthew 11:25, Matthew 11:26). It combines infinite humility with sublime self-assertion as Jesus prayed, "Father, glorify thy name." God answered from heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." At the baptism and on the Mount of Transfiguration, He had glorified His name as Father. He answers now to glorify it again. In all that Jesus had said and done, God had glorified His name as Father. In the death and resurrection of Jesus there will be supreme glorification.

Reaction of the Crowd The fact that the startled crowd heard the sound, but did not understand the words that were spoken, suggests the probable reaction of the crowd at the baptism of Jesus. It is parallel to the experience of the men with Saul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:7; Acts 22:9). This entire sermon with its tenderly-intimate revelations, which were yet veiled in meaning, had probably the same puzzling effect on His hearers. Jesus spoke thus in parables frequently during his ministry to stimulate the effort of the zealous to understand and at the same time to rebuff the aggressive worldlings. His hearers show that they understand He is talking about His death. He has spoken to them frequently of His approaching death at the hands of His enemies. He had pictured this very day, in their hearing, the Son as sent by the Owner of the vineyard and slain by the wicked husbandmen. But the people cannot see how such predictions are to be harmonized with a glorious reign of the Messiah. They offer a perplexed protest: "We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?" (John 12:34). Here is the clearest evidence in the New Testament on the vexed problem as to whether the Jews of the first century had come to understand enough of the Messianic predictions of the Old Testament to see that the Messiah was to be a supernatural Being. They had now received three years of instruction from Jesus on the subject. They show by their citation that they have been searching in the Old Testament for light on this subject. Isaiah 9:7 would have been a suitable passage with which to substantiate their assertion: "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." Only God abides for ever. Were they now

fumbling for the sublime truth that the Christ is indeed God-in-the-flesh? They had just heard Jesus give powerful demonstration from the Old Testament that David had been inspired of God to declare that the Messiah would be “Lord.” Are they now not trying to fit together this assertion of deity which His enemies had not been able to contradict, with His present resignation to death at their hands? Can Jesus really be the Christ? They have joyously proclaimed Him as the long-promised King at the triumphal entry, but if He is not going to use His miraculous power to destroy His enemies, and continues to talk in such a meek manner of surrendering to them to be slain, what then? Who is this Son of man? What sort of a Christ is this? The answer of Jesus is a characteristic enigma. He urges them to believe. His final words are: “While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be children of light.”

124. Chapter 11 - The Destruction of Jerusalem

Chapter 11 - The Destruction of Jerusalem Matthew 24:1-28,Matthew 24:32-35;Mark 13:1-23,Mark 13:28-31;Luke 21:5-24,Luke 21:29-33 The Temple A generation which has witnessed the destruction of so many majestic buildings and so much of the material heritage of the civilized world, should not find it difficult to share the meditations of the apostles as they looked again upon the indescribable beauty of the temple at the close of the final day of Jesus' public ministry. "And Jesus went out from the temple, and was going on his way; and his disciples came to him to show him the buildings of the temple" (Matthew 24:1); "One of his disciples saith unto him, Teacher, behold, what manner of stones and what manner of buildings!" (Mark 13:1); "As some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and offerings" (Luke 21:5). The apostles had already been warned of the impending destruction of Jerusalem: it was to come as the judgment of God upon the nation for its rebellion and rejection of His final Messenger. Amid the shock of the first desperate clash between Jesus and the wicked rulers of the nation, as He had driven the traders out of the temple in the opening days of His ministry, they had heard that solemn prediction: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). Since they had not understood at the time that Jesus was speaking concerning His own death at the hands of the Jews, it was inevitable that they should have been influenced in their thinking by the reply of the Jewish leaders who thought Jesus spoke of the destruction of the temple structure. In fact, the manner in which Jesus had phrased his prediction seems definitely to have been calculated to prepare the way for an association of the fact of His death with the destruction of the temple.

Love of the Temple As Jesus prepared to leave Galilee on this final journey to Jerusalem (Luke 11:50; Luke 13:35) and, again, in the midst of the excitement of the triumphal entry (Luke 19:41-44), they had been deeply moved by His laments over the terrible fate of the unbelieving city which had rejected God's supreme Messenger and was about to be rejected of God. And now in the closing hours of this final appeal of Jesus to the nation, they had just listened to the blistering denunciations which Jesus had delivered against the scribes and Pharisees, and had heard Him repeat His lament over the fate of the city (Matthew 23:29-39). Thus, when they called His attention to the immense stones and the beauty of adornment, there was much more in the comment of the apostles to Jesus than admiration and awe at grandeur of great buildings and exquisite architecture. Weighed down with sorrow over the fearful predictions of His imminent death, they likewise were appalled at the dark background of the destruction of the holy city and the nation. Seeking further light upon this whole dreadful theme, they tactfully called His attention to the solidity and beauty of the temple buildings. There seems to be a wistful color of sadness in their tribute to the noble structure which they had known and loved from their youth. The Greatest Loss

It may not have occurred to them at the time of the earlier predictions that Jesus had not devoted His expressions of regret to the subject of the wanton destruction of magnificent buildings and vast waste of material resources and years of skilled labor. He had spoken with breaking heart of lost souls; He had grieved over suffering too terrible to be related. In His tender words is heard

especially the cry of helpless, little children caught in the vortex of man's wickedness (Luke 19:44; Luke 23:28, Luke 23:29). It is hard for man to realize that there is no real profit in gaining the whole world of material things; if he loses his soul in the process. He is continually tempted to stand in awe of vast buildings and piled up treasures which many generations have accumulated, and fail in his estimate of the incalculable worth of one human soul. The Church and the Temple

It was not a simple process, at first, for the Jerusalem church to gain a clear enough understanding of the gospel to view the temple in proper perspective. Here was one of the ways in which the Holy Spirit was leading the apostles and the inspired messengers into all truth. With his own life-blood, Stephen wrote indelibly upon the heart of the church the passing of the temple, and the all-sufficiency of Christ who makes holy with His presence even the assembly of two or three in His name. However garbled the testimony of the embittered Jews against Stephen may have been, it is evident that the Holy Spirit was thrusting Stephen forward into the forefront of the battle to make plain to all that the law had passed and the temple was no longer sacred: "This man ceaseth not to speak words against this holy place, and the law: for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered unto us" (Acts 6:13, Acts 6:14). In the moment of Jesus' death, the veil of the temple had been rent in twain leaving the holy of holies exposed, barren, deserted, but it was hard for friend or foe to seize the significance of this startling miracle. One might write over the masterful sermon of Stephen, broken and interrupted at the very critical point of introduction of the facts of the gospel and its commands and promises, the cryptic prediction of Jesus to the Samaritan woman: "Neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem ...[but in any place in all the world]...[if] in spirit and in truth" (John 4:21-24). With amazing skill that dumbfounded his hearers Stephen surveyed the history of Israel to show that the spot on which Moses had stood before God in the wilderness as the bush burned and was not consumed, was also holy, and that God really does not dwell in houses made with hands. The Prediction The apostles had much to learn as they pointed to the temple buildings and spoke to Jesus in praise and admiration of the sacred structure. The answer of Jesus was blunt and unmistakably clear: "See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Matthew 24:2). Shocked and thrilled by the awesome words of Jesus, the disciples could hardly wait until they had reached the privacy of their meeting place on the Mount of Olives, which was evidently the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus was wont to go with his disciples, before asking Him anxiously for further information as to the portentous events ahead. The Great Buildings

It may well be true that the disciples pointed to "the walls and fortifications surrounding the outer court and constituting the defenses of the temple," since Jesus had already "gone out from the temple," and since these contained the most massive stones that would remind one of "the everlasting hills" from which they had been quarried. Josephus describes great stones in the temple buildings that were 25 cubits long, 12 cubits wide, and 5 cubits high. Ferguson's estimates of the temple itself are that it was 100 cubits by 60; that the inner enclosure was 180 cubits by 240; the outer, 400 cubits square. In the magnificent porticos and cloisters about the temple were great monoliths of marble 40 feet high. Even though outside the temple area, Jesus and His disciples may have been looking also at the temple itself with all its beautiful adornments, for Luke reports the comments of the disciples upon "how it was adorned with goodly stones and offerings." 2 Macccabees 3:2-7 tells of rich gifts presented by princes or men of wealth to adorn the temple.

This had been the inferior structure erected by Zerubbabel and his helpers. Herod the Great was a great builder, and the greatest of his achievements in this field was the temple which he constructed. The Jews had been loath to permit him to tear down the temple, fearing his promise to replace it with a structure rivaling the grandeur of the temple of Solomon itself would not be kept. Herod began the work of rebuilding the temple in the eighteenth year of his reign, 19 b.c. The main edifice was built by priests in a year and a half, and the cloisters finished in eight years; the work on the labyrinth of outside courts and buildings continued until the reign of Albinus as governor of Palestine in a.d. 62-64. Typical of the lavish adornments of the temple structure was the great golden vine that was placed by Herod over the entrance to the temple, a vine that had golden bunches of grapes as tall as a man (Jos. Antiq. 15.11.3). The Jews, reflecting the assurance with which they viewed the building and its future, had said to Jesus on the occasion of the first cleansing of the temple: “Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou raise it up in three days?” (John 2:20). The Two Questions

Much of the confusion in interpreting the predictions of Jesus recorded in Matthew 24:1-51 and the parallel passages arises from the failure to see that the disciples asked and Jesus answered two questions: one, concerning the fall of Jerusalem; the other, concerning His second coming. “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (Matthew 24:3). The manner in which these questions were asked shows that the disciples asked two questions, not three; they related together the second coming and the end of the world; hence, this constituted one question. It is also evident that the disciples were so profoundly impressed by the prediction of the utter destruction of Jerusalem that they immediately began to wonder if this event was related in time to the second coming. They wanted to know when the destruction of Jerusalem would occur and how they would be able to discern the approach of the second coming and the end of the world. This does not prove that they thought this would all occur in their lifetime; much less does it show that they so thought after receiving further instruction and after the guidance of the Holy Spirit directed them at Pentecost and following. The disciples were struggling to free themselves from the materialistic ideas of the kingdom which prevailed among so many and to follow Jesus’ revelation of His spiritual program. At the ascension they were still asking: “Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6), but this does not reveal the balance of the material and the spiritual in their conception. They certainly did not by this question relate the establishment of the kingdom to the second coming and the end of the world, though they had to be rebuked again for undertaking to know beforehand the time of the fulfillment of God’s plans.

Approaching Disaster In answering the first of the two questions, Jesus began by predicting the time of terror and disaster that would precede it. It would be important for the Christians to discern the approach of the annihilation of the Jewish nation. In the light of the history of the church and the vast amount of completely contradictory teaching which has been propagated concerning this entire field, it is most impressive that Jesus should have begun this discourse with a strong warning against the false leaders who would claim to he the Christ, and the false teachers who would claim to be able to declare the presence of Christ.

False Christs

First among the signs of the approaching doom of the city of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans was to be the appearance of false Christs. We can understand how naturally mountebanks witnessing the amazing sweep of Christianity over the Roman world would want to try their hand at such false pretensions. Jewish political leaders, disappointed that Jesus had insisted upon a spiritual ministry and had permitted His enemies to slay Him, and seeking desperately for relief from the increasingly cruel oppression of a Roman government rapidly growing more corrupt, attempted to use the name of Christ and delude the multitudes: “For many shall come in my name, saying, I am the Christ; and shall lead many astray” (Matthew 24:5). The fact that we do not have any historical records that give any detailed account concerning the rise of false Christs in the period preceding the fall of Jerusalem proves nothing but the fragmentary character of extant records. The rise of Bar Cochebas (Son of the Star — see how he attempted to use the star of Bethlehem in the messianic title he chose) which occurred in a.d. 132-4, when the final, despairing effort of the Jews to regain Jerusalem resulted in their annihilation, is an extreme illustration of what was common in this whole period. Theudas (Acts 5:36), Simon Magus (Acts 8:9), The Egyptian (Acts 21:38), are examples of this type of false leadership.

Wars The second sign which Jesus declared would help the Christians to foresee the approaching destruction of Jerusalem and escape being caught in the holocaust is: “Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars….Nation shall rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and earthquakes in divers places” (Matthew 24:6, Matthew 24:7.) The historical writings of Josephus give abundant records of such calamities. In the decade immediately preceding the fall of Jerusalem disorders and violence of every kind increased like a whirlwind in Palestine. During this whole period leading to the final disaster there were three definite threats of wars from Roman emperors, three uprisings of Gentiles against the Jews, a number of famines and at least one pestilence in Rome which caused the death of 30,000 people. The Roman historians, Tacitus and Seutonius, give corroborative details.

It is a common mistake in the interpretation of this chapter to overlook the fact that Jesus is answering the first question in the early part of this discourse, and to attempt the application of this prediction of “wars and rumors of wars” to recent world conflicts which are supposed to give the key for determining the date of the second coming and the end of the world. But it is clear that Jesus is giving signs by which they can anticipate the fall of Jerusalem, for He explicitly declares: “Then let them that are in Judaea flee unto the mountains: let him that is on the housetop not go down to take out the things that are in his house; and let him that is in the field not return back to take his cloak” (Matthew 24:16-18). The Christians are to flee the country and escape the dire calamity that impends as the Romans advance against Jerusalem. The Christians are set for the propagation and defense of the gospel and for the salvation of lost souls; they must keep themselves dedicated to this task. It would be absurd, of course, for anyone to imagine he could escape the day of judgment by fleeing to the mountains or by not returning to his house when working in the field. Furthermore, Jesus goes on to describe their flight out of the stricken land as the savage war between Romans and Zealot Jews rages to its final climax: “And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on a sabbath” (Matthew 24:20). Winter with the rainy season, flooded streams out of their banks, ice and snow, would make any travel hazardous, and swift, assured travel exceedingly improbable. The Christians would not be keeping the Sabbath, but the Jews would, and that would make it very difficult to purchase supplies and secure means of swift

travel.

Persecution

Jesus declares that all this war and bloodshed, famine and calamity “is the beginning of travail”: the beginning of the tragic series of events in Palestine which would lead to the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:8). A further sign is added in the terrible persecution which is to be heaped upon the Christians as both Jew and Gentile seek to destroy Christianity. Jesus had clearly predicted such suffering when He had given the solemn commission to the twelve apostles (Matthew 10:1-42), and had instructed them to flee from one city to another in order to preserve and to deliver their message. There is no indication that the apostles experienced any such persecution in their first mission, but toward the close of Jesus’ ministry the warnings are being made sharp and imperative as to what they must expect: “Then shall they deliver you up unto tribulation, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all the nations for my name’s sake” (Matthew 24:9). The Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of Paul and Peter give abundant evidence of the fulfillment of this prediction in the years preceding the fall of Jerusalem.

Apostasy The effect of these terrible persecutions is to be seen in the apostasy of many, the rise of many false prophets, the growth of corruption and iniquity in the world, and the cooling of the ardor of many Christians (Matthew 24:10-12). Since the greater part of the New Testament was written in this very period from a.d. 40-68, and carries the history of the church either in direct form or the indirect pattern of the Epistles, it is a simple matter to see the fulfillment of these predictions during this period. This urgent warning is given: “iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of many shall wax cold.” Jesus adds: “But he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13). This evidently refers to the end of the life of the individual. It cannot mean the end of the city and nation (destruction of Jerusalem), since those who were slain because of their faith in Christ before the destruction of the city could not endure to the end of the city; those who proved faithful to the time of the destruction of the city, but apostatized after that, could not be included in the promise. The End

It is equally clear that “the end” in Matthew 24:14 does refer to the end of the city. The same word should not be interpreted in different ways in the same passage unless the context requires it, but here the context does compel the interpretation of “the end” in Matthew 24:13 as the end of life of the individual, and in Matthew 24:14 as the end of the city. The context following Matthew 24:14, shows plainly the reference in that verse is to the fall of Jerusalem, for it offers the warning to the disciples that they must flee from the city.

World Evangelization

One of the chief specifications by those who claim to be able to predict the time of the second coming is this Matthew 24:14 which is so solidly imbedded in the warnings and predictions of the destruction of Jerusalem: “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come.” But when Paul wrote to the Colossians in a.d. 63, we find him affirming such a world-wide proclamation of the gospel had been fulfilled: “the hope of the gospel which ye heard, which was preached in all creation under heaven; whereof I Paul was made a minister” (Colossians 1:23). Neither the prediction of Jesus nor the affirmation of Paul is to be taken to mean that every single individual had actually heard

the gospel, but that the whole Roman world had had opportunity to hear; it had been broadcast to every nation.

Mark and Luke contain a noteworthy addition in this section of the sermon of Jesus by recording one of the most explicit of all the claims to miraculous inspiration for the apostles and their associates. “Whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye; for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Spirit” (Mark 13:11); “I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to withstand or to gainsay” (Luke 21:15). Matthew had already recorded an earlier, similar prediction by Jesus (Matthew 10:19, Matthew 10:20).

More precise in character than predictions of wars, bloodshed, calamities, persecutions, apostasies, and world-wide proclamation of the gospel, and yet sufficiently veiled in character to rebuff the unbelieving, is the famous prophecy concerning the abomination of desolation: “When therefore ye see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him that readeth understand), then let them that are in Judaea flee unto the mountains” (Matthew 24:15, Matthew 24:16). The parenthetical warning for those who read to give the strictest attention to what is read, in order that they may understand, is seized by radicals as prime evidence of their theory that the Gospel writers copied from one another or from common sources, since the warning is in both Matthew and Mark. But they are assuming that the parenthesis is added by the writer and refers to the Gospel narrative; if it was spoken by Jesus and meant: “Let every person who reads in the book of Daniel the prediction concerning the abomination pay the strictest attention,” then it is simply a factual report of the speech by Matthew and Mark and offers not the slightest aid and comfort to the radicals as they spin out their thin web of “form criticism.”

Abomination of Desolation A study of Daniel 8:13; Daniel 11:31; Daniel 12:11 will show that the abomination of desolation was to be something which was an abomination because it desecrated the temple, and “was an abomination of desolation” because it would leave the city desolate. “And forces shall stand on his part, and they shall profane the sanctuary, even the fortress, and shall take away the continual burnt-offering, and they shall set up the abomination that maketh desolate” (Daniel 11:31); “And from the time that the continual burnt-offering shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days” (Daniel 12:11). Various specific facts or events associated with the approaching siege of Jerusalem are selected by various commentators as being the exact fulfillment of what was meant by the abomination of desolation, but Luke gives the key to the interpretation of the prophecy by showing that Jesus also said: “But when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that her desolation is at hand” (Luke 21:20). The Greek has a present participle “being compassed,” so that the Christians are warned to flee as they see the hostile armies closing in on the city; after the city had been “compassed,” it would have been too late. Their work of evangelization which had been so fruitful in the capital is now to be made impossible by violence; they are to flee to other places with their precious message.

Many Jews fled into the capital for refuge as outlying cities and fortresses were reduced to ruins. But the Christians gave heed to these warnings of Jesus and fled out of Jerusalem into the mountains and the open country, across the Jordan to safety. Eusebius declares: “The people in the church in Jerusalem being commanded to leave and dwell in a city of Peraea called Pella, in

accordance with a certain oracle which was uttered before the war to the approved men there by way of revelation" (H. E. III:5, 3). He evidently is giving a free reference to this prediction of Jesus to the apostles, and records the fact that the Christians all escaped from the city. Josephus seems to refer to a general exodus at the time of the flight of the Christians when he writes: Many of the most eminent of the Jews swam away from the city as from a ship when it was going to sink" (Wars 2:20:1). Since Cestus Gallus started to lay siege to Jerusalem and then retired without any evident reason, it was probably at this juncture that the Christians fled. Plummer remarks that the Christians may have fled to other places also, but the flight to Pella, recorded by Eusebius, illustrates the way the Christians obeyed the warning of Christ. He points out that if this prediction in the Gospel narratives had been invented by Christians after the fall of Jerusalem, its wording would have been made definite instead of general, to fit this historic incident of their escape. Eusebius quotes the prophecy as definite, but the words of Jesus are indefinite. This is very strong evidence of their genuineness. It is also plain that if the Synoptic Gospels had been written after a.d. 70 as the radical scholars claim, then the writers most certainly would have cited the fact that the predictions of Jesus covering the fall of Jerusalem had been fulfilled, as Luke does in regard to the famine predicted by Agabus (Acts 11:28). Gibson says: "Those who deny the divinity of Christ are greatly troubled with this prophecy, so much so that the only way in which they can get rid of its witness to Him is by suggesting that it was really composed after the destruction of Jerusalem, and therefore never spoken by Christ at all. There are difficulties enough of other kinds in the way of such a disposal of the prophecy; but there is one consideration which absolutely forbids it — viz., that any one writing after the event would have avoided all the vagueness of language which gives trouble to expositors. To those who can judge the internal evidence, its obscurity is clear proof that this discourse could not have been produced in the full light of subsequent history, but must have been what it professes to be — a foreshadowing of coming events" (Commentary on Matthew, p. 344).

Destruction of Jerusalem The tragic character of the fall of Jerusalem was described by Jesus in dramatic language: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:21). Although the vast number of soldiers and civilians involved in modern conflicts dwarfs the opposing forces in the final days of the Jewish capital, yet the siege and destruction of Jerusalem remain the type and symbol of all the horrible cruelty of war and the suffering it entails. The fact that the inhabitants were completely engulfed in the disaster does not tell the whole story. It is recorded that 1,100,000 were slain and 97,000 taken captive, forced to fight to the death in the arena, tortured, or sold as slaves. Josephus, who shows many signs of having read various New Testament books with care, says in language which appears to be influenced strongly by this statement of Jesus: "It appears to me that the misfortune of all men from the beginning of the world, if they were compared to those of the Jews, are not so considerable as they were" (Preface to Wars, Sec. 4). Added to the total annihilation of the city, the fact that five wars were going on at once in the city, made it an incredible mad-house. The city was in the hands of four warring factions of the Jews with each quarter fortified and fighting against every other quarter as well as against the Romans on the outside. When the Romans attempted to storm the wall in one quarter, the Jewish factions in the other quarters immediately attacked the Jewish rival faction from the rear, broke into the beleaguered section, burned, pillaged, and murdered, while the Jews of this desperately assailed section fought off the Romans on the outside. Surely, nothing like this has ever been witnessed in military history.

Josephus, who was a prisoner of the Romans during the siege and had the opportunity to witness the entire series of events at close range and the leisure to record his observations and impressions, has left a fascinating account. The final breach of the walls was made at the northeast corner as in the case of every other capture of Jerusalem of which we have record. It was at this point in a.d. 1099, that the famous crusader, Godfrey De Bouillon, using a prefabricated, movable, wooden tower which had been shipped across from Venice, managed to lead his knights in desperate assault over the wall for final conquest of the city from the Saracens. When the Romans finally broke into the city, the temple area, a powerful fortress in itself, held out to the last. The tremendous fortification at the northwest corner of the temple area, which had been erected by Herod the Great and named Antonia, after Mark Antony, was the anchor of the temple defenses. Like a typical Roman general committing suicide in the moment of overwhelming defeat, the Jews themselves set fire to the temple. When the Romans gained entrance to the temple area, Titus rushed into the holy place and viewing the indescribable beauty of the building and its contents, cried out to his soldiers to put out the fire and save the building. But it was too late. Carved into the stones of the triumphal arch of Titus still standing in Rome, may be seen the forms of the Jewish captives carrying the seven branched candlestick, the table of shewbread, and the altar of incense through the streets of Rome in the triumphal procession of the Roman conqueror. But there is nothing to be seen that resembles the ark of the covenant, an object that would be easily identifiable by reason of the cherubim with outstretched wings. The ark had disappeared at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. When the captives returned from Babylon and rebuilt the temple, they made no attempt to replace the ark of the covenant. A simple block of stone marked the place in the holy of holies where it had been. And eventually in their fury the Romans tore the very buildings of the temple down to the foundations and finally plowed over the surface of the area in their contempt. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate.”

125. Chapter 12 - The Second Coming

Chapter 12 - The Second Coming Matthew 24:29-51;Matthew 25:1-46;Mark 13:24-37;Luke 21:25-31,Luke 21:34-36 The Two Questions

One of the most perplexing features of the predictions recorded in Matthew 24:1-51 and the parallel passages is the fact that two questions are being answered, and it is very difficult to determine when the transition is made from the destruction of Jerusalem to the second coming. In this respect, there is a similarity to the Messianic predictions of the Old Testament which do not clearly state that there are to be two comings: the one, to save; the other, to judge. The politically minded Jews seized upon the passages depicting the Christ coming in glory on the clouds of heaven, and passed over the passages which told of His coming humbly to suffer and die for the sins of mankind. The spiritually minded Jews naturally studied with more reverent interest the passages which represented the Christ as a suffering Servant. The prophecies were evidently veiled in this fashion to allow Christ to reveal Himself when He came, and at the same time to stimulate the constant study and interest of the people of God during the intervening centuries.

Earlier Instruction

Gould claims that Jesus could not have talked now with His disciples about His second coming because He had not spoken of it before, and they did not understand about it. He holds their failure to understand about the death and resurrection of Jesus to be incredible if they had known about the second coming. Thus do the radicals who attempt to cut up the Gospel narratives and throw away what interferes with their theories, find themselves continually forced to use multiplied acts of violence to support their original rejection. The disciples had understood so clearly the prediction of Jesus concerning His death made many months before at Caesarea Philippi, that they were horrified and thrown into despair. By the time of the journey to Jerusalem at the resurrection of Lazarus, they were in the desperate mood to agree with Thomas: “Let us also go, that we may die with him.” During these last days they could think of nothing else. The fact that they did not understand the predictions of Jesus concerning His resurrection does not prove that they did not see the glimmer of light offered by His repeated promises to return again in glory. Their blindness toward His declarations about His resurrection would cause them to concentrate feverishly upon the promises of His second coming. It is for this very reason and out of such a background that they excitedly seek information about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and the relation of this event to the second coming. Jesus had continually talked with His disciples about His second coming. One parable after another had been built around the fact that He was to leave and then come again: Luke 19:11 is a good illustration; Matthew 13:40-47; Matthew 16:27; Matthew 20:21 are further examples.

Those Days

It seems clear that Matthew 24:22 marks the beginning of a transition section in the discourse as Jesus turns from the discussion of the first question, as to when Jerusalem shall be destroyed, to

the consideration of the second coming. Matthew 24:21 carries an atmosphere of finality: “For then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be.” The chief difficulty is to determine what is meant by the phrase, “those days,” in the following verses. Those who would interpret “those days” to mean the crisis leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem face three difficulties: (1) The rest of the paragraph is then a repetition of the declarations of appearance of false Christs preceding the destruction of Jerusalem, as in Matthew 24:5, Matthew 24:11; (2) The statement “no flesh would have been saved” must be taken in a limited sense since the continuation of the siege of Jerusalem could hardly have been expected to carry its destructive impact outside of Judaea where both Jews and Christians living in that section of the world might have been swept to general destruction; (3) the relation of “those days” to the second coming by the word “immediately” in Matthew 24:29 compels the understanding of this word in a very general sense, if the period described by “those days” means the crisis leading to the fall of Jerusalem. In fact, this verse is one which radicals leap upon to make their charge that Jesus expected to return immediately or that the apostles expected Him to return in their lifetime and concocted this speech to support their expectation. The Times of the Gentiles The accounts of Mark and Luke give decisive information in the solution of this difficulty. Luke 21:24 reads: “and they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led captive into all the nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” Thus Luke couples with his closing statement of what Jesus said concerning the horrors of the final siege of Jerusalem, the added declaration of Jesus that the fall of the city is to be followed by an indefinite period which is to be distinguished by the fact that the city is to be “trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” It is a most remarkable fact that the city has never been in the hands of the Jews until this day. The fleeting effort of Bar Cochebas to reestablish Jewish dominance ended in the final debacle of a.d. 132-4, and can hardly figure in this estimate. Not even the fiercely fighting forces of Israeli today were able to drive the Arabs, entrenched behind their barbed-wire entanglements, from the old walled city of Jerusalem, and the UN stepped in to make the city an international city, which still fits the description of its being trodden down by the Gentiles and not under Jewish control. If the Jews should manage to secure control of Jerusalem and make it their capital as they declare they will do in defiance of the UN, it would be enough to make one wonder if the times of the Gentiles have been fulfilled. But there is no such military event in prospect at the present time. Luke relates the second coming to this indefinite period which is to follow the fall of Jerusalem.

Mark adds the important item that Jesus used the term “those days” in this part of His address with the explanatory statement that He meant a period following the fall of Jerusalem: “But in those days, after that tribulation” (Mark 13:24). A study of the three accounts makes evident that the writers are giving independent summations of what was evidently a much longer discourse by Jesus. It is most interesting to note that Luke, who gives the very definite description of the period following the fall of Jerusalem as a time when the city will be trodden down of the Gentiles, does not say that “the second coming” will follow “immediately” after the end of this period, while Matthew who uses the term “immediately,” connects it with the altogether indefinite phrase “those days.” Thus the report of neither violates the key statement of Jesus concerning His second coming: “But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only” (Matthew 24:36). The fact that the translators of both the Authorized and American Standard Versions did not end the paragraph at Matthew 24:21, but continued on to

Matthew 24:28, shows that they thought these verses (Matthew 24:22-28) should be read and interpreted with the preceding, rather than the succeeding context, or in a paragraph by themselves. It is clear, however, that we have here a transition in the discourse, for Jesus speaks plainly in Matthew 24:27 of his second coming: “For as the lightning cometh forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west; so shall be the coming of the Son of man.” This immediately forces us to retrace our steps and ask: “Just where did Jesus change over from discussion of the fall of Jerusalem to the answer to their second question as to His second coming?” The term “those days” is so indefinite that it can refer either to the crisis leading up to the fall of Jerusalem or the period following it. If, as both Mark and Luke indicate clearly, it refers to the period between the fall of Jerusalem and the second coming, then all the difficulties in this section are cleared up at once. The prediction of the rise of false Christs is not a repetition of what He has just said in Matthew 24:5 and Matthew 24:11, but is a warning that in the period following the fall of Jerusalem, also, many false Christs will arise. History has shown a continual succession of such false Christs even to our own day. Furthermore, in the light of our present desperate world situation the declaration of Jesus concerning “those days” begins to take on new meaning: “Except those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened” (Matthew 24:22). In the present discussions among scientists about the fearful possibilities of wars with atom and hydrogen bombs, we hear scientists, who are utterly irreligious and who know nothing and care less about the Bible, predicting the total annihilation of the human race is in prospect. Is this what Jesus was talking about: “no flesh would have been saved”? The history of interpretation of prophecy which is yet to be fulfilled is so replete with all sorts of fantastic interpretations which men have devised and have attempted dogmatically to force upon others, it is always well to be cautious in affirming certainty of understanding. It should be remembered, however, that the very obscurity which the inspired records maintain in such predictions is calculated to create a constant attitude of expectancy on our part and a persistent examination of the trend of events in history. This is not to say that one is thus attempting to predict the date of the second coming. If “those days” refers to the period between the fall of Jerusalem and the second coming, then the following conclusions are evident from Matthew 24:22 : (1) We should not be frightened at aught that men can do, for God is still in control of the ultimate destiny of the world and can bring it to an end when He will. His heart is full of love for mankind and He is ever striving for their redemption. (2) The state of the world will grow worse, whether progressively or spasmodically; we have already reached a state where it is generally being discussed as to whether mankind can long survive on this planet. Paul’s predictions of how “evil men shall wax worse and worse” and the visions of the book of Revelation envisage the same sort of state of world affairs as time proceeds. (3) God will see to it that man does not perish from the earth in spite of the worst that wicked men may do; God Himself will bring about the end of man’s stay in this world and will, at that time, call all men to judgment. The central proposition which Christ presents in this section is that no man will be able to foretell when His second coming will be. Many false Christs will arise, but the Christian should not be deluded: the second coming will be as the lightning sweeping across the heavens — visible, instantaneous, universal, unpredictable. The Eagles Gathered The enigmatic declaration in Matthew 24:28 has been the subject of immense speculation: “Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.” In the present paragraphing of the a.v. and a.s.v. , this statement brings to a close the discussion of the fall of Jerusalem, but it is a discussion which has just been changed over to

consideration of the second coming. To which of these, then, should the reader apply this cryptic remark? or does it apply equally to both? It is a curious feature of both translations that the Greek word aetos should be rendered “eagles” instead of “vultures.” It can mean either, but the context plainly shows that it means vultures, soaring, circling, and finally descending upon a dead body which they devour. The theory of the English scholar, Lightfoot, that the golden eagle, mounted on the crest of the banner of Roman legions, was the abomination of desolation, seems to have influenced the a.s.v. translators to retain the word “eagle” here instead of vulture. Some interpreters suggest that the verse refers to the comparison: as the vultures indicate inevitably the presence of a dead body, so the signs Jesus has set forth will enable the Christians to discern the approaching siege of Jerusalem. Others point out that Jesus has just mentioned the second coming in the preceding verse. This final, veiled remark applies equally to the terrible suffering which Jesus has just predicted will precede the fall of Jerusalem and also precede His own return: sin is the carcass which always draws the vultures.

Cosmological Changes

“But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:29, Matthew 24:30). This is the precise point where the reports of Mark and Luke are of so much assistance as they clearly point out that “those days” refers to the indefinite period between the fall of Jerusalem and the second coming. Matthew’s term “immediately” would indicate the instantaneous character of the second coming which has already been affirmed in Matthew 24:27 in comparing it to a bolt of lightning streaking across the sky. The cosmological changes are to be simultaneous with the second coming; they are not signs which precede and will indicate the approach of the event, but are wonderful changes of the face of heaven and earth which will accompany the second coming. The sun and moon will be darkened, and the Son of man will return, all at once. The answer to the second question of the disciples, then, is that there will be signs accompanying the second coming, but none preceding it by which men may predict the time and prepare themselves for a known, assured time. They must be ready at all times, for no man can predict the time. The words of Jesus fit in a wonderful way the nature of the earth and the heavenly bodies, and the suddenness and universality of the second coming: both the sun and the moon will be darkened at once: it is day on part of the earth where the sun is shining, and the moon will be darkened and stars will fall on the part where it is night. It will suddenly become dark on all parts of the earth at once, while the divine brightness of heaven as suddenly shines in the second coming of Christ. If Jesus had predicted the second coming as either in the daytime or the night, it would have contradicted modern scientific knowledge of the world or the universality of the coming. The Sign of the Son of Man

What is “the sign of the Son of man” which shall appear in heaven, but the Son of man Himself as He appears? Certainly no opportunity is to be given to men to change their lives suddenly and prepare for His coming. They must be ready at all times. “The tribes of the earth shall mourn,” and the Christians are to “lift up your heads” in joyous welcome “because your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:28) as all are summoned to the judgment at the second coming. The problem as to how the figurative declarations of the book of Revelation are to be fitted into the predictions of

Jesus is the source of the violent Pre-millennial and Post-millennial discussions. Revelation 20:4-10 declares that the martyred saints shall reign with Christ 1,000 years. The A-millennialists deny that there is to be such a reign and maintain that the language of Revelation is purely figurative. Those who hold to this view are not necessarily radicals, for the famous conservative scholar, Dr. Machen, held this view. The Post-millennialists hold that there is to be a golden age of 1,000 years leading up to the second coming, hence the second coming is after the reign of 1,000 years. But this view seems to collide solidly with the prediction throughout the New Testament of the wickedness, the persecution of Christians, the falling away and indifference of many, which will characterize the world in the time preceding the second coming. It certainly does not sound like a “golden age,” but the golden age idea sounds like the theory of evolution — a theory which is having extremely hard going at the present time. It is truly difficult, today, to find any one who claims the world is of necessity growing better. The Pre-millennialists face the difficulty of supposing two second comings: one to summon the righteous to the reign of a thousand years; the other, to call the wicked to judgment at the end of this reign. They emphasize the next verse of Matthew 24:1-51 which says: “And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matthew 24:31); with this, they emphasize the statements of Matthew 24:40, Matthew 24:41 that the righteous “one” is taken, and the other is left. But to emphasize these elements too strongly is to overlook the entire force of the closing phase of this discourse which covers the entire Chapter 25 and plainly represents both the righteous and the wicked as being summoned to judgment at once. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 is also given strong emphasis as indicating that the righteous are to be taken out of the world for a period of 1,000 years before the final judgment. This is to read considerable into the text, however, and it seems better to be content with the promises of God and allow Him to show forth finally the manner of their fulfillment. John affirms in Revelation that there is to be a reign of a thousand years. God will, in His own good time, demonstrate how this is to be fulfilled with regard to the second coming. Not even the most devout Jews at the time of Christ’s birth in Bethlehem understood many Old Testament predictions concerning the nature of His coming and His kingdom. God so veiled the predictions as to allow Christ to reveal Himself and His program: no man could anticipate and announce beforehand His procedure. This should be a warning to us against presumption in arranging all the details of the reign of a thousand years and the second coming. Frequently those who argue so violently about the millennium seem to have little breath left to tell of the glories of heaven. After all, the reign of a thousand years is only a thousand years; heaven is for ever and ever. A Christian does not have to be a Pre-millennialist or a Post-millennialist or an A-millennialist. He can maintain a pro-millennial view and humbly watch and wait for the second coming of Christ to make known to us the meaning of the veiled predictions. The basic fact in this whole discourse of Jesus on the second coming is that no man will be able to predict the time of His coming and every man should keep himself ready at all times, “for in an hour ye think not the Son of man cometh.” Whatever his particular opinion as to details, he should hold fast to this fundamental proposition which resounds as a refrain through the last 61 verses of this sermon covering two chapters. No Prediction of the Time

Once this fact is accepted, it becomes immediately evident that the declarations of Matthew 24:32-34 refer to the destruction of Jerusalem which can be clearly foreseen, and which will occur within the limits of the generation Jesus addressed. At this point we see the superior translation which the Authorized Version offers both as regards the rendering of Matthew 24:33 and the

beginning of a new paragraph at Matthew 24:36. This translation plainly affirms that Jesus is discussing in Matthew 24:32-34 the destruction of Jerusalem as an event that can be as certainly foretold as one might observe the approach of summer by the budding of the fig trees. It translates: “So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.” The American Standard Version, on the other hand, translates it in such fashion as to contradict the fundamental proposition of the entire sermon: “Even so ye also, when ye see all these things, know ye that he is nigh, even at the doors.” A marginal reading is given suggesting “it” and showing there was a strong disagreement over the translation among the scholars with the majority vote favoring “he.” The Greek text does not carry the subject of the verb; it must be supplied and may be either “he” or “it” so far as the Greek structure is concerned. The thing which caused the majority of the American Standard translators to favor “he” is evidently the fact that in the immediately preceding context Jesus has been discussing the second coming: there must be some sort of order and logic in this discourse.

Outline of the Sermon The following analysis of the chapter is offered to show that a most effective method of arranging a discussion of two points, is to give a discussion of each in turn, and then to offer a summary of each. This principle applied to Matthew 24:1-51 shows how and why Jesus discussed first the one topic, and then, the other.

Matthew 24:1-51 Jesus — “There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”

Disciples — “When shall these things be?” (Destruction of Jerusalem) (Matthew 24:3).

“What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (Matthew 24:3).

(I) Jesus answers the first question and warns them how to escape the destruction of Jerusalem by fleeing to the mountains when they see the signs (Matthew 24:15-21).

Transition section of the discourse, shifting from the first to the second question (Matthew 24:22-28).

(II) Jesus answers the second question and gives the sign of the second coming which is His appearance on the clouds of heaven simultaneous with vast cosmological changes (Matthew 24:29-31).

(1) Summary of answer to Question I — Signs easily recognized — Watch for them — destruction of Jerusalem to be before the end of that generation (Matthew 24:32-35).

(2) Summary of answer to Question II — Impossible to predict the time of the second coming. Be ready at all times (vv. 36-51).

Further discussion of the second coming and practical application of its certainty and uncertainty (Chapter 25). That Day and Hour

Those who claim to be able to predict the time of the second coming would evade the flat declaration of Jesus in Matthew 24:36, by saying that no man knows the day or the hour, but that he can predict the year! The force of the adversative conjunction “but” is very strong in this verse. The preceding verses state that the signs preceding the destruction of Jerusalem will be

identifiable, just as the budding of the fig tree shows the approach of summer, and declare that the fall of Jerusalem will occur within that generation, “but” (on the contrary, so far as the second coming is concerned) “of that day and hour knoweth no one.” No man will be able to foresee and foretell the second coming, for it is not even known to the Son of man, but to God. Proof that the phrase “that day and hour” means “time” is found by comparing Matthew 24:42 with Mark 13:33 : Matthew says: “Ye know not on what day your Lord cometh”; Mark reports: Ye know not when the time is.” A study of the parables with which Jesus illustrates the certainty of His second coming, the uncertainty of the time, and the awful results of being unprepared, in the closing verses of Chapter 24 and all of Chapter 25, will show that the very heart of all these illustrations is found in the fact that men cannot find out the time and get ready at the last minute, but must be ready at all times. If the master of the household could have foreknown when the thief was about to break into the house, he would have given up everything else and prepared to defend his possessions, but he did not know and was robbed. The good steward who was always ready is contrasted with the wicked steward who was found unprepared. Again we see that “day” and “hour” are used in the general sense (Matthew 24:50); as also “even,” “midnight,” “cock-crowing,” or “morning” (Mark 13:35). It is a strange fact that so many Christians instead of occupying themselves with the diligent effort to do the will of Christ, should take the perverse attitude of spending their time trying to figure out and predict the time of His second coming. We do not know why God kept the time of the second coming so secret that the Son, to whom all authority in heaven and on earth was given, did not know this time. But we can see that if Jesus had declared that He knew the time, but would not reveal it, the temptation to read into every statement of Christ some subtle prediction of the time would be compelling. It is plain that Jesus did know that the second coming would not occur until after the end of a period of time following the destruction of Jerusalem and that this destruction would occur in the generation of those living when He made the predictions. It is plain from His parables that there is the continual hint the second coming would be delayed so long that many would give up hope and turn back to the world and many others would scoff at the whole idea. This is a strong feature of many of His parables As we reflect upon this fact, we see the impressive appropriateness of His language in saying He did not know “the day nor the hour.”

Pastor Russell’s Prediction

Pastor Russell, founder of the Jehovah’s Witnesses sect, attracted great interest in his preaching in New York City and in his writings during the years preceding the First World War by predicting that the second coming would occur in the year 1914. When the World War exploded upon the civilized world, Pastor Russell shouted in triumph that he had told everyone that 1914 would be the date and here it was approaching but when 1915 rolled around, he had to find some way of escape from his embarrassing dilemma, so he began to say that Jesus really had come, but no one knew it except himself and his select group of followers. He had made too many specific predictions, however, for this dodge to be effective with anyone familiar with his writings, for he had predicted that the rule of all earthly rulers would cease in 1914, that Christ would come and take over control of all the nations, and similar declarations.

Luke’s Account

Luke has several interesting statements peculiar to his account. In describing the amazing changes in the heavens and the earth that shall accompany the second coming, he mentions:

“And upon the earth distress of nations, in perplexity for the roaring of the sea and the billows; men fainting for fear, and for expectation of the things which are coming on the world” (Luke 21:25, Luke 21:26). This, however, does not prove that these awesome changes are not to be simultaneous with the second coming. He closes his report of the discourse with this statement: “But watch ye at every season, making supplication, that ye may prevail to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (Luke 21:36). There is no indication that the darkening of the sun, moon, stars, and the terrifying storms and roaring of the sea are anything to be escaped in the sense of fleeing to the mountains to escape these cosmological changes. He is rather summing up the whole discussion of the times of trial which shall come upon the earth and cause many to fall away: “But take heed to yourselves, lest haply your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day come on you suddenly as a snare” (Luke 21:34). They would not be able “to stand before the Son of man” at His second coming by means of escaping death at the fall of Jerusalem or any other disasters, but by righteous living and faithful service. Luke closes his warning concerning the fall of Jerusalem in Luke 21:24, summarizes this in Luke 21:29-33, and doses his warning concerning the second coming in Luke 21:28, and his summary in Luke 21:34. The Times of the Gentiles

Luke, who is the clearest in his specification that the second coming is not to occur at the time of the fall of Jerusalem, but is to be separated from it by a period during which “Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled,” is also emphatic in his report that the fall of Jerusalem will not mean the downfall of the church, but rather its greater triumph. At the point where the Authorized and the American Standard Versions part company as to whether the texts of Matthew 24:33 and Mark 13:29 should read “he is nigh” (second coming) or “it is nigh” (destruction of Jerusalem), Luke introduces a new element by reporting: “Even so ye also, when ye see these things coming to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh” (Luke 21:31). John the Baptist reported that the kingdom of heaven was at hand when the Messiah was about to begin His ministry. Now that the church had been established at the day of Pentecost, the kingdom coming nigh after the destruction of Jerusalem must refer to a new phase of growth and power in the kingdom. When the disciples had been assured that the destruction of Jerusalem would occur in their generation, but that the second coming would not be until after the times of the Gentiles had been fulfilled, then the natural question in their minds would be as to the result upon the church of the destruction of the temple and the holy city. Would this mean likewise the subjugation and desolation of the church? Evidently at this point in His discussion Jesus introduced light upon this phase of the problem which Luke records in the clause “the kingdom of God is nigh.”

Plummer holds that these words of Luke refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, but it seems clear that the language used shows that Jesus said something which showed the relation and effect of the destruction of Jerusalem as regards the church. In his comments on Luke 9:27 where Christ affirms: “There are some of them that stand here, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God” (Mark 9:1 “the kingdom of God come with power”), Plummer cites the similarity with Luke 21:31 and urges that it refers to the destruction of Jerusalem. “The exceptional privilege of some, as distinct from the common experience of all” is the key which he draws from the phrase: “some of them that stand here.” Judas, however, did not survive until the establishment of the kingdom on the day of Pentecost and the reference of Luke 9:27 may be to

this event.) Plummer argues: “The destruction of Jerusalem, witnessed by St. John and perhaps a few others of those present, swept away the remains of the Old Dispensation and left the gospel in possession of the field. Only so far as the destruction of Jerusalem was a type of the end of the world is there a reference to the parousia. A direct reference to the parousia is excluded by the fact that none of those present lived to witness it, except in the sense that all men will witness it. Jesus has told us that during His life on earth He was ignorant of the date of the day of judgment (Mark 13:32): and we cannot suppose that in spite of that ignorance He predicted it was near; still less that He uttered a prediction which has not been fulfilled. Moreover, the “shall not taste of death until’ implies that the “some’ will experience death after seeing the kingdom of God which will not be true of those who live to see the parousia (1 Corinthians 15:51).” (Plummer, Commentary on Luke, pp. 250, 485).

Radical Attacks

Modernists generally hold that the Synoptics were written after the fall of Jerusalem and these predictions either were invented completely or highly colored by a knowledge of the events supposed to be predicted. They hold in regard to the second coming either (1) that Jesus expected to return immediately and was mistaken in this as He predicted an immediate return, or (2) that Jesus did not expect or predict any visible return to the world at some definite time, but only predicted a spiritual entering into the affairs of the world. Against the first position, it should be noted (1) The Gospel of John, which all agree was written after the fall of Jerusalem, does not attempt to report or to elaborate upon these predictions. Since they had already been reported thrice, they already served their purpose in assisting the escape from Jerusalem of the early Christians and had been recorded for future generations as evidence of the miraculous foresight of Jesus. John had additional evidence, as yet unrecorded, given by Jesus on other occasions, which he desired to record. (2) The silence of Matthew, Mark, and Luke as to the actual fulfillment of these predictions would have been inexplicable, if written after the events. (3) The obscure character of the predictions recorded from the lips of Jesus would have been made more definite by inventors with the actual history before them. (4) The evident, urgent purpose of narratives is to assist the Christians in anticipating and escaping the fall of Jerusalem, and in maintaining an urgent expectation of the second coming. A group of radical critics (Weizsacker, Wendt, Vischer, Weiffenback, among others) hold that since Jesus was no more than a mere man, He could not have predicted such a thing as His return in glory to judge the world. Since they think this would have made Him a hopeless fanatic, they undertake to argue that this chapter was copied into the text from some Jewish or Jewish-Christian apocalypse. Daniel had predicted this centuries before, but it seems preferable to these critics to deny the possibility of prediction and to make out that these are mere inventions of some anonymous writer of the Maccabean period. Keim held that the discourse of Matthew 24:1-51 has been expanded from some genuine sayings of Jesus. He was willing to admit that Jesus had said some of the things attributed to Him. He was able to see that Mark 13:32 (“no man knoweth the day”) never could have been invented and put into the mouth of Jesus because it declares such an astounding limitation to His knowledge. Even Schmiedel made this one of his “Pillar Passages” which he would admit had been spoken by Jesus.

Reply to Radical Attack

It may be replied to this whole group that the theory of a Jewish-Christian apocalypse is purely imaginary, like the rest of the “sources” the radicals conjure up to assist them in dissecting the historical narratives of the New Testament. Plummer replies ably to the entire group, showing how the Gospel accounts are lined throughout with statements of Jesus concerning His second coming (Luke 11:49-51; Luke 13:23-27, Luke 13:35; Luke 17:23-37; Luke 18:8; Luke 19:15, Luke 19:23; Luke 20:16; Matthew 7:22; Matthew 10:23; Matthew 19:28; Matthew 21:44; Matthew 22:7; Matthew 24:31; Matthew 26:64). Particularly notable is the fact that the central declaration of Jesus at His trial before the high priest, Caiaphas, upon the basis of which He was condemned to death, presents the basic proposition of His second coming (Matthew 26:64). Plummer says: “That all three (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) derived their utterances from Apostolic tradition is credible. Is it credible that a writing otherwise unknown and by an unknown author should have had such an enormous influence? And its influence does not end with the three evangelists. It has contributed largely to the Epistle of St. Paul.” The Gospel of John and the book of Revelation also add their continuous and powerful testimony to the fact that Jesus predicted His second coming.

Effect on the Apostles The effect of this discourse upon the apostles, torn between despair and hope, surrounded by deadly peril, and full of perplexity, must have been profound. They had begun their questioning with an air of wistful regret at the prospect of the destruction of such magnificent buildings; they are now led to contemplate the indescribable glories of heaven. They had been oppressed with the thought of the uncertainty of life. They are now led to see that the permanence of man’s mighty achievements in building is but a fleeting shadow; it is the Word of Christ which is sure and unshaken when the heavens and the earth pass away; it is Christ, Himself, who shall return and bring all men to judgment, no matter how great their present power and how flagrant their wickedness. Chadwick, in his commentary on Mark, has a fine discussion of this element of the discourse which he entitles: “Things Perishing and Stable.” The apostles, faced with the appalling imminence of the death of Jesus and with the ominous chain of tragic circumstances daily confirming their worst fears, must have found in this discourse much to rescue them from doubt and despair. It was submerged by the swift, terrifying march of events in the next few hours, but how triumphantly it would resurge in the glorious days following the resurrection. This day which began with the withering of the fig tree and its implications of the destruction of the city and the unlimited scope of His own power, closes now with this amazing revelation of both fearful destruction, and final, ineffable glory. The Day of Glory

Meditating upon the statement of Luke 21:36, the thrilling nature of the consummation comes before us: “Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.” The war is over. The final victory has been won. The great Commander stands up to review His gallant heroes of the battlefield as they march by. Out of great tribulation, persecution, and suffering they come. On their bodies they bear the marks of the Lord Jesus. But their heads are lifted high and they sing in joyous acclaim the glories of the Lamb of God who has redeemed them by His blood. What a day of triumph that will be for those who have withstood the false lures of the world and the cares of this life and are “accounted worthy...to stand before the Son of man.”

126. Chapter 13 - In the Upper Room

Chapter 13 - In the Upper Room Matthew 26:17-29;Mark 14:12-25;Luke 22:7-38;John 13:1-38;John 14:1-31;John 15:1-27;John 16:1-33;John 17:1-26 Passover Preparations

Judas must have listened with the utmost attention to the instructions which Jesus gave to Peter and John as to where He intended to observe the Passover meal. This would be the very time to keep his bargain with the chief priests and scribes: there would be no dangerous crowds; the streets would be deserted; each family-group would be in quiet, reverent seclusion keeping the feast. Once he learned exactly the location of the house, he could find a chance during the day to slip away and notify the enemies of Christ. But Judas got nothing from the instructions Jesus gave. They could be illustrated as follows: “Enter the city by the Damascus gate; go along Valley Street to the first intersection and turn right. The exact moment that you turn that corner, you will see a man walking down the street in front of you carrying a jar of water. Follow him through the winding streets of the city until he enters a house. Go into the house after him and ask permission for us to use the guest chamber — the large upper room.” Judas got nothing from this description. He found himself stymied. The miraculous foreknowledge of Jesus had enabled Him to give infallible instructions that were secret.

After securing permission to use the room, Peter and John would have purchased a lamb and the necessary supplies (bread, wine, herbs). The market was now not in the temple, but outside the city where it belonged. Even allowing for Josephus’ weakness of exaggerating his numbers, the vast crowds at the Passover feast must have concentrated hundreds of thousands of people in the capital, in nearby towns and villages. If the people did not have friends or relatives near, they would camp in the open. The warm, dry weather was now favorable for out-of-door life. Manifestly it seems impossible for such enormous crowds to have brought the lamb of each family-group (from ten to twenty people) into the temple court to be slain. It is probable that a multitude of priests served the crowds in the open terrain around the city, passing from one group to another to supervise the slaying of the lamb, and catching some of the blood in a receptacle to be taken into the temple court. An official return to Cestus Gallus says 256,500 lambs or kids were slain annually at the Passover.

Those who attempt to move the day of the crucifixion back to Thursday, or even to Wednesday, argue that this must have been a substitute, preliminary meal that Jesus ate, for the priests were so hostile to Jesus they would not have consented to assist in the sacrifice of a lamb by the two apostles. This objection overlooks completely the enormous crowds and the vast number of priests who would be serving. Certainly some of the priests would be friendly. But amid so great a crowd and the pressure of three hours time for the slaying of the lambs, any representative of a group would not be easily identifiable. Mark is very clear in his affirmation that this is the day when the Passover lambs were being killed (Mark 14:12). All the accounts represent that Jesus did eat the Passover. The Crisis

After completing all the preparations, which included roasting the lamb before an open fire, Peter and John returned to Bethany and awaited the will of the Master. It seems clear that the owner of the house was a disciple and the family may have assisted Peter and John in making the preparations for the meal as well as arranging the room. There is no indication that any of the household were present in the room during the meal. Out of respect for the Master they probably left the group to their own private devotions. Although the meal could be eaten just after sun-down, it seems that Jesus would have waited until dark to make the journey into the city. His movements would not be so easily kept under surveillance. But now that the Jewish leaders had a spy in the inner group, they may not have needed to keep watch in any other way.

It may seem strange that the disciples had entered the upper room without washing their feet. A host usually provided for such ordinary courtesy at the door, but once the table had been set and the viands provided, the reverent privacy offered in this home seems to have left everything to the guests. Perhaps the disciples were too eager to get their Master in off the dark, menacing streets of the city, where assassins might hide, to think of such a matter as washing their feet at the entrance. The excitement of the moment must have been tumultuous. The Quarrel

One of the interesting problems in reconstructing this evening in the upper room is the question as to whether Judas was present at the Lord's Supper. The solution turns upon the proposition as to whether Luke is chronological in his narrative. He declares in his preface that he has written "in orderly fashion," but this does not necessarily mean chronological order. It is evident that in the account of the temptations in the wilderness, Luke follows a geographical rather than chronological order. So in his account of the events in the upper room, he appears to introduce incidentally the account of the quarrel among the disciples over precedence. The word "also" bears out the proposition that he is now telling something else that happened without arranging it in order of time: "And there arose also a contention among them" (Luke 22:24). Edersheim's theory concerning the seating arrangement as the cause of the quarrel, which is illustrated by the accompanying chart, explains satisfactorily a number of puzzling details. He supposes that when they came into the room, Judas feeling that the bold course was the safest, pushed forward and took the seat at the left side of Jesus which was ordinarily occupied by Peter. Outraged and disgruntled at this unexpected turn, Peter went down to the foot of the table which would have placed him across the table from Jesus, John, and Judas. The quarrel that arose evidently concerned who should have the seats of honor: "For which is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am in the midst of you as he that serveth" (Luke 22:27). If it seems hard to understand how the disciples on the very eve of the death of Jesus and in the hours of parting could have possibly indulged an unseemly quarrel over who should have the precedence, we need only remind ourselves that it takes only one person to set a whole company in an uproar. The devil had entree to the inner group now through his servant, Judas. Furthermore, the intense pressure of the emotional stress and imminent peril for all would set their nerves on edge and create the atmosphere for a rash quarrel. It probably was indulged in by scowls, suppressed gestures and whispers, rather than outspoken wrath.

John's Account

It is amazing how wonderfully John supplies the necessary link to understand what Jesus meant in suppressing the quarrel by reminding them that He was in the midst as one that serves. This is

precisely what Jesus did in washing the disciples' feet. Luke does not tell of this incident or explain what Jesus meant by saying that He was a Servant in the midst. John, on the other hand, does not tell of the quarrel, nor does he explain why Jesus should have interrupted the meal to wash the disciples' feet. it was "during supper" (American Standard Version), not "supper being ended" (Authorized), as the Greek participle clearly shows. It seems that the quarrel arose immediately after the beginning of the meal and, as the unpleasantness continued, Jesus humbled the entire group by His menial service to them. If Peter was seated at the foot of the table, then it would have been natural for Jesus to have approached him first. His outraged protest makes it evident he is the first one whose feet were washed by Jesus. The Foot Washing The artists' pictures of the upper room are evidently at fault in having the group seated in chairs around a table. The first century custom was for the guests to recline on couches, resting on the left elbow with the right hand free to provide the food. Two guests and sometimes three were alongside on the same couch. The chief places of honor were the seats at the right and left hand of the leading figure. It would have been a difficult matter to get down and wash the feet of a person seated in a chair with his feet under the table. Since they were reclining on couches, it was quite practicable for Jesus to have washed the feet of each disciple just as he was situated. The disciples must have been filled with wonder and then dismay, as they saw Jesus arise from the table and lay aside His outer cloak, gird himself with a towel, and take a basin of water. Their quarrelsome thoughts and looks now must have melted into tears of shame. Most impressive is the thought that Jesus humbled Himself even to wash the feet of Judas. The water was poured from a pitcher over the feet and caught in a basin. Peter wept bitter tears as he left the trial hall of Caiaphas later on this night. It seems true to his impetuous nature that the tears would be falling now as he protests in a hoarse whisper: "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" The answer of Jesus was considered indecisive by the determined Peter. It was not enough to be told he did not understand now, but would, later on. He boldly declares: "Thou shalt never wash my feet." The rebuke of Jesus was as strenuous as the refusal of Peter had been rash: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Still ever seeking to lead rather than to follow, Peter imagined that he was the soul of resignation in asking that his hands and head also be washed. Jesus was forced to rebuke him again with the declaration that one who has been bathed needs only to wash his feet. The lesson of humility that each should be ready to offer any such humble service that is needed in the name of Christ, becomes doubly powerful when the accounts of Luke and John are fitted together. Luke declares that Jesus stopped the quarreling by reminding the group that He was in the midst as a Servant and that they should imitate Him. John pictures Jesus showing Himself as a Servant in washing their feet.

Unveiling of the Traitor

If the quarrel and the foot washing were near the start of the meal, then it is clear that the unveiling of the traitor began early in the evening. He began to warn them that He could not include them all in the precious sayings he was presenting (John 13:18). After the supper had been resumed, Jesus plainly predicted betrayal that night by one of the twelve apostles seated at the table. Following Edersheim's suggestion as to the seating arrangement, it is easy to see how John seated at the right side of Jesus and leaning upon His breast, could readily ask the question which Peter, seated directly opposite, could gesture for him to ask. Jesus answered that it was the one to whom He would give the sop (a piece of bread and meat which had been dipped in the gravy of the common dish in the center of the table). Since the ruler of the feast might offer this courtesy to

any or all of the guests, this reply was indefinite. Jesus also said: “He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me” (Matthew 26:23; Mark 14:20). This coincidence might also happen with all those present at some time during the evening. The heart-broken question that was asked around the table shows that the indefinite answers of Jesus had not made clear the identity of the traitor. It also shows depth of humility and self-examination. The disciples did not immediately turn an accusing finger on Judas. He was a shrewd individual who had concealed his true character from all but Jesus. They were moved with simplicity of spiritual devotion as each questioned concerning the fidelity of his own heart and life. They did not even suspect Judas when Jesus sent him from the room (John 13:28, John 13:29). “Lord, is it I?” was asked by each in such humble self-accusation that each had no looks, words, or thoughts for ferreting out the traitor other than the urgent gesture of Peter to John and the question John asked Jesus. The Traitor Driven Out

All others having asked the question to free their conscience, it was necessary for Judas to ask, if he would not call attention to himself. If he was seated next to Jesus on the left, then it is easy to see how the exchange between them could have taken place without being understood by the others. At the very moment that Judas asked the question, he was dipping in the large central dish with Jesus and was offered the sop. John tells that the moment Judas brazenly received the sop from Jesus, the devil entered into his heart and took final possession of him. Jesus then drove him from the room with the peremptory command: “What thou doest, do quickly” (John 13:27). There seems a deep spiritual meaning to the words that follow: “He then having received the sop went out straightway: and it was night.” The deep, impenetrable darkness of his final choice of infamy now surrounded him in the night of doom. In determining whether Judas was present at the Lord’s Supper, the puzzling thing is to decide at what time he was driven forth. John tells of the sending forth of Judas from the upper room, but he does not record the giving of the Lord’s Supper. The first intimation that we have from the accounts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke that Judas is not present with the rest is at the Garden of Gethsemane where he is pictured as leading the company of soldiers and rabble. John declares that Judas left immediately after Jesus made known to him that He knew of his treachery. Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell of this unveiling, but do not mention his departure. The manner in which Luke then introduces the quarrel among the apostles as an incident important to record, but not given in chronological order, leads us to conclude that Judas was not present at the giving of the Lord’s Supper. Luke’s account seems topical here. The Lord’s Supper The synoptic writers do not indicate the time of giving this solemn memorial other than that it was during the Passover meal. The assembly in the upper room occurred in the early hours of the night. The entire procedure of Jesus was unhurried, as the whole night up to the time of the arrest was devoted to spiritual communion with His disciples and with God. The supper and the conversation, together with the washing of the disciples’ feet, must have consumed much time. Everything which had preceded, added to the solemnity of Jesus’ words as He instituted the Lord’s Supper. The distressing predictions and questionings had led to the very self-examination with which this institution should be approached. The manner of Jesus must have been most impressive as He took a loaf of bread sufficient in size for each to share a little, and blessed the loaf, giving thanks to God. In Matthew 26:26 “blessed” has no object stated and may have either “God” or “bread” understood as the object. If the former, it would mean: “Gave thanks to God for the bread”; if the latter, “Blessed the loaf” — called down the blessings of God upon it as they partook. Matthew and Mark have “blessed” in regard to the loaf and “gave thanks” for the cup.

Luke has “gave thanks” for both. The Language Figurative The loaf represented his body. His physical body was still actually present and visible as He gave them this loaf. Thus it is plain He used a figure of speech as He said: “This is my body.” Luke makes it clear that His language is figurative: “This cup is the new covenant in my blood” (Luke 22:20). To say that a cup is a covenant is plainly a metaphor. The fact that after declaring the cup contained “my blood of the covenant,” Jesus also referred to it as “this fruit of the vine,” is clear proof of the figurative character of His statements as to His body and blood. If you showed a visitor in your home a picture on the wall and explained: “This is my grandfather,” you would expect him to use ordinary common sense and understand that you mean it is a photograph which reveals the likeness of your grandfather. The New Testament The Greek word diatheke can be rendered either “covenant” or “testament.” A covenant is a general word for an agreement between two parties and a testament is a particular type of covenant — a will. The word usually means “will” or “testament” in classical Greek, but in the New Testament it usually means “ “covenant.” Either meaning would fit here. It is translated “testament” in the Authorized Version; “covenant” in the American Standard Version. Hebrews 9:15-22 gives a strong presentation of how the shedding of blood was necessary in the sealing of a covenant in the Old Testament and how the death of the testator is necessary for a will to be in force. The American Standard Version clings desperately in this passage to the translation “ “covenant,” but is forced to yield to the rendering “testament” in Hebrews 9:16, Hebrews 9:17.

All three evangelists report the statement of Jesus that His blood was to be “poured out” “for you” or “for many.” The word “ “poured out” indicates a violent death; the statement that it is . “for you” or “for many” indicates that it is sacrificial. Only Matthew states that it is “unto the remission of sins.” This explanation would immediately call to their minds the whole Old Testament teaching and practice on sacrifice for sin. Perhaps they would recall the prophetic words of John the Baptist: “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.” But Jesus did not attempt to explain the exact nature and necessity of the atonement to them as He gave this institution. They could not even understand fully the fact of His death now, not to mention its mysterious, divine purpose. This was made clear to them later. Through their preaching and writing, especially the Epistles of Paul, it was proclaimed to the world. The same basic proposition, however, is affirmed here as was later proclaimed by the inspired apostles.

Time of Observance

Only the very solemn words of Jesus “until that day when I drink it new with you” and the solemn significance given to the bread and the fruit of the vine indicate in the records of the Synoptics that it is to be kept regularly. Paul quotes the declaration of Jesus, “This do in remembrance of me,” “This do, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord’s death till he come” (1 Corinthians 11:24-26). The practice of the New Testament churches under the guidance of the inspired apostles shows that we should keep the Lord’s Supper on the first day of each week. Acts 20:7 shows that this was the regular practice of the church at Troas. All other churches established by the same inspired apostles would have had the same practice. The church at Corinth met on the first day of each week (1 Corinthians 16:2), and at its regular meeting was accustomed to partake of the Lord’s Supper (Acts 11:20). Early Christian literature abounds with proof that this was the universal practice of the churches (cf. The Everlasting Gospel, pp. 124-127).

Difficulty in Luke's Account

Luke's account offers difficulty in that he tells first of taking the cup, then of breaking the bread, then of taking the cup again (Luke 22:17.). It seems that the cup of Luke 22:17 is not the communion cup of Luke 22:20, but the last of the four cups passed during the Passover meal. In other words, Luke cuts into the events of the hour just at the point where the Passover meal is being concluded. Jesus declares He is not to partake of it again until the coming of the kingdom on the day of Pentecost when He will share the communion with us each Lord's Day. This means He was giving a solemn farewell to the Old Testament institution and does not mean that He did not share the cup of communion with them a few moments later. After this fateful night He is not to partake of the Passover cup, but to share with them this institution which is now given to the church.

Unleavened Bread and Fruit of the Vine The fact that all leaven had to be removed from the house two days before the Passover began, is positive proof that the wine which they used was unfermented. The bread was unleavened; for precisely the same reason the fruit of the vine was unleavened. The Greek word oinos is used in classical literature of both fermented and unfermented grape juice. The Gospel writers are very careful, however, and do not even use the word "wine" in telling of the Lord's Supper. They always use the phrase "the fruit of the vine." That the ancients knew the art of hermetically sealing up fluids is seen clearly from the incident of the anointing of Jesus by Mary of Bethany. The precious ointment was sealed up in the container. The moment the container was broken, the pungent odor spread through all the house (John 12:3). A Greek wine ship of the second century b.c. found by divers off the southern coast of France several years ago contained a great number of wine flasks that had been sealed so tight that after more than 2,000 years the sea water had not seeped into them. The Name

Paul calls this institution, "The Lord's Supper." It commemorates the Lord's death. He shares the meal with us and is the host as we sit about His table. It is often called the "Communion Service" because Paul declared it was a "communion" (a partaking in common) of "the body" and "the blood" of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16, 1 Corinthians 10:17). Roman Catholics often refer to it as "The Eucharist." This title is not applied to it in the New Testament, but the verb, eucharisteo — "to give thanks" — is used in describing the giving of the institution. The Purpose The Lord's Supper is a memorial. It is to fulfill in a new and more complete fashion the purpose of remembrance of God's redemptive grace which had saved Israel from Egypt and now saves all from the bondage of sin. The Lord's Supper is a communion. It is to bind His followers together in a new fellowship. Even in these last hours of parting they receive the assurance not merely that they shall partake of it together in the kingdom, but that Christ will share it with them. It is a time of self-examination. It is to recall to the Christian his sins: "which is poured out for many unto the remission of sins." What are these sins? Why was such terrible suffering necessary? It is a proclamation: ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come" (1 Corinthians 11:26). Even as all who witness, are led to inquire the meaning of the feast and those who preside set forth its origin and purpose, it is to show forth the death of Jesus to the world. Baptism is in like manner a proclamation of the central facts of the gospel — the death, burial, and resurrection. The Lord's Supper is a prediction: it looks forward to His second coming even as it looks backward to the cross. The Disciples Warned The intimate instruction and appeals given in the upper room were now interspersed with warnings of their imminent failure. As He predicted again that the hour of His glorification was at hand, He warned

them that He was going away where they could not follow. This was to be true of these dear friends, even as He had said to the hostile Jews. Peter cried out in anguish to know where it is that Jesus is going; if it is death He is talking about, that certainly will not separate them since Peter is ready to die for Jesus. The Master responded with the blunt prediction that Peter would deny Him three times this very night before the cock-crowing time (John 13:36-38). Luke adds the information that Jesus said He had been praying for him even as Satan had asked for him that he might sift him like wheat: “that thy faith fail not; and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, establish thy brethren” (Luke 22:31, Luke 22:32).

These warnings seem to have been begun in the upper room and continued as they walked through the night. Jesus had plainly declared that they would all be offended (caused to stumble because they could not understand why He did not use His miraculous power to destroy His enemies and save Himself for a glorious reign as the Christ) in Him this night. He reminded them that His death and their desertion had been predicted in the Old Testament (Matthew 26:31; Mark 14:27). His renewed prediction of His resurrection and their future meeting in Galilee fell upon deaf ears. The shocking announcement that they were all to be offended in Him and desert Him that very night was too much for Peter. Boldly he declared that even though all the rest should be offended in Him, yet he would not. Even as the last man in the world to believe in Jesus, he would yet persevere in his devotion. Mark is particularly emphatic in reporting: “But he spake exceeding vehemently, If I must die with thee, I will not deny thee. And in like manner also said they all” (Mark 14:31). John 13:31-38 seems to give the opening warning which was followed by Luke 22:31-38, with the parallel accounts of Matthew 26:31-35 and Mark 14:27-31 giving further details. This would make two distinct predictions of Peter’s denials and two protests from him. This is likely. When Jesus washed his feet, it took several exchanges before Peter was submissive. The astounding prediction that Peter was about to deny his Master would probably produce more than one protest. These warnings were to help prepare them for the shock that was about to descend upon them and to help them to recover from their failure as they would recall the merciful predictions of their restored fellowship with Him. The warnings gave a commission for future work after their dark hours of failure. The closing verse of John 14:1-31 is so precise, “Arise, let us go hence,” that we are forced to conclude that the warning he records occurred in the upper room. Matthew and Mark tell of the singing of the hymn and of leaving the room, and then describe the warning. Luke places the warning just before they leave the upper room. It seems there were two warnings; one in the upper room before the farewell discourse of John 14:1-31; the other, as they were leaving and proceeding toward Gethsemane. When Peter had had time to reflect, he burst out in another and more vehement assertion of his fidelity. Judas had only been hardened by the prediction of his treachery. He had listened with smooth hypocrisy and masterful self-control. He had kept the other apostles from reading his heart even though Jesus knew and faced him with his plots. But Peter showed the natural reactions of an honest man and a zealous follower. He was astounded and horrified, and protested his loyalty in the most emphatic language. He knew his heart, but he overestimated his strength. He did not realize the severity of the trials ahead. Mark 14:31 emphasizes that Peter kept on protesting with increasing vehemence. The warnings particularly directed to Peter must have dumbfounded the rest, but since they were not so much implicated, they listened in puzzled and painful silence. When they made ready to leave the room and all the others were included in the sweeping warning, Peter, who was boiling over with his reflections and protests, was joined by the others speaking in earnest protest. The Farewell

Discourse A clear indication of how precious the farewell discourse of John 14:1-31 has been to the church is seen in its continual use at funerals. What Jesus said in the hour of parting with His disciples is what we would recall in the time of parting with those we love. How deeply troubled their hearts were! Their sorrow over Jesus' predictions and the dreadful prospect before them were almost more than they could bear. Their only pillar of support was their desperate determination to die with Him. Now even this had been shaken by His predictions of betrayal by one of the twelve, denial by the leader of the group, and desertion by all. Such a night of alarms brought forth supreme words of comfort and beauty that have supported the followers of Christ through the ages. The verbs "believe" in John 14:1 may be either imperative or indicative and the conjunction may be rendered either as "and" or "also." This makes four ways the verse may be translated: (1) "Ye believe in God, and if this is true, as assuredly it is, ye believe also in me" (2) "Ye believe in God, believe also in me" (Vulgate, a.v.). (3) Believe in God, and (as a natural consequence) ye believe in me. (4) "Believe in God, believe also in me" (a.s.v.). Although the rendering of the Authorized Version is attractive, it is perhaps best to take the rendering of the American Standard Version. The translation "mansions" comes from the Latin mansiones. The Latin word meant resting places or stations along the highway where travellers found temporary rest. This is one of the meanings of the Greek word. Some of the early Christian scholars adopted this meaning and began to speculate as to what was meant by temporary resting places. The use of the word in John 14:23 shows conclusively that the meaning in John 14:2 is a permanent abiding place: a vast home in which rooms are available for all guests.

Assertion of Deity The protest of Thomas brought forth one of the sublime declarations of deity from Jesus. Jesus had solemnly warned of their separation, but He now renews His joyous assurance of His second coming and their glorious reunion. His assertion: "Whither I go, ye know the way" was too much for Thomas to let pass. "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, how know we the way?" When they did not even know the location of Jesus' destination in the time of parting, how could they be expected to know the way to arrive at that destination? "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." Dean W. W. Fenn of the Harvard Divinity School remarked in the classroom one day that in his opinion the most profound declaration Jesus ever made was the assertion: "I am the truth." Truth in the final analysis is to be identified with a personality, rather than a statement or a collection of statements. God Himself is the final embodiment of truth. The startling majesty and grandeur of this entire declaration reminds us of His statement to Martha concerning the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). When Jesus said, "I am the way," He declared He is the highway from earth to heaven. The first name applied to Christianity, "The Way" (Acts 9:2), doubtless arose out of this declaration of Jesus. It shows the profound influence this statement had upon the thinking and life of the church from the very beginning. Bernard remarks: "The uniqueness of Christ's claim in John is that He is the Way, i.e., the only way to God. This is the heart of the Johannine message, which admits of no compromise with non-Christian religions, and in fact takes no account of such." Jesus declares, as He had in His statement to Martha, that He is the life — not only the source of life and the way to life, but He is the ultimate life itself. In his preface John had so stated: "In him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). Bernard translates "from now you are beginning to know him." Westcott identifies "henceforth" as meaning from the present moment when they have heard this decisive declaration, but the further conversation shows that they did not understand and know from this moment. Bernard says that the "now" means the moment of His passion. It is better to conceive the statement of Jesus

("hence-forth") as taking in His death, resurrection, and exaltation, all of which gave the disciples the fuller knowledge of Jesus' person.

Again a disciple interrupts the discourse of Jesus with a question. Thomas had lapsed into silence meditating upon the thrilling response of Jesus. But Philip now expressed the universal longing of mankind to see God. He doubtless had in mind such a vision of God as was granted to Moses or Isaiah. The gentleness with which Jesus answers Philip, repeats his name, yet makes the question so full of rebuke, shows the deep pathos of His reply. God has been in their midst in the person of His Son, yet they ask to see God; they have not really opened their eyes to see Jesus. Present before them in the flesh, Jesus is yet the perfect revelation of God. The unity of Christ and the Father is so complete that the very words Jesus spoke were from God, and the deeds He performed were from God. Jesus again offers His miracles as the proof of His claim to deity.

Coming of the Holy Spirit

Having discussed with them the objective manifestation of God in the person of His Son, Jesus now discusses the subjective manifestation of God within them. Christ points out that His disciples are to continue His work through His help (John 14:12-14). He is to send the Holy Spirit to aid them (John 14:15-17). He will come to them Himself (John 14:18-21). When we are troubled with the difficulty of discerning just how the Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts guides, counsels, and strengthens us, we need to reflect that we cannot comprehend exactly how Jesus who is with us always, also hears, understands, and helps. As Paul sought to preach the Word further in Asia on the second missionary tour, Acts declares both that he was "forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia" and that "the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not" (Acts 16:6, Acts 16:7). In the miraculous age of the apostles and those on whom they had laid their hands in conferring the power to work miracles, both the Holy Spirit and Jesus worked in the heart and life of the Christian with such miraculous guidance. In our own time as faith, hope, and love, the abiding elements, together with the complete testimony of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures, are our guide, we can also depend upon the presence and the help of the Holy Spirit and of Jesus in our hearts and lives. The fact that we cannot definitely isolate and describe the influence, should be no more disturbing than that we cannot comprehend God. Without God nothing can be understood or explained. Of one thing we can be sure: the Holy Spirit today gives no new revelations nor any advice which is contrary to the faith once for all delivered unto the saints in the New Testament. The revelation of the gospel in the New Testament is full, complete, perfect.

Names of the Holy Spirit The word "Paraclete" which is used to describe the Holy Spirit is peculiar to John's Gospel. Most modern commentators argue that the word should be translated "Advocate" instead of "Comforter," but both meanings were employed by early Christian scholars in translating the word. In classical literature the verb from which this noun is derived, means to call a person to stand by one and to help in various ways: (1) as a witness; (2) as an adviser; (3) as an advocate. Origen says that while Paraclete means "Intercessor" in 1 John 2:1, it means Consoler in the fourth Gospel. The American Standard Version of 1901 suggests "Helper" in the margin. "Comforter" is perhaps the best rendering, but it is well to remember the wide range of meanings which the word has. Notice that the Holy Spirit is called "another Comforter." In other words, Christ is one Comforter who has been so precious to them and who is about to leave them; the Holy Spirit is another Comforter who will abide. The Holy Spirit is as much a person as Jesus;

so the word “another,” the emphatic pronoun “he” (John 14:26), and the whole description of the person and work of the Holy Spirit prove. The concept of the Trinity is plainly implied. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one in person and work.

Understanding of the Apostles The question naturally arises as to how much the apostles understood about the Holy Spirit when Jesus was giving them this instruction. They knew that in the Old Testament men had spoken as they had been moved by the Holy Spirit. There is a touching reference to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the great Old Testament leaders, when Samson had sinned away his days of leadership, and had gone so far as to reveal to Delilah the true secret of his dedication to God. Formerly “the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him” (Judges 15:14). But now as he heard again the cry: “Samson, the Philistines are upon thee,” he foolishly imagined that he would be able to destroy his enemies at will again, but “He knew not that the Lord was departed from him” (John 16:20). The apostles knew that John the Baptist had been inspired by the Holy Spirit and that the Holy Spirit had come upon Jesus at the time of His baptism. The apostles, when sent forth two by two to preach and to work miracles, had been working by the power of the Holy Spirit. They were not strangers to the Spirit, but they were now to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. They were henceforth to find Him their constant Comforter and Helper. The promises of Jesus to return to them and to be with them constantly are interwoven with the promises of the coming of the Holy Spirit. “I will not leave you desolate, I come unto you” (John 14:18). The word “desolate” (the a.v. says “comfortless”) is the Greek word from which we derive the term “orphans.” The Work of the Holy Spirit

It should be observed that in the promises given of the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them to comfort and help them, the strongest emphasis is given to the work of the Holy Spirit in assisting them to present God’s revelation to the world. The Holy Spirit is called “the Spirit of truth” (John 14:17). “He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you” (John 14:26). Westcott says of this with magnificent brevity: “So the Gospel could be written.” There were many things which Christ had not been able to tell them: they were not prepared to receive them. But the work of the Holy Spirit is primarily to lead them into a perfect understanding of the truth Jesus had delivered unto them. Here is one of the strongest declarations of the miraculous inspiration of the writers of the New Testament. All questions as to how the New Testament writers could have recalled years later what Jesus said and did, find the all-sufficient answer in this statement of Jesus. Two decades after hearing the Sermon on the Mount Matthew gives three chapters of thrilling report of the sermon. How could he do this? What a pitiful pigmy is the unbelievers’ figure of Matthew copying down notes as the sermon was given and years later expanding them and copying from all sorts of odds and ends of “sources.” Compare with this what Jesus promised that they need not be anxious what they were to say when placed on trial for their faith: “Be not anxious how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you” (Matthew 10:19, Matthew 10:20). Of like magnificence is this promise of Jesus in the parting hours: “He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you.” All the things necessary for man’s redemption by the gospel would be made plain to them. In keeping with this the writers of the New Testament without either explanation or apology declare the hidden secrets of the past, of the future, and of heaven. John tells calmly what was and what happened before the

creation of the world (John 1:1.). Mark tells what happened in heaven after the ascension (Mark 16:19). New Testament writers predict with absolute assurance the events of the future and reveal the mind of God to man. They did not need to defend themselves in this course or to declare their divine inspiration. Jesus had already stated the case for them. They needed only to record what He had said, to deliver to man what was revealed to them, to allow man to pass judgment on the authority and truth of their statements, and to allow God to pass judgment upon man for his faith or unbelief. On the Way to Gethsemane The promises given in this farewell discourse are repeated as they journey toward Gethsemane. The great work of the Holy Spirit, in convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, is stated. Again the emphasis is upon the fact that the Holy Spirit is to work through the declarations of these inspired leaders. “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you” (John 16:13, John 16:14).

It is not possible for us to understand fully the emotional stress of the upper room. It was like the tearful scene when a father or mother is dying and the children are gathered about the bedside in the agony of parting, listening to the last instructions and the pathetic appeals. How exceeding precious are the words of Jesus: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful” (John 14:27). Going to His death by horrible torture and crucifixion, He yet speaks calmly of the peace which He has and can bestow. It is a peace which is beyond that which the world can receive or even know. Bernard calls the words: “If ye loved me, ye would have rejoiced, because I go unto the Father” (John 14:28): “a tender, half-playful appeal….He does not really question their love, but He reminds them of it.” The consultation in the upper room closes with the sharp warning that the devil is approaching. He has nothing of his possession he can claim in Christ, but the apostles must beware of the critical trials ahead. “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

127. Chapter 14 - In the Garden

Chapter 14 - In the Garden Matthew 26:30-56;Mark 14:26-52;Luke 22:39-53;John 18:1-12 The Garden Of the two great periods of storm and stress in the ministry of Jesus, the first was in the desert; the second, in a garden. There undoubtedly were other times of agonized facing of critical issues such as the night in prayer on a mountain overlooking the Sea of Galilee, after the feeding of the 5,000 and the abortive attempt of the Zealots to take Jesus by force and to make Him king. But these two experiences, both of which brought Jesus near to death, are described in detail by the Gospel writers. Both were seasons of intense prayer as Jesus faced a struggle in maintaining complete subjection to the will of God. In both, the devil was present with all the lures and wiles at his command. His sinister offerings occupy the center of the struggle in the combat in the desert. But special mention is also made of his presence in the garden. As they left the upper room, Jesus indicated His words of counsel and warning were about ended: now He must go into battle against the devil: “I will no more speak much with you, for the prince of the world cometh: and he hath nothing in me” (John 14:30). There is a strong note of triumph in this declaration. The war had been on for years; Jesus had won every battle. The final tragedy of the opera, “Faust,” comes as a result of the horrible bargain which Faust had made with the devil when he had sold his soul. But Jesus, facing this final season of trial, could say with assurance that the devil had no mortgage on His soul. Angels came to comfort and strengthen Jesus after both of these seasons of combat. Complete victory and untroubled peace of spirit came at the close of each of these battles.

Because “Gethsemane” means “olive-press,” we conclude that this plot of ground was an olive orchard. Because Jesus was accustomed to find privacy and seclusion here with His disciples, we conclude that it was the property of a disciple who delighted to have his Master frequent it. It is called a “garden.” We use this word for a plot of ground devoted to the culture of flowers, vegetables, or fruits. Ordinarily, if it is occupied by trees, we call it an orchard. It is natural for our fancy to imagine that at least a part of this garden was devoted to flowers. We delight to sing the hymn: “I come to the garden alone, While the dew is still on the roses.” Man’s downfall in his first combat with Satan was in a garden filled with all the beautiful and useful things God had provided. There is something very fitting in the fact that this final, critical battle for man’s redemption should have been fought out in a garden. The Time

We are not able to trace with any certainty the hour of leaving the upper room. Knowing with divine insight the movements of Judas and His enemies, Jesus was able to arrange His own movements with assurance both as to time and space. It seems that Jesus left the upper room before midnight. The last verse of John 14:1-31 is decisive: “Arise, let us go hence.” The parable of the vine and the husbandman was spoken as they walked through the moonlit environs of Jerusalem. All sorts of explanations are offered by commentators as to what suggested the comparison of the vine and its branches: a vine growing over the door of the home they were leaving; the great golden vine Herod the Great had placed over a gate of the temple; heaps of pruned branches of vines being burned on the hillsides. But there is no necessity to suppose anything visible caused Jesus to make the comparison. The beautiful words of love and fidelity that fill John 15:1-27; John

16:1-33 have as their natural climax the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit to be their Comforter and Guide. In the detailed description of the work of the Holy Spirit, there is specific mention again of the fact that “the prince of this world hath been judged,” wherefore the Holy Spirit will convict the world of judgment. The Prayer

Westcott supposes that the majestic high-priestly prayer of Jesus in John 17:1-26 was delivered in the great court of the temple, deserted now of human occupants save for these twelve, and flooded with moonlight. But it may have been given at any appropriate spot as Jesus went on this leisurely journey toward Gethsemane. The triumphant mood is manifest throughout this, “the Lord’s Prayer.” It is the hour of glory that is at hand, as He goes to His death. In widening circles, Jesus prays first for Himself that the divine glory may now be consummated; for His disciples that they may remain one in the faith through their fidelity to the truth — His word; for all those who will become disciples in the future generations through their word; and last of all, for all the world, that it may be led to believe in Him by a faithful, united church true to the revelation which Jesus has brought to the world. The Disciples

After this prayer was ended, Jesus passed over the Kidron with His disciples (John 18:1). The traditional location of the Garden of Gethsemane is probably correct or nearby. It was across the brook Kidron and on the Mount of Olives. The present garden is obviously not so large as the one in which Jesus prayed. He separated the eight disciples from the chosen three, and was Himself separated from the three by a stone’s throw. The eight disciples were left at the gate or near the entrance. By all the teaching and admonitions of Jesus, they were to pray. We are specifically told that the three were asked to pray. We conclude that this command was given to the eight. The writers do not feel any necessity to inform us that the eight disciples went to sleep over their prayers. We can readily conclude this from the failure of the three chosen disciples.

Jesus’ Experience The description of the agony of Jesus even as He entered the garden is full of pathos: “And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and sore troubled” (Matthew 26:37). Mark says: “greatly amazed, and sore troubled” (Mark 14:33). The second verb is the same in both accounts. The derivation may give the meaning: “to be homesick” or “to be sated.” Either derivation is very appropriate. Jesus “homesick” for heaven and His Father in the hour of death! Jesus so surrounded with the unbelief, ingratitude, and wickedness of man and His own endless suffering to save them, that in this hour of anguish, He begins to be “sated” with the harrowing experience. The word “sate” is often used of the glutton who has eaten so much, that the very sight of food is unbearable. The Son of God has endured such infinite suffering that in this hour of agony, He is sated with suffering.

Modernists like to talk of the “disillusionment” of Jesus in Gethsemane, using the word “sore amazed” as the basis for their charge. It is a charge against Christ, for it carries the content of being mistaken (or under illusion), disappointed, and despairing. Although Jesus knew before of His mission and the suffering entailed, the actual fierceness of the hatred of wicked men, the continuing inability of even His chosen few to enter into His experiences and share His suffering, the incredible weight of the sins of the world now being heaped upon Him combined to make the actual experience amazing in its fearful reality. The Watch That Failed

“Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: abide ye here, and watch with me” (Matthew 26:38). A dying person usually likes for the light to be on in the room and

dear ones to be awake and near. Even though they may not now share the experience of death, there is comfort in their presence. The disciples could not actually lift any of the load from Jesus, yet He desired them to be awake and praying. He did not ask them to pray for Him, but for themselves. He knew how great was to be their trial this night, and how much they needed God's help. Many times before, they had tried to pray as Jesus prayed — for long hours. They had failed. As a result of their failure they had asked Jesus for more instruction on the subject of prayer (Luke 11:1). We are apt to be harsh in our criticism of the failure of the disciples in their efforts to pray in Gethsemane: the need was critical; Jesus' request was urgent and personal. Why did they fail? Luke gives a very beautiful touch to his narrative as he explains this failure: "he came unto the disciples, and found them sleeping for sorrow" (Luke 22:45). It was utter, complete exhaustion which overcame their most determined efforts to remain awake and stedfast in prayer. How many nights had it been since they had slept? How could they sleep with the death of Jesus staring them in the face? Did Peter walk the streets of Bethany by night clutching his sword under his cloak? Unable to sleep when they should, they, with the perversity of human nature, now find themselves so exhausted they cannot remain awake when they should. Is there any exhaustion quite so prostrating as that from sorrow when the emotions are drained to the last dregs? The Agony The revelation to His disciples that. His suffering was so intense that it had brought Him close to death is couched in the words "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." How intricate was the intertwining of sorrow for a lost, perishing world and the infinite suffering which was now His as He achieved redemption for all we would believe and obey. "And he went forward a little, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass away from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). Luke gives further light: "And he was parted from them about a stone's cast; and he kneeled down and prayed" (Luke 22:41). How far a stone would be thrown would depend upon the strength and determination of the thrower and upon the size of the stone: the statement is in general terms. Jesus evidently kneeled down at first, and then as His agony increased, fell prone on the ground. The first posture expressed reverence; the second, the intensity of his suffering. The "cup" is a familiar figure which may suggest joy or sorrow that is being experienced. Psalms 23:5, "My cup runneth over," speaks of abounding joy and blessedness. When James and John had sought the chief seats, Jesus had questioned them sharply: "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I am about to drink?..." (Matthew 20:22). They had understood He meant His death.

Conflict of the Human and the Divine

Any effort to interpret that Jesus was afraid He would die in Gethsemane from the present tidal wave of suffering and not live to die on the cross, and that the "hour" and the "cup" refer to the agony in Gethsemane, seems quite inadequate. It was the incredible suffering on the cross where He died for us all, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, that was the subject of His prayers. The mystery of His suffering in Gethsemane is quite beyond human comprehension, even as the mystery of the incarnation and the atonement. The perfect union of the human and the divine in Jesus made it possible for Him to endure such agony and to talk with God concerning the necessity of His death on the cross. That which is so hard for us to understand in the suffering of Christ is the very element which helps us to know the reality of His suffering. Were it not for this agony, these requests of God, and His outcry on the cross, some would be making the charge that the death of Jesus was no more than play-acting with little personal significance for Him. This

prayer seems to impinge upon the foreknowledge of Jesus and to collide with His many predictions of His death. But it is when we reflect that Jesus was both God and man, that we get the clearer understanding of the mighty struggle which was taking place in His soul. The sublime resignation with which Jesus prayed helps our understanding of how these prayers were possible. Jesus talked with God about the necessity of the cross, but He talked in terms of complete submission to His will. Mark informs us that Jesus prayed: “Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee...” (Mark 14:36). Abba appears to be an Aramaic word meaning, “father.” The repetition of the address to God is very touching. It carries a tenderness of appeal. Jesus addressed Martha in this double form when wishing to rebuke her and at the same time to express His great love and appreciation of her devoted service: “Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things” (Luke 10:41).

Fear? From the Epistle to the Hebrews we have additional information concerning the agony in Gethsemane. Here alone do we learn that Jesus wept and that He uttered audible outcries: “Who in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save Him from death, and having been heard for his godly fear. though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation” (Hebrews 5:7-9). “In the days of his flesh” is a sublime statement both of His pre-existence and His perfect humanity. It sets forth that which was involved in this desperate struggle in the Garden. The Greek word translated “godly fear” means definitely this and not any sort of fright or cringing fear. To suggest that Jesus was afraid to die would reduce Him below the level even of mere human martyrs who have gone to their death without flinching. It was the incalculable burden of the sins of the world which weighed Him down. Godly fear, which is reverence, fills each of the prayers that He offered to God that the cup might pass, but that God’s will might be done. There is a change indicated in His prayers as the battle is won: “My Father, if this cannot pass away, except I drink it, thy will be done” (Matthew 26:42). Here the resignation is even more complete than in the first prayer. The statement quoted by Mark: “all things are possible unto thee” means all things that are right and true. The holy character of God forbids His doing any wicked things. “It is impossible for God to lie” (Hebrews 6:18). Man deserves death as a proper punishment for his rebellion against God. It is not the righteous character of God, but His love, which stood in the way of any failure to offer man this supreme means of redemption in Christ through His death on the cross. The Sleeping Disciples

There is matchless sympathy and tenderness in the rebukes Jesus gave to His disciples. Peter, the leader, bore the brunt of His censure. He is addressed as “Simon”: he is not showing the quality of a rock now: “Simon, sleepest thou? couldest thou not watch one hour?” This does not prove that this season of prayer had lasted just an hour. The term seems to be general: it may have been more or less. How understanding and gentle were the words of pity He added: “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” In the last world wars, men fought and died on battlefields that were so desperate that one passing over the scene of carnage after the storm had swept by, could only distinguish the dead from the living by touching and examining their bodies. Those cold and stiff were dead, but the living had fallen in physical collapse which left them sleeping that which was so like the sleep of death, only examination could prove there was life in their bodies. It was such sheer exhaustion which had now overcome the apostles. They longed to

stay awake and pray; they tried with desperate determination, but they were unable any longer to command their bodies. At His second coming, “they knew not what to answer him”: “Their eyes were very heavy.” The Angel

Luke tells us that an angel came, strengthening Him between the second and the last season of prayer, and that at the last “being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground” (Luke 22:44). The angels that came at the close of the struggle in the desert had ministered unto Him. They doubtless ended His fast by providing food for the body as well as spiritual strength for the soul. The primary meaning of the verb used in Luke 22:43 is of bodily strengthening, but the meaning in this verse evidently includes strengthening of both body and spirit. The sight of the angel and the encouraging message from heaven would bring renewed power. The Greek word translated “agony” is held to have the primary meaning of fear by some who would render it “agony of fear.” But again Hebrews 5:7 gives confirmation of that which the whole revelation about Christ would declare, that it was Godly fear or reverence that was basic in His experience. The Bloody Sweat The word translated “great drops of blood” can be rendered “blood clots.” It seems to mean more than that His drops of sweat resembled drops of blood by their size and frequency; otherwise there would be no reason or force in such a comparison. “Bloody sweat” is a good translation. Plummer cites the case of Charles IX of France as reported by Stroud, The Physical Cause of the Death of Christ (Commentary on Luke, p. 511): “During the last two weeks of his life (May 1754) his constitution made strong efforts...blood gushed from all the outlets of his body, even from the pores of his skin; so that on one occasion he was found bathed in a bloody sweat.” Even if no such phenomenon were known today, it would not prove that such did not occur in the case of Jesus. His agony was unique. The nobler the person, the more sensitive he is to suffering of this type.

Transfiguration and Gethsemane

Burton has an interesting comparison between the experiences of Christ and the three disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration and in Gethsemane. On both occasions the death of Jesus was the object of solemn contemplation. At both times the disciples were borne down by sleep. It is hard to believe, however, that there was anything miraculous about this sleep. Excited labors and great sorrow oppressed them before and after the meeting at Caesarea Philippi and in Gethsemane. In both, the disciples were only able in a very small way to enter into the experience of Jesus. One was on a mountain; the other in a garden. The one scene shows in majestic fashion His deity; the other, His humanity. A brilliant cloud and luminous appearance transfigured Christ on the mountain; deep lines of suffering and a bloody sweat veiled His face in the moon-light of Gethsemane. Heavenly messengers came on both occasions to commune with Jesus. (The Expositor’s Bible, Commentary on Luke, pp. 365-6). The Answer The Gospel narratives do not explicitly state that the prayers of Jesus were answered. It was not necessary. The omission of such a declaration is in harmony with the sublime insight and delicacy of detail of the whole narrative, in which so much more is implied than is told. The teaching and life of Jesus made it unnecessary to affirm that God actually did hear His prayer. The coming of the angel, the growing resignation of Jesus, and His final calm and peace as He returned to His disciples and faced arrest, all show clearly that God heard and answered His prayer. The cup was not removed: He was given the strength to drink it. Hebrews 5:7 declares plainly that His prayer was answered. The Rest

It is not possible to understand the instructions given by Jesus to the disciples at the close of the period of agony, except by perceiving that an indefinite period of time elapsed between the statements: “Sleep on now, and take your rest” and “It is enough; the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us be going” (Mark 14:41, Mark 14:42). How long Jesus sat in silent contemplation, while the disciples slept, we do not know. From the Garden of Gethsemane the company of Roman soldiers, the priests, and their temple hirelings could be seen emerging from the city gate. Jesus awakened the three and advanced to the gate where He also awakened the remaining eight. It would be all too severe a test of their faith and courage. At least they must have the ordinary privilege of being wide-awake. The enemy must not be allowed to imagine that Jesus was hiding from them or trying to escape. He would go forth to meet them. The Arrest

All three of the Synoptics agree in calling the hostile force “a multitude” or “crowd.” This suggests a mob, a sort of irregular and unorganized force, but John uses the Greek word which means a Roman cohort or a detachment of it. He states that it was under its officers and the chief priests themselves. Permission from Pilate would have been necessary to secure the support of Roman soldiers. It is plain during the trials that Pilate was expecting the crisis and was well informed as to its nature.

Every conceivable preparation had been made for this arrest: the crowd of temple guards ready for any wicked enterprise their cruel masters might plan; the Roman soldiers to give security and legality; the swords and staves for warfare, if any unexpected uprising of Zealots in His defense should threaten to thwart their plan; Judas, the traitor, to make sure that no mistake was made in the identity; lanterns and torches to give light if dark corners must be searched; a pre-arranged sign that was to be both the means of recognition and the signal for immediate action; the chief priests leading the mob; the high priests in the court rooms rehearsing suborned witnesses.

Jesus’ Deity

Never at any time in His ministry does the Master show more impressively the peace which is above the understanding of the world. His suffering is now past; there is no fear or anger. Jesus shows incredible gentleness even toward the traitor. His rebuke of the chief priests is full of dignity and measured reason so much more effective than hot wrath. The majesty of heaven shines out in every word and deed in this hour of humiliation. The crowd seems to have surged forward rapidly as they approached the Garden for Mark says: “And straightway while he yet spake, cometh Judas” (Mark 14:43; Matthew 26:47). Jesus now stood forth and revealed Himself to the entire crowd: “ Whom seek ye?...I am he.” The multitude, overwhelmed by the sudden revelation of His divine nature with which He had a number of times before prevented their laying violent hands upon Him, fell to the ground in awe and fear. Again Jesus addressed them asking whom they sought. Since nothing had happened to them and Jesus now asked again of their purpose, they regained their courage and arose. They answered: “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus identified Himself to them and asked that the disciples be permitted to leave without being molested. It was at this juncture, after Jesus had made Himself known, that Judas went through the empty performance He had planned. He had agreed to the exact procedure he would follow, and even though Christ had stripped him of the traitorous necessity, he followed on through as he had planned. Judas had chosen the ordinary salutation between friends as the means of identification and the signal for

concerted action.

Judas When the manner of the betrayal is contemplated, all efforts to cover up the degradation of Judas and clothe him in motives more or less respectable fail. Judas accepted leadership in laying out the procedure and in fulfilling it (Matthew 26:48, Matthew 26:49). His words: “Hail, Master” and the traitorous kiss are the climax of baseness. The Greek verb is compounded and means “to kiss effusively or in a most demonstrative manner.” It is thus that great love and the joy of meeting again after having endured a prolonged agony of parting, would be expressed. Judas came forward boldly and was presumably in the place of greatest danger, if Jesus chose to use His power to defend Himself. Judas was convinced that Jesus would not resist arrest.

Jesus had this very night conferred upon His disciples the title, “Friends,” but He had at that meeting in the upper room made it clear that Judas was not included now in the circle of His friends. Why, then, did He call Judas, “Friend,” while he was in the very act of treachery? The Greek words are different in the two passages. “Comrade” or “companion” is a better translation of the word used here. Gibson thinks that Jesus uses the term in a last appeal to turn Judas from his wicked course. It is hard to believe that this is the meaning. It seems rather to be used to show Judas that he is recognized and to remind him of his absolute baseness in betraying the One who had been his comrade. It is rebuke rather than an appeal, but does not seem to be either an expression of sarcasm or anger. The Authorized Version translates: “Friend, wherefore art thou come?” while the American Standard Version says: “Friend, do that for which thou art come.” The verb must be supplied; there are no punctuation marks in the uncial manuscripts. The broken sentence is full of pathos. It may be filled in as follows: (1) “Friend, this is that for which thou art come [I know your treachery]” ; (2) “Friend, do that for which thou art come”; (3) “Friend, is it this for which thou art come?” ; (4) “Friend, is this [a kiss] fitting for that for which thou art come?” This last interpretation would make the statement practically the same as given in Luke 22:48, but it is more likely the latter was added immediately after Judas had kissed Him.

Peter

Peter’s rash attack upon the first villain he saw rushing toward Jesus to lay violent hands upon Him, was exactly what he had planned to do. He had declared he was ready to die with Christ. Any one who talks of the cowardice of Peter has to shut his eyes to the fact that Peter rushed to attack a company of Roman soldiers and a mob of temple guards and underlings. Here were eleven men against a multitude, and only two swords in the possession of the eleven! On the way to the Garden Jesus had given more enigmatic advice: “He that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise a wallet; and he that hath none, let him sell his cloak, and buy a sword” (Luke 22:36). Peter had answered promptly that for once he had foreseen the need and forestalled the request: “And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords.” Some suggest these were knives used in preparing the Passover lamb, but the Greek word is “sword,” and Peter certainly was swinging a sword in the Garden. One wonders where and from whom they had procured these swords, how long they had been in their possession, who had the other one, and whether they had been keeping night watches in Bethany during this dreadful week. The question arises why Jesus did not compel them to throw them away as soon as they made known they were in their possession or why He had not forced them to confess they had armed themselves before this. But the dramatic scene in the Garden emblazons the teaching of Jesus as no private rebuke could have done. It also afforded

miraculous proof on the spot that He could have destroyed them all and saved Himself, if He had so willed. Jesus' answer to their revelation that two of them were carrying swords is also cryptic: "It is enough." ("We will not discuss the matter further now. It is useless to argue with you in your present mood.")

How swift moving the action was in the Garden is shown by the fact that as the high priest's servant rushed forward to be the first to seize Jesus, Peter rushed up and swung his sword wildly at the attacker. Just how one could swing a sword at an opponent and only clip off an ear is seen if the servant saw Peter lunge and swing and in the instant dodged to escape the blow. Thus a solid blow which might have split the head or severed the shoulder, was almost escaped, but for the ear. Luke shows that the apostles cried out to Jesus for permission to use violence: "Lord, shall we smite...?" (Luke 22:49). The action was so swift and simultaneous that Peter's blow followed before an answer was given. As Jesus reached out and healed the ear of the servant, He said: "Suffer ye them thus far." This is hard to interpret. Was He addressing the apostles and commanding that they desist and refrain from violence? or was He addressing the soldiers and asking that no reprisals be taken against the apostles since He was rebuking their rash action and healing the wounded man by a miracle?

Peter had previously misunderstood the command of Jesus to procure swords. It had only been a figurative way of saying that they are now to face such violent persecution, they must beware to preserve their lives. Now Jesus vigorously corrected Peter's misunderstanding. "Put up again thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Or thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels? How then should the scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?" (Matthew 26:52, Matthew 26:53). In this moment Jesus gave final proof of the voluntary character of His death. He set forth the fundamental principle that His cause is not to be advanced by violence and that whoever resorts to violence can expect to suffer the same. This does not mean that law and order are abolished and the innocent and the helpless left to the mercy of the wicked oppressor. Paul solemnly points out that God decrees law and order and the king does not bear the sword in vain, but is ordained of God to protect the helpless from the vicious (Romans 13:4).

Final Rebuke A last rebuke was given to the mob: "Are ye come out as against a robber with swords and staves to seize me? I sat daily in the temple teaching, and ye took me not" (Matthew 26:55). Luke reports: "but this is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53). The devil has been close at hand. He has lost the battle with Jesus. But he rules this crowd of villains, and has his way for the time being. Matthew shows that Jesus also reminded them that they were fulfilling Scripture in this violence toward the Messiah. "The scriptures of the prophets" had foretold His shameful suffering and death at the hands of wicked men. Unable to stand and wait or to surrender with Jesus, the disciples turned and fled. In the heat of the attack they were ready to die, but now in the quiet of the surrender under the stern rebuke of Jesus and His reminders that all of this is in accord with the will of God and the express predictions He had made through the prophets, the fear and indecision which they had previously resisted overwhelm them.

128. Chapter 15 - Who Crucified Jesus?

Chapter 15 - Who Crucified Jesus? The Passion Play When the Passion Players of Freiburg, Germany, toured America some years ago, the acting of Adolf Fassnacht, who attempted to impersonate Jesus, and of his fellow-players received much publicity and aroused a variety of comments. The Freiburg drama claims to date from 1264, and hence to be older than the Oberammergau cycle. The Freiburg Company played in Cincinnati, and the Jews of the city made a heated protest against such a play being permitted. The protest was led by David Philipson, the distinguished rabbi who ministered to the great Rockdale Temple in Cincinnati. The agitation was part of the world-wide movement the Jews had started against the continuance of the Passion Play at Oberammergau.

Jewish Reaction An excerpt from David Philipson's sermon at Rockdale Temple is quoted from the Cincinnati Times-Star, and illustrates the attitude and argument of the modern Jewish scholar:

Now, what is the real truth of the arrest and death of the Founder of Christianity? Jesus of Nazareth, a mighty spirit, a preacher of magnificent force, a prophet dwelling on the heights, incurred the opposition and hatred of the priestly class among the Jews. It was this class, and not the Jewish people, whose enmity Jesus aroused. In fact, we read in the New Testament story that the people heard Him gladly. His denunciations of corruption in high places infuriated the priest politicians who sat in those high places. It was they who delivered Him to those authorities for condemnation on the ground that He incited His hearers against the powers that were. And those powers were Roman, and not Jewish. The Roman was the political overlord. The Jewish state had lost its political independence and was a vassal of the Roman power. The Jewish courts had not the power to inflict capital punishment. That was the prerogative of the Roman ruler — in this case Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator of Judea. Furthermore, crucifixion was never a Jewish mode of punishment. It was the Roman method of putting the condemned to death.

...The entire result of the showing is to emphasize the guilt of the Jews as a whole, in place of the guilt of the party of priest politicians, and to minimize the part that the Roman governors and soldiers enacted in the tragedy.

Christian Reaction The Christian world has generally considered it a piece of irreverence bordering on blasphemy for any actor to attempt to represent Jesus. Hence "the unwritten law" that kept such efforts from the field of drama. The plays of the obscure German villagers were tolerated because they were little known and because of the peculiar circumstances out of which they arose. But many Christians naturally ask: Why should we need the futile efforts of an actor attempting the impossible, when we have the glorious accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John? And there is a certain atmosphere of commercialism which is repulsive in the passion plays on the screen, in American theaters, and even in the Barnum and Bailey publicity which accompanies the Oberammergau performance nowadays and draws such a motley throng of the idle rich and curiosity-seekers.

Jewish Denial of Historic Jesus The above objections to the passion plays are, of course, on a different basis from that of Mr. Philipson, who argues that while it was too bad that a man named Jesus, who was a great preacher, should have been killed, yet it happened two thousand years ago and is now ancient history, and therefore should not be brought up today, because it stirs reproach against the Jews. His attitude, in turn, is in contrast with that of the Orthodox Jews of today who assailed Rabbi Wise of New York as a traitor because he declared that the Jews would have to change their views and admit that Jesus is a historical figure — that such a man as Jesus of Nazareth once actually lived. Rabbi Philipson represents the modernistic Jew who occupies a parallel position to the modernistic Christian in denying the unique inspiration and truth of both the Old and New Testaments, and in making God an idea and religion a matter of the inner conscience and of self-worship.

Attitude of Ancient Jews The position of Mr. Philipson is also in contrast with that of the Jews in the early centuries as reflected in the Talmud. They were not at all willing to admit that Jesus was “a mighty spirit, a preacher of magnificent force, a prophet dwelling on the heights,” but instead represented Him as so vile that in eternity He is to be condemned to be cast into boiling filth. Their hatred was so violent that they avoided even calling His name, but referred to Him by every epithet of contempt they could conjure up, such as “the one hung,” “the fool,” “son of the stake,” “such a one,” “that man,” “the Nazarene.” They went through the New Testament attempting to contradict every good or wonderful thing affirmed of Jesus, and instead to invent some foul thing as the actual fact in the case. They denied His birth of a virgin, and instead affirmed that He was born of the illicit union of Mary of Nazareth with a Roman soldier named “Panther.” (They invented this word “Panther” from the Greek noun for “virgin,” parthenos.) Much of their abuse is so violent that it is utter nonsense, as when they affirm that Jesus was “the worshipper of a brick” — a statement which even Klausner admits is silly and meaningless. Their desperate efforts to overcome the shameful manner in which Jesus was rushed through a series of trials and condemned to death led them to invent the following narrative : On the eve of the Passover they hanged Yeshu (of Nazareth), and the herald went before him for forty days, saying, “Yeshu of Nazareth is going forth to be stoned in that he practiced sorcery and beguiled and led astray Israel. Let every one knowing aught in his defense come and plead for him.” But they found naught in his defense and hanged him on the eve of Passover.

Here the malicious character of the hasty, farcical trials of Jesus is changed into a forty-day search by a herald for one person in all Israel who would say one thing favorable to Jesus! This Baraita from the Talmud holds that the death of Jesus was entirely justifiable, as in the case of any other criminal who has been properly tried and proved guilty. Mr. Philipson holds, on the contrary, that the death of Jesus was not deserved, and is to be charged against the Romans, with a modicum of blame resting upon the Sadducees.

Jesus Blamed by Modernists

Modernists, like Kirsopp Lake of Harvard occupy a position in contrast with Mr. Philipson. Professor Lake delivered a series of lectures in the Unitarian Church in Cincinnati some years ago. A large portion of his hearers were from the Rockdale Temple and the Hebrew Union Seminary. He made a continual effort to discard the New Testament and play to the Jewish section of his audience by rewriting the record in order to reflect great credit upon the enemies of Jesus and

discredit upon Him. He discussed at great length the death of Jesus, and was as zealous as any Jew could be to remove all blame from them.

Mr. Philipson and Professor Lake are one in the persistent effort to shield the scholars of Israel (the Pharisees) from any blame, and to make out that it was purely a matter between the Sadducees and Jesus. Rabbi Philipson frankly admits “corruption” of “the priest politicians,” but Professor Lake defended the Sadducees warmly. He declared that their temple market was both legitimate and well managed and that Jesus’ death was “the result of His attempt to break up the meat trust of Jerusalem, which was making no more profit than a modern bank would expect.” His view, when simmered down, was simply that no one is to be blamed for the death of Jesus: He brought it on Himself and deserved it. The view of Professor Lake reverts to the Talmudic position that Jesus was responsible for His own death, although the malice which bursts forth in abusive epithets in the Talmud is carefully concealed by the modernist under delightfully delicate and courteous language. Such was the original difference between the methods of Judas in the garden and of the Sanhedrin in the courtroom.

Why Raise the Question?

Why should we discuss the problems as to who was responsible for the death of Jesus? Certainly not to stir up prejudice against the Jews of today. But the cross of Christ stands in the center of Christianity. The death of Jesus, joined with His resurrection, is the most important event in history. It is not a dead issue, but living “good news.” The Christian should be eager to study everything that is to be known about the death of Christ.

First Century Attacks

Jesus died because it was the will of God that He should give His life on the cross for the sins of the world. The effort to make out that those who put Him to death were not to blame constitutes as direct an attack upon His deity as could be made. The Epistle to the Hebrews indicates that through the early decades of the history of the early church the effect was being made to justify those who had put Jesus to death: A man that hath set at nought Moses’ law dieth without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense. And again, the Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:28-31). The marginal reading for “an unholy thing” is “a common thing.” The passage depicts the unspeakable shame of the Christian who turns his back upon Christ and tramples the Son of God under his feet by declaring that the death of Jesus means no more than the death of any other person who was put to death and deserved what he got. Such is the effort of the Talmud to justify the death of Jesus on the ground that He was an evil-doer or of the modernist on the ground that He was a meddler in the management of the temple, which was none of His business.

Motives

Human conduct seldom arises out of a single motive. One motive may predominate, but a variety of purposes is usually intertwined. Sometimes noble and base motives are combined in the most inexplicable fashion. The death of Jesus was the result of the devil’s campaign to destroy the Son

of God, as it was the fulfillment of God's program for the saving of a lost world. The human agencies which entered into the transaction were numerous and actuated by a diversity of motives.

Judas

Judas Iscariot bears part of the responsibility for the death of Christ. The strange view is sometimes expressed that Judas is not at all to blame for what he did, since he fulfilled prophecy and played an essential part in the divine program as Jesus freely predicted. This confuses the meaning of predestination and destroys the freedom of will. The Gospel writers clearly represent Judas as yielding to the wiles of the devil instead of the pleadings of Jesus and as being entirely responsible for the course he chose. Jesus tried to save him, but in vain. A father may predict the doom of his boy while toiling to save him from it. When the boy plunges on to destruction, in spite of all the prayers and warnings of his father, the boy, and not the father, is to blame. The fact that Jesus foreknew the end of Judas does not mean that He compelled him to pursue this course. Hear His solemn warning in the upper room on the night Judas betrayed Him: "He that dipped his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth, even as it is written of him: but woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had not been born" (Matthew 26:23, Matthew 26:24). This is the estimate of Jesus concerning Judas' guilt. The testimony of Judas himself concerning his own guilt is as follows: "Then Judas, who betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood. But they said, What is that to us? see thou to it. And he cast down the pieces of silver into the sanctuary, and departed; and he went away, and hanged himself" (Matthew 27:3-5). The motives of Judas have been the subject of much discussion. Some hold that Judas meant well by his action, and was only trying to force Jesus to come to blows with His enemies, destroy them, and proclaim Himself the material Messiah, which the apostle so ardently desired Him to be. But this is contrary to the repeated declarations of Scripture that the devil had taken possession of Judas: "The devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him" (John 13:2; Luke 22:3); "And after the sup, then entered Satan into him" (John 13:27); "Not one of them perished, but the son of perdition" (John 17:12). Judas did not mean well. If there were any confused ideas about forcing Jesus to become a material Messiah by this means, the Scriptures fail to reveal the fact. Judas is represented as falling before the overweening passion for gold. He became a thief and stole from the treasury of the little group (John 12:6). Stung by the rebuke of Jesus which uncovered to himself his infamy, he went out and plotted with Jesus' enemies to betray Him (John 12:1-8; Matthew 26:6-16). It was not until he saw Jesus condemned to death that he realized the full enormity of his crime; and then, overcome by remorse, he hanged himself. One of the proofs of the unique inspiration of the Scriptures is the marvelous restraint which the Gospel writers show in their reference to Judas. They show no hatred, and the Scriptures are absolutely free from any sort of abuse of those who slew Jesus. Could any of us have told the story of Jesus' death and not yielded to the desire to impress the character of Judas' infamy by heaping epithets upon him?

Fiction

Typical of the modern Jewish attitude is the novel by Sholem Ash, The Nazarene, in which Judas is made the hero. Numerous other such novels have undertaken the defense of Judas. It is a clever and popular method of attacking the deity of Christ. The Roman Government The Jews were the most stubborn and turbulent people with whom the Romans dealt. They occupied a strategic output of the empire; they were a sort of buffer state against the barbarous Scythians to the east. Every effort was made not to offend the religious scruples of the Jews. The Roman standards were kept out of Jerusalem, the Holy City. The Romans refrained from unnecessary breach of the Sabbath-day regulations and did not place the effigy of the emperors on the coins in use in Judea. They allowed the Jews to try cases where Jews only were concerned, but did not permit them to exact the death penalty. The Roman procurator doubtless investigated the movements of John the Baptist and of Jesus and satisfied himself thoroughly that these campaigns were not militaristic, but purely spiritual; and, therefore, permitted them utter freedom. Herod Antipas beheaded John the Baptist and attempted to drive Jesus out of Galilee. He was given a bold reply by Jesus and did not push the matter further. But the Romans in no way interfered with the ministry of Jesus. A number of Roman officers appear in the New Testament account, and frequently in the most favorable light. The centurions of Capernaum and of Caesarea were particularly noble men; the former believed on Jesus, and his servant was healed by a miracle; the latter was the first Gentile to accept the gospel. The centurion who had charge of the crucifixion of Jesus seems to have indulged in no wanton cruelty and to have possessed extraordinary insight into the character of Jesus. The conduct of the soldiers at the cross is in contrast with the brutality of those in the barracks when Jesus was tortured. Lysias, the captain of the guard at Jerusalem, showed courage, fairness, and skill in his rescue of Paul. The centurion who had charge of the attempt to scourge him, and the two centurions who escorted him to Caesarea, also faithfully exercised their power. The centurion who escorted Paul to Rome also appears to have been a good man. The Roman governors — Pilate, Felix, and Festus — do not make so favorable an impression. But the Scripture makes absolutely clear that the move to destroy Jesus did not arise from the Roman Government.

Lynch Law

If the ministry of Jesus did not clash with the Roman authorities, why, then, did they put Him to death? A Roman governor condemned Jesus to death because the Jews demanded it. They did not possess the power to kill Jesus and demanded that Pilate execute Him. It is interesting to note that in the cases of the stoning of Stephen and the attempted assassination of Paul, the Jews did not hesitate to take the law into their own hands to override the Roman authorities, and to indulge in mob violence. Why did they not assassinate Jesus in like fashion? Evidently His personality was so tremendous and the character of His movement so widespread and powerful that they did not dare to kill Him without the consent of the Roman governor.

Jewish Charges The Sanhedrin condemned Jesus to death on the ground of blasphemy, because He claimed to be the Son of God, but they knew that they could not hope to procure conviction from Pilate on this ground. Luke states that the charges they made against Him before the governor were: “We found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ a king” (Luke 23:2). The first charge was that Jesus was a revolutionary, which Pilate knew well enough to be untrue; the second was a deliberate falsification; the third sounded like a real charge, but Pilate soon saw that Jesus was no rival of

Caesar's. The Jews had tried desperately to bring Jesus into collision with Rome by attempting "to come and take him by force, to make him king" (John 6:15) and by demanding He pass on the question as to whether tribute should be paid to Caesar (Matthew 22:15-22), but in each case they had met with signal failure. Pilate quickly saw the innocence of Jesus: "For he knew that for envy they had delivered him up" (Matthew 27:18). He struggled desperately to save Him. The Jews Controlled Pilate

Why, then, did Pilate yield and condemn Christ? Did the basin of water free him from guilt? Pilate condemned Jesus for the same reason that a man yields today when a pistol is suddenly pointed at him. Israel was a vassal of Rome, but the Jews had a way of compelling the conqueror to obey on occasion. They finally pointed at Pilate the double threat of starting a bloody riot and of placing charges against him at Rome that he was a traitor to the Roman interests. Pilate knew that they were compelling him to commit murder, but he also knew that his record in Palestine was so black that he did not dare risk stirring the Jews to appeal to Caesar against him. The basin of water could not make him "innocent of the blood of this righteous man," for he counted his position as governor and his life as of more value than his character, and passed the death sentence on Jesus. He must answer for what he did. But Jesus Himself said that his guilt is not so great as that of the Jews. "Pilate therefore saith unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to release thee, and have power to crucify thee? Jesus answered him, Thou wouldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath greater sin" (John 19:10, John 19:11). It is true that the particularly cruel method of execution by crucifixion was of Roman, and not of Jewish origin, but this is immaterial. Who was it that persistently cried: "Let him be crucified"?

France's Puppet Pilate

Anatole France in his novel, The Procurator of Judaea, attempts to attack Christ by means of fanciful inventions concerning Pilate's later life. Josephus relates how Pilate was deposed as procurator of Judaea because of his bloody suppression of a gathering of Samaritans on Mount Gerizim in a.d. 36. Tradition declares that Pilate was banished to Vienne, France and finally ended his life by suicide. The crux of Anatole France's fiction is a scene where Pilate in his exile, old age, and ill-health is bemoaning his fate. A friend questions him as to a certain man, Jesus of Nazareth, whom he had executed by crucifixion during his governorship of Judaea. But Pilate can remember not a thing about such an event. It must have taken place, of course, but he was always executing political prisoners, and this had just been a day's work for him — nothing more. Thus Anatole France undertakes to deny not only that Jesus is the Son of God, but to deny that He was even a man of more than ordinary stature. His trial and crucifixion had made no more impression upon Pilate than any other of the many criminals and political prisoners he had executed. With a wave of the hand of fiction Anatole France would deny the historic testimony of the awe and terror of Pilate and of his wife, of the repeated declarations of Pilate as to the innocence of Jesus and the heinous nature of the murder he was being compelled to commit. The enormous impact of the Son of God upon the hardened Roman governor during the trials is shrewdly blotted out by Anatole France. But infidelity always tends to overreach itself and destroy its own product. Such an attack upon Christ by means of fiction is as if one would destroy a powerful fortress by splattering its wall with a hand-full of mud. The People

It is useless for the modern Jewish scholar to attempt to shift the blame for the death of Jesus upon the Romans and a clique of priest politicians. “The chief priests and the elders persuaded the multitudes,” and “they all say, Let him be crucified.” “And all the people answered and said, His blood be on us, and on our children” (Matthew 27:20, Matthew 27:22, Matthew 27:25). It is doubtful if a greater piece of hypocrisy has ever been perpetrated than the pious protest of the Sanhedrin a few weeks later against the preaching of the apostles: “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name: and behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” But Peter and the apostles answered and said, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:28, Acts 5:29). The contention that not all the Jewish people were responsible for the death of Jesus has, of course, some merit. The eleven apostles were not to blame, nor were the faithful disciples and women who had supported Jesus in His campaign and followed Him to Jerusalem. The Jewish people who were not in Palestine at the time knew nothing of the entire transaction. But Jesus was crucified at the Passover, and the city was thronged with the multitudes of worshippers from all over Judaea and the Roman Empire. The statement that the chief blame rests with the corrupt leaders who misled the people is quite true. This is always true. Whenever a nation pursues a false, wicked course, there are always some people with enough wisdom and virtue to regret and oppose the prevailing policy. But the majority of the people think but little, and follow their leadership blindly. This is even true in a democracy with modern means of education and communication. The greatest blame for World Wars I and II does not rest with the German people, who are a liberty-loving people, but with the atheistic philosophers of Germany who poisoned their thinking and the militaristic clique who filled them with wicked ambitions. Thus, in the time of Christ, Israel was cursed with a vicious leadership which lured the nation with false teaching and imperialistic designs of worldwide dominion under a material Messiah. But the people were responsible for following such leadership when they beheld the very light of heaven in the person of the Son of God.

Condemnation by Jesus When Jesus condemned the populous cities of Galilee for their unbelief, He did not say: “Woe unto the little group of intellectual leaders of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum!” He said: “Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you. And thou Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? thou shalt go down unto Hades: for if the mighty works had been done in Sodom which were done in thee, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee” (Matthew 11:21-24). It is hard to see how the condemnation of the people as a whole could have been more explicit or terrific. Jesus did not predict the downfall of the little group of leaders who had misled these great cities, but the doom and utter desolation of the cities as a whole. The people had seen the light and had deliberately shut their eyes. The Destruction of Jerusalem

Jesus also condemned the Holy City itself and, with a breaking heart, pronounced its doom. He paused on the brow of the Mount of Olives in the midst of His triumphal entry, and, instead of inveighing against the Sanhedrin, He included the city and the nation in the sweep of His tremendous denunciation: “And when he drew nigh, he saw the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace! but now they are hid

from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, when thine enemies shall cast up a bank about thee, and compass thee around, and keep thee in on every side, and shall dash thee to the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19:41-44).

It adds to the dramatic intensity of this denunciation and prediction of destruction that it came at the very moment that the excited multitudes were indulging in the wild enthusiasm of their triumphal reception of Him as the Christ. Jesus understood the fickle character of their praise and the false premises on which they thought that He was the Messiah. In Galilee when they tried to take Him by force and make Him king, being impatient with His spiritual ministry, and He refused, they turned away and rejected Him. So here at last they led Him in triumph into the city when they saw Him boldly facing His enemies and declaring by His manner of entrance that He was the Messiah, for they were sure He would now use His power to destroy His enemies and start on the long expected campaign of world dominion. When they saw Him refuse to do this, they turned against Him with all the suddenness and blindness of an unreasoning mob.

Jesus' lament over the city, as recorded in Matthew, comes at the close of His fiery denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees, and shows how clearly He included the city and nation as a whole in His denunciation, even as they were about to become one in their rejection and crucifixion of Him: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matthew 23:37, Matthew 23:38).

Sermons of Apostles The apostles took the same position in the sermons recorded in the early chapters of Acts; they charged both the rulers and the people with the death of Jesus. At Pentecost Peter boldly charged the whole multitude with the crucifixion: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know; him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay" (Acts 2:22, Acts 2:23). It would he impossible to improve upon this statement. It includes the elements of God's foreknowledge and plan to save the world through the death of Christ, the cruel part of the Romans in the crucifixion, and the fact that the persons who really did the deed were the Jews who forced the Romans to kill Jesus. This was directed at the Jews who thronged Jerusalem at the Pentecost feast, and not at the Sanhedrin. The people frankly admitted their guilt and cried for pardon: "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Peter repeated this charge in his second sermon: "...Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied before the face of Pilate, when he had determined to release him. But ye denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of life..." (Acts 3:13-15). But he adds the declaration that neither the people nor the rulers had realized the enormity of their crime: "And now, brethren, I know that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers" (Acts 3:17). When the apostles were arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin, Peter cast the same charge in the teeth of the Sadducees and Pharisees: "Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified" (Acts 4:10). The thrilling prayer offered by the church upon the release of the apostles quotes the second Psalm and its fulfillment: "Why did the Gentiles rage,

And the peoples imagine vain things? The kings of the earth set themselves in array and the rulers were gathered together, Against the Lord and against his Anointed: for of a truth in this city against thy holy Servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel foreordained to come to pass" (Acts 4:25-28). When the Sanhedrin arrested the apostles again and charged, "Behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us," Peter boldly repeated his indictment: "We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, hanging him on a tree" (Acts 5:28-30). Stephen fiercely assailed the Jews for the death of Christ: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? and they killed them that showed before of the coming of the Righteous One; of whom ye have now become betrayers and murderers" (Acts 7:51, Acts 7:52). His Friends

There must have been many people in Jerusalem when Jesus was crucified who viewed His death with a breaking heart. The disciples beheld it from afar, with the exception of the little group standing by the cross. Surely there were many who had been healed and blessed by Jesus who loved Him still as He was led forth to die as a common criminal. But the fact that Jesus refused to use His miraculous power to defend Himself and even refused to speak in His own defense led these friends to remain silent. The Zealots The Jews had a two-party system in the time of Christ: Sadducees and Pharisees There were three minor sects: Herodians, Zealots and Essenes. The Essenes were a communistic sect localized west of the Dead Sea. They do not seem to have had any contact with Jesus and do not enter the New Testament account. The Zealots were the extremist party demanding insistently rebellion against Rome to free Israel. They were particularly strong in Galilee. They seem to have played a larger part in influencing the locale and method of Jesus' earlier ministry than is generally understood. They doubtless shared most enthusiastically in the triumphal entry, as they had in the effort to force Jesus to become a material Messiah after the feeding of the five thousand. They were the dangerous element in the national complex from the viewpoint of the Jerusalem hierarchy, who dreaded to put Jesus to death during the feast while the hosts of Galileans were at the capital. They seem to have become indifferent to Jesus or to have turned against Him in disgust and assisted in demanding His crucifixion, when He refused to use violence in self-defense and to declare Himself a material Messiah. Their activities are not mentioned by name in the Gospels, but their influence constantly underlies its movement. The Herodians The Herodians enter but twice into the Gospel narrative and each time they are represented as joining in the malicious plots to destroy Jesus (Mark 3:6; Mark 12:13; Matthew 22:16; Luke 20:20). The Pharisees, in their desperate eagerness to kill Jesus, were even willing to forget their natural hatred of the Herodians and to invite the assistance of these wily politicians in carrying out their plots.

Modernists (both Jewish and Christian in their leanings) try to shield the Pharisees from any blame for the death of Jesus. It seems to make them feel uneasy to hear of such pious scholars being held responsible for crucifying Jesus. They would rather shift the burden to the Sadducees, who were politicians more than scholars. But the New Testament repeatedly affirms that both of these sects led in the innumerable plots against the life of Jesus and finally compassed His death. The Sadducees The bitter struggle of the Sadducees and Pharisees with Jesus really began before

Jesus entered upon His ministry. The scorn with which they viewed John the Baptist and his message and the scathing indictment which he, in turn, made against them showed how inimical they were to such a spiritual movement. A deadly struggle was inevitable. When Jesus began His ministry by throwing down the gauntlet to the Jerusalem hierarchy in cleansing the temple, it was like casting a lighted match into tinder. It was a direct challenge to the Sadducees' management of the temple, but it was also an affront to the Pharisees. Because they had been in harmony with the chief priests in this matter, the Pharisees were jointly responsible for it. The Sadducees had actual control of the temple and were centralized in Jerusalem so that the clashes with them were limited almost completely to Jesus' visits to the capital. But the Pharisees were the school-teachers of the nation, and every town and village saw the bitter struggle with them over the fundamental principles of the traditions of the elders versus God's word, love versus legalism, humility versus pride and conceit, the search for the lost versus exclusive self-righteousness, Jesus as God's Son and the divine program for saving the world versus the religious system of Judaism. It became immediately evident that if Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, then they must yield the leadership of the nation to Him. This they refused to do and, instead, began to plot His death. The first definite plot to destroy Jesus arose, not from the Sadducees, but from the Pharisees in combination with the Herodians (Mark 3:6). The Sadducees rejection of the doctrine of the resurrection was at the heart of their bitter persecution of Jesus and the church. The Pharisees The facts that the Sanhedrin condemned Jesus to death and that the Pharisees had the majority in the Sanhedrin also show that the responsibility for the death of Christ cannot be placed solely on the Romans and the Sadducees When Herod the Great became king, he immediately executed forty-five leading members of the Sanhedrin who were Sadducees and put Pharisees in their place. The Sadducees had been supporting the Maccabean family which Herod supplanted, and the blow also shattered the power of the council. The high priest still presided, but the Pharisees controlled the Sanhedrin. The New Testament shows that some of the Pharisees were noble and friendly to Jesus, but the party as a whole was encompassed by prejudice and full of bitter hatred that led them to join with their natural enemies, the Sadducees and Herodians, to bring about His death. The Pharisees led in the attempts to brow-beat and silence John the Baptist (Matthew 3:7; Matthew 21:23, Matthew 21:32; John 1:24). Early in the ministry of Jesus, the Pharisees plotted His death (Mark 2:6; Mark 3:6). They repeatedly sought to stone Him (John 5:18; John 7:19; John 8:59; John 10:31; John 11:8, John 11:57; Mark 11:18). Nicodemus was a notable exception (John 3:1-9). His protest against the wicked plots of the Pharisees brought from them a bitter, sarcastic reply (John 7:45-52). The horrible torture of Jesus by the members of the Sanhedrin when they passed the death sentence reveals the venom of the Pharisees as well as the Sadducees (Matthew 26:67, Matthew 26:68). Both the Sadducees and the Pharisees joined in taunting Jesus as He hung upon the cross (Matthew 27:41; Mark 15:31; Luke 23:35). The Present Situation

What should be our attitude toward the Jews of today in the light of these facts? Should we hold them in contempt because of what their ancestors did? Most certainly not. But the modern Jew must answer for his crucifixion of the Son of God in the year 1962. He is directly responsible for his present rejection of Jesus and for his malicious attacks upon Him and upon God's final message to the world. But, in spite of this, our constant effort should be to imitate the attitude of Jesus on the cross: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." This, however, does not mean that our regard for their feelings should silence our proclamation of the message of Christ. If their protest against the passion plays be valid, then our brotherly obligation would be not to remind

them of the cross of Christ in any way. Our love for the Jewish people should be expressed in the same way as toward every other non-Christian in the world: A passionate proclamation of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. A Christian cannot contemplate this topic without some very solemn and humbling reflections on his own guilt. Inasmuch as it was for our sins that He went to the cross, then we must share the universal guilt of His crucifixion. Poignant is the appeal of the moving hymn: “Once I crucified my Saviour, Shall I crucify again?”

129. Chapter 16 - The Good Confession Before Pontius Pilate

Chapter 16 - The Good Confession Before Pontius Pilate Content of the Good Confession

Upon issuing the invitation to men that they accept Jesus as the Son of God and their Saviour and Lord, we are accustomed to call upon them to make the good confession which the apostle Peter made at Caesarea Philippi. We make a most careful study of that scene, the movement of the ministry of Jesus leading up to it and the psychological background of the apostles and the multitudes as they pondered the person and work of Jesus. We sometimes overlook the fact that Peter did not understand the full import of the confession which he made, as is seen by his horror a few moments later at the idea of Jesus submitting to death at the hands of His enemies. The death and the resurrection of Christ are the very center of the proposition that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Neither Peter nor the other apostles understood this at Caesarea Philippi. When Peter stood up on the day of Pentecost to lead men to accept Christ as the Son of God and as Saviour and Lord, he did understand it.

Accuracy of the Statement The most surprising thing is the fact that the statement which Peter made at Caesarea Philippi was so all-sufficient that it expressed the full truth of the whole gospel as preached at Pentecost and did not need to be changed in order to encompass the facts of redemption by the death of Christ. Does this help us to sound the depths of Jesus' joy as He cried, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven"? Not all the meaning which the good confession was ultimately to convey had yet been revealed to Peter, either through the teaching and conduct of Christ or through direct guidance from God, but the statement which he made was sufficient to serve as a vehicle for the full truth which should finally be made known when Peter used the keys of the gospel (the divine plan of salvation) to open the kingdom of God to men.

Other Confessions The solitary emphasis which is so often placed upon Peter's confession sometimes leads us to overlook other magnificent confessions which are found in the Gospel narratives. Shortly before the scene at Caesarea Philippi, Peter had exclaimed in answer to Jesus' searching inquiry as to whether they, too, intended to desert Him: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God" (John 6:68, John 6:69). A careful analysis of this confession will show how completely Peter identifies Jesus as God, as the sole Saviour of men and sole source of truth and as the Lord and Master of our faith and conduct. This confession, like that which Thomas made to the risen Christ, always stirs our hearts.

Martha's Confession The confession of Martha is remarkably clear and powerful. Out of the depths of agonized parting with her brother, Lazarus, facing the reality of death and the utter helplessness of man without divine help, she answered boldly the challenge of Jesus. After affirming that He is the "resurrection and the life," He demanded whether she believed this. "Yea, Lord: I have believed that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, even he that cometh into the world." Here again are the divine elements seen in the good confession of Peter. The Greek word "to confess" is a

compound verb which means “I say the same thing.” The good confession means more than a mere collection of words, no matter how full of meaning. It means the committal of the whole life. Whatever Jesus says, we will say after Him; whatever He commands, we will seek to do for Him; wherever Jesus sends, we will endeavor to go with Him. Now notice how beautifully the good confession of Martha presents this proposition. Long ago she had made up her mind: “I have believed.” She cannot quite comprehend the depth of what Jesus is saying about being “the resurrection and the life” nor just what He intends concerning Lazarus, but she accepts Jesus absolutely as the Christ, the Son of God, and whatever He says is right and she will avow it whether she can fully comprehend its meaning now or not; whatever He does is right and she will bow to His will. The marvel of it all is that the actual life and teaching of Jesus stand this supreme test. Who can point out one sin in his life or one error in His teaching?

Jesus’ Confession

It is not without reason that we place so much stress upon the confession Peter made. The marvelous condensation and the profound depth of the declaration are joined with a thrilling statement of approval by Jesus and a prediction that upon this sublime truth He is to build His church. Nevertheless, it is worthy of note that when the apostle Paul admonished young Timothy to be faithful and steadfast, he did not cite the confession that the apostles made that night when Jesus walked on the water, the confession of Thomas, Martha or Peter. He reminded Timothy of the confession Jesus Himself made: “I charge thee in the sight of God, who giveth life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed the good confession; that thou keep the commandment, without spot, without reproach, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Timothy 6:13, 1 Timothy 6:14). This strong reminder to Timothy stirs our desire to study carefully this confession that Jesus made and compare it with the one which Peter made. The statement of Paul moves us to wonder why he said “before Pontius Pilate,” when Jesus made the same confession on the same night before the high priest. Was it because the ecclesiastical trials were so very base and farcical, while the trials before Pilate did at least have some semblance of dignity and fairness on the part of the judge at some phases of the proceedings? Was it because the trials before Pilate furnished the final climax and the legal basis for execution? Is there any vital difference in the confessions that Jesus made before each of the judges? Or did the citation of the confession before Pilate naturally include that which had preceded? At any rate, we shall be compelled to consider both confessions and shall seek to compare both with that of Peter.

It is of supreme import that Jesus did make the good confession and that He made it in the most public manner conceivable and at the cost of His life. Everything that could be devised was brought upon Jesus to make Him recant and deny, but He confessed! The wiles of the devil attempted to weave a silken web about Him in the wilderness as he urged the Son of God to renounce His identity and bow the knee for a joint rule of the world. The cross was then only in distant prospect. Now in the presence of death the devil would use chains instead of silken strands; and all the intimidation that earth could concoct is thrown into the effort to get Jesus to deny instead of confess.

One of the central contentions of the modernists is that Jesus did not claim to be the Son of God, but that this “superstitious belief” grew up by gradual accretions and was affirmed later by the writers of the New Testament. This theory is of one piece with their attempts to deny the bodily

resurrection of Jesus and yet to claim that they accept the New Testament accounts. In each case the fact is so central and is so repeatedly affirmed and so strongly emphasized that when omitted the entire Gospel accounts are left completely without meaning or purpose. The gospel becomes like a circle with the circumference rubbed out and the point from which the radius had been drawn obliterated. Thus do the unbelievers of the twentieth century attempt to obscure with violence to the records the fundamental reason which caused the unbelievers of the first century to use violence in their determination to destroy Jesus rather than believe on Him.

“But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou art the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his garments, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy: what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? They answered and said, He is worthy of death” (Matthew 26:63-66).

Confessions of Jesus and Peter

Notice the phrasing of the solemn question as the high priest demands that Jesus answer under oath: “The living God,” “the Christ, the Son of God.” See how the very elements included in Peter’s confessions at Caesarea Philippi are here repeated in this final, fatal question of the high priest. This is most remarkable. Peter did not understand all that was included in the confession he made at Caesarea Philippi at the time that he made it. How much did the high priest understand of the deeper significance of what he asked in such careful phrases?

Well could Paul admonish Timothy to give unyielding fidelity to this good confession of Jesus at the trials: Jesus died because of the confession He made. Even in the manner in which the question was phrased there was dramatic emphasis and accuracy. It is idle for us to speculate how the high priest came by such accuracy of statement. We only marvel at it. On another occasion the high priest had spoken words urging the death of Jesus, words which John declares meant much more than he intended or understood (John 11:49-53). The answer of Jesus to Simon Peter had looked forward to the future, to the establishment of the church. He had declared implicit approval of what Peter had said in his confession and predicted not merely the establishment of the church, with the proclamation of God’s plan of salvation, but also His death and resurrection which were to be the very center and substance of the gospel. Now standing before Caiaphas and facing the fulfillment of what He had predicted to Peter, Jesus looks beyond His death and resurrection to the second coming when these wicked men who presume to pass judgment upon God’s Son shall find themselves at the judgment seat of the One they have condemned and crucified.

“Thou Hast Said”

Many have experienced difficulty because Jesus did not give to Caiaphas merely the simple, direct reply: “I am.” Why did He give what seems to be an obscure or even evasive reply: “thou hast said”? One needs to do no more than turn to the parallel account of Mark to assure himself that Jesus did answer in the affirmative: “Again the high priest asked him, and saith unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven” (Mark 14:61, Mark 14:62).

Moreover, both accounts show that Jesus not only answered in the affirmative, but clearly and boldly affirmed much more than the high priest had asked. The instant action of the high priest in rending his garments (both hands seized the robe at the neck in front and tore a slight rent in the customary gesture of horror at blasphemy) shows that the answer of Jesus was clearly understood by all as affirmative. Then why does Matthew report that Jesus replied, “Thou hast said,” while Mark records, “I am”? A study of the Talmud and other Jewish writings assists our understanding of the fact that Matthew was reporting the exact language of Jesus as He used a Hebrew idiom. Mark was translating into a phrase which no one could possibly misunderstand. In such mysterious harmony amid diversity did the Holy Spirit guide the testimony for the ages.

Scholars disagree as to whether the Hebrew idiom carried merely an affirmation or a particularly emphatic affirmation. Some speak strongly of no passage having been found in Hebrew literature which shows that this idiom was a particularly strong method of affirming. The fact seems to have been overlooked that the idiom might have been used with special emphasis by Jesus, even though it was not ordinarily so used. If the comparison be not too uncouth in the consideration of so tragic and supreme an act of God, it might be faintly illustrated by citing the modern college slang: “You said it!” When spoken with the characteristic skill and fervor of American college boys, this reply is ever so much more meaningful than a mere “yes” or “I agree,” or “I think so.” A gesture or a subtle intonation may have added terrific power to this statement of Jesus to Caiaphas. In spite of all their nights of deadly plotting to do Jesus to death rather than accept Him as Christ, in spite of all their public bravado in rejecting the miracles of Jesus and His equally divine teaching, in spite of all their efforts to avoid the real issue and to convict Jesus on some sort of trumped-up, perverted testimony of false witnesses, in spite of everything the devil could suggest to them, the high priest had said it He had said it before the world. He had said it so all the ages would hear it. He was about to see to it that no one could ever overlook, conceal or deny that he had said it, for he was about to punctuate his question with the death sentence. Every effort that the devil made to overwhelm the Son of God in shame and oblivion but lifts the higher, to the very heaven itself, the “good confession” that Jesus made.

“Henceforth” The story is told of two intimate friends who were separated for life because one became a business man in America and the other a missionary in the wild sections of western China. After many decades, the cherished dream of a lifetime came true when the business man circled the globe to visit his bosom friend. Swiftly fled the precious days and hours, and the time of final parting had come. The missionary had accompanied his friend to the edge of a sharp valley and from opposite mountains the two friends gazed through their tears and solemnly lifted hands in farewell. The missionary uttered the word of impassioned faith and farewell, “Hitherto”; the traveler replied with grandeur of soul, “Henceforth.” This word “henceforth” in the reply of Jesus is most impressive. According to the plans of the high priest there was to be no “henceforth,” at least only a few hours until the desperate deed was done. How calmly Jesus looks beyond the cross and the tomb to the gates of heaven and the throne beside His Father and to the final consummation when He should return to judge the world! Moreover, the word implies that the very deed the wicked agents of the devil are about to accomplish against God’s Son will be the means by which God’s plan for redeeming from the devil’s clutches all who would return to God may be accomplished. “Henceforth,” from this very hour, out of this very agonized experience of death, which seems to be the end of all, is to be the beginning of all. Out of His death is to come the

crowning proof of His deity in His resurrection. Their rejection of Him is to be followed one day by the summons to His throne to answer for their lives. In this magnificent fashion does He affirm His deity. And there is the added reminder in the language quoted from Daniel 7:13 and Psalms 110:1. It is as if Moses and the prophets, speaking across the centuries, cry “Amen” as Jesus makes the good confession before Caiaphas.

Pilate and Jesus

“Pilate therefore entered again into the Praetorium, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered, Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee concerning me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth” (John 18:33-37). As they had sought conviction of Jesus in their own court upon other charges and only brought out the claim of Jesus to be the Son of God as a last resort, so in the court of Pilate, the Jews charged Jesus at first with “perverting our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ a king” (Luke 23:2). The King

Taking up the most tangible and important of these charges, Pilate began his examination by asking Jesus: “Art thou the King of the Jews?” If we knew more about the mental attitude of Pilate, we could follow more closely the subtle turns of repartee. Did Pilate emphasize “thou” or “king” or “Jews”? Or was the whole question asked in an even voice that as yet did not betray mysterious awe and fear or bewilderment mingled with the customary callous cruelty of this hardened Roman? “Are you a king? You, a poor, defenseless person who enters Jerusalem in triumph on the colt of an ass and who now is betrayed and condemned by his own people?” If Pilate emphasized “Jews,” then he threw the weight of his ridicule at this hated nation of trouble makers. Matthew, Mark, and Luke report briefly the final answer of Jesus: “Thou sayest.” Notice how Jesus again uses this form of affirmation and how clearly the context in John shows that it is an affirmative answer. John gives the trial before Pontius Pilate in much more vivid and detailed fashion.

Pilate on Trial

Jesus answered Pilate’s question with a question which was like a warning flare sent up in the night to warn the lost of deadly peril. It was Pontius Pilate who was on trial, not Jesus of Nazareth. If Pilate was at ease when he asked his first question, he certainly was not when he received the reply. This was part of the purpose of Jesus — to startle Pilate into an immediate realization of the desperate situation the governor was in and the fateful choice he was about to make. Moreover, the question of Pilate was one which did not lend itself to an immediate, categorical answer, because what Pilate understood by “King of the Jews” was different from the royalty of Him who was King of kings. If Jesus answered “Yes,” His reply would lend itself to misunderstanding by Pilate and perversion by the Jewish accusers. If Jesus said “No,” then all the teaching and conduct of Jesus by which He had laid specific claim to be King would have been stultified. If He had asked Pilate for a definition of terms, the trial would have settled into a dull routine of technicalities, from

Pilate's point of view.

Jesus asked His question in such a fashion that it nettled Pilate and shocked him into a partial realization of what he faced. It is as if Jesus turned on Pilate with that greatest of questions: "What think ye of the Christ? Or are you thinking? Do you permit yourself to be made a tool of base men? Or are you conscious that you must speak for yourself and answer for your choice this hour?"

Pilate answers testily, "Am I a Jew?" and cites the strange circumstance of a rebellious nation delivering into his hands one of their own whom they accuse of treachery against Rome. In other words, Pilate complains that he cannot be expected to understand the issues of the hour, he is not a Jew, the questions of their religion and law are not in his sphere. The Confession

Jesus insists in His answer that Pilate cannot avoid the responsibility of searching out the meaning of the charges and the validity of the claims of the One before him. See how clearly Jesus proclaims that He is a King and how Pilate immediately understands Jesus' answer as affirmative, even though it was couched in language which forced Pilate to think hard and fast: "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews." Some suggest that by the word "servants" (the Greek can be rendered "officers") Jesus did not refer to the multitude of disorganized, unarmed disciples who would be no match for either Jerusalem or Rome in mere military terms, but that He meant the twelve legions of angels that He could have summoned in a flash. The Roman soldiers in the Garden had heard Jesus declare this (Matthew 26:53).

Pilate's Dilemma

However Pilate may have understood this part of Jesus' reply, he quickly took up the confession which Jesus made and asked Him again to make the issue stand out apart from the spiritual declaration of Jesus as to what His kingdom was like: "Art thou a king then?" The answer of Jesus is now categorical, although He couches His reply in such language as to remind Pilate that the circumstances of His public ministry had been such as to compel the Roman governor to phrase the very truth, even though it is in the form of a question: "Thou sayest that I am a king." Jesus' declaration that He had come into the world as a king not to enslave men by the sword, but to set them free by the truth, and that any man may become a citizen of His kingdom by accepting His witness and obeying the truth He reveals, stirs memories of Caesarea Philippi.

Even though He was talking to a Roman governor who could not be expected to understand such declarations as Jesus made to Peter after the good confession, yet there is an undercurrent in what Jesus said to Pilate that makes us think of what He said to Peter: A church, a kingdom, is to be set up and people are to be permitted to enter, if they will accept this sublime proposition concerning the person and work of Jesus. In spite of the frank confession of Jesus that He was a King, Pilate went forth to declare he could find no fault in Him and to strive desperately to save Him. When all other charges and issues failed, the Jews were driven again to declare their real charge: "We have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God. When Pilate therefore heard this saying, he was the more afraid; and he entered into the palace again, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou?" (John 19:7-9). Here was the final, the unavoidable issue. In terms of kingship and of authority the confession had before been made — in such terms as would naturally arise in the court of the Roman governor. Even in such terms the

deity of Jesus had been clearly affirmed by Christ and strangely sensed by Pilate. The Son of God As Pilate asked the supreme question, Jesus did not again answer with a question. Pilate's conscience was already on fire, the spiritual nature of Jesus' kingdom had already been declared. He remained silent. That silence was awesome. It heightened the alarm of Pilate and concentrated attention upon the solemn affirmation of Jesus which followed Pilate's bitter protest. "But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore saith unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to release thee, and have power to crucify thee? Jesus answered him, Thou wouldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath greater sin" (John 19:9-11). In this tremendous assertion, Jesus again declares His deity, His authority, His invincible power. No threats of Rome's power could stand in the presence of the Son of God. Alone, seemingly helpless, facing the death sentence — yet He calmly affirmed that not even the Roman governor could do aught against Him, "except it were given thee from above." No more need now be said to Pilate. He is the real prisoner at the bar. If he lifts his hands against the Son of God, he must answer to God. When we make the good confession we "say the same thing" with our Master Himself as He gave His life for us. We affirm both our belief in the great truths concerning His person and work, as the Son of God and our Saviour and King, and we pledge to give our whole lives in daily service to Him. "I charge thee in the sight of God, who giveth life to all things, and of Christ Jesus who before Pontius Pilate witnessed the good confession; that thou keep the commandment."

130. Chapter 17 - The Death of Christ (Historical Details)

Chapter 17 - The Death of Christ (Historical Details) Matthew 27:27-56;Mark 15:16-41;Luke 23:26-49;John 18:39-40;John 19:1-30

Importance The death of Christ for the sins of mankind is the central doctrine of Christianity. By his own deliberate rebellion against God, man is hopelessly lost in sin. He cannot save himself. It is only through God's mercy and in obedience to Christ's commands that salvation is offered to man. "God so loved the world, that he gave (gave to die on the cross for us) his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." All efforts to separate the moral elements of Jesus' teaching from this central proposition inevitably collapse. A social gospel without a divine Redeemer is the futile substitute of the enemies of the cross.

Relation to Resurrection and Deity

It is impossible to separate the death of Christ from His resurrection. As the atoning death of Christ gives meaning to the resurrection, so the resurrection gives power to His death. Inherent in the doctrine of the death of Christ for our sins is the sublime truth that Jesus is the Son of God. Both the person and the work of Christ enter into the good confession that He is the Son of God and our personal Saviour. When Peter made the good confession at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus immediately introduced the first clear prediction of His death. The teaching of Jesus reached its climax in the revelation of His approaching death, its voluntary character, and its purpose. The fact of His divine person was not to be separated from the divine work He was to accomplish in dying for our redemption. The actual events of His earthly life center in the fulfillment of this great purpose of His coming into the world.

God's Plan From the hour of His birth in Bethlehem, the devil sought to destroy God's Son. But God saw to it that the Messiah was not slain as an infant in Bethlehem during the bloody orgy of Herod the Great. The Messiah was not to be killed until He had fully proclaimed the divine message and warned men of the righteous judgment of God: neither on the precipice outside Nazareth, nor in any of the many encounters in which the Jews sought to assassinate Him. Well did Paul declare to King Agrippa: "This thing hath not been done in a corner." The devil sought the death of Christ as a supreme object, but he did not foresee that by God's grace the death of Christ was to become the very means of wresting men from the clutches of Satan. Its Place in the Preaching of the Apostles

Even a hurried glance through Acts will show how each summary of a gospel sermon carries profound emphasis upon the death of Christ. It had not been easy for the disciples to arrive at this position. With the full pattern of God's plan of salvation in our hands it is still hard for us to understand the death of Christ. It is not hard to understand the incredulous horror and despair with which the disciples first heard Jesus predict His death at the hands of His enemies. But when finally the fact was faced in the glow of the resurrection, it was understood and became the central proposition of their preaching. By encompassing the death of Jesus and a death of such incredible

cruelty and shame, the devil hoped to destroy the influence of God's Son among men. But the shameful death on the cross became the very glory of the gospel. A glance through any Christian hymnal which has not been polluted by the deletions of the modernist will show a throng of triumphant hymns voicing the faith, hope, and love that center in the cross of Christ.

Friend and Foe at the Cross When Christ went to His death on the cross, friend and foe were gathered in breathless array. The whole event may even be considered from the angle of their attitude and reactions. It is sometimes said that from the arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane to His death on the cross no voice was raised in protest. This is not in accord with the historic facts. It is true that no voice was raised in defense of Him at the trials. None was sought or permitted. Nevertheless, there were certain protests, some tributes, and some venomous attacks that amounted to unconscious confessions. The dull, dead silence of the godly portion of the nation showed not merely a lack of courage and faith which we constantly lament, but their silence thunders down through the ages the protest of all good men of the nation against the incredible crime. And there were audible protests.

Judas A slouchy, slinking figure sagging under the burden of a sin that could not be measured is seen crossing the temple courts to the very entrance to the temple. A conference with the high priests is sought and grudgingly obtained. Hear the terrible outcry from the overburdened conscience of Judas: "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood" (Matthew 27:4). What a protest and from what a source! Not even the sneers and jeers of the chief priests can drown out this protest, as they said: "What is that to us? see thou to it." Then Judas "cast down the pieces of silver into the sanctuary, and departed; and he went away and hanged himself." It is hard to see how Judas could have managed to cast the pieces of silver into the holy place (the Greek word naos is well translated "sanctuary" and cannot be taken to mean less than the holy place). He seems to have been talking to the priests at the entrance to the court of priests which surrounded the temple structure. Was he able from such a location to hurl the silver into and through the doorway to the holy place? or did he in the boldness of despair brush past the priests and violate the court of priests by entering it, and going to the entrance to the temple cast therein the blood money in token of his desperate remorse and his open declaration of the corruption which filled the house of God in the person of these priests? He was about to die by his own hands. Death at their hands was not a thing to be avoided. And did the priests look on in amazement and not move to strike him down because they realized his desperate mood and did not desire unnecessary violence and undesirable publicity at this juncture? The blood money in the hands of the priests proved a most embarrassing object. Their consciences were hardened, but somehow they could not bear the sight of the money anymore than Judas had been able to do so. They could not leave it lying on the temple floor. They had to collect it and hurried to get rid of it. They tried to cover up their embarrassment by pious pretense that "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is the price of blood" (Matthew 27:6). What else is this but a damaging admission of the quality of their own crime? Their scruples were very absurd since they had paid the money out of the treasury to purchase a terrible crime, but now felt it would not be fitting to put the money back into the treasury because it had been so used. No charitable act such as buying a field in which to bury strangers could really cover up their crime. Nor could it get the money out of sight since the name "field of blood" clung to this plot of ground which had been stripped of its useful soil to make pottery and was sold for burial purposes. Matthew informs us that it was called "The field of blood"

because it had been bought with “blood money.” Luke, in Acts, gives the additional information that the plot was so called because the death of Judas occurred on this very plot of ground as “falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out” (Acts 1:18). This description fits with the brief summary of Matthew that “he hanged himself” since the body probably hung unnoticed in an obscure thicket until the rope broke or the neck gave way causing it to “fall headlong” in the manner described. It is Acts that summarizes in regard to the purchase of the field. The statement of Luke that Judas obtained the field finds further illumination in the account of Matthew of just how it took place that Judas cast the money into the sanctuary and the priests bought the field. That which a person does through an agent, he does himself. Since the peculiar process by which the money had been used to buy the field had already been told in detail by Matthew, it was not necessary for Luke to do ought but offer a general summary.

Pilate’s Wife A further protest against the crime was uttered in the very urgent warning Pilate’s wife sent to him in desperate haste as he sat on the seat of judgment: “Have thou nothing to do with that righteous man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him” (Matthew 27:19). Pilate had been summoned at dawn for the trial. His wife, sleeping late, had been filled with terror by a dream concerning Jesus. We are not told whether the dream was miraculous, sent of God that Pilate might have full warning of the terrible responsibility that rested upon him, or was the natural mental reaction from many hours of fearful anxiety over a crisis they had seen approaching and could not fathom. The significant language of Pilate’s wife, “that righteous man,” bespeaks a considerable acquaintance with the unparalleled situation Pilate faced and makes the clearer how great was the responsibility of Pilate in the sight of God.

“The Acts of Pilate”

Fascinating because so little is told of so much we would like to know, this became the fertile field for the imagination of the apocryphal writers to spin out their customary additions to the New Testament. The Roman Catholics delight to propagate such fanciful documents; and some Protestants have shown an interest in this apocryphal gospel, “The Acts of Pilate,” which was recently republished in this country under the title “In Caesar’s Court.” A priest in the Vatican at Rome showed an old copy of this work to a tourist preacher who seized upon it as wonderful new information about the life of Jesus and had it copied, brought it back with him, and arranged for its publication in pamphlet form. It requires no more than a glance for any one at all informed to see that it is one of the fanciful romances of the second and third centuries which the ignorant masses delighted to weave about the Gospel narratives. Justin Martyr in his writings refers to the fact that the record of the trial of Jesus before Pilate was to be found in Rome and some have tried to argue that this document, “The Acts of Pilate,” is that legal record. One needs merely to read the document to see that it is not a legal paper, but a fanciful development of Roman Catholic origin. It represents the images on the standards held by the Roman soldiers as bowing before Jesus in profound worship as He is brought into court. A grotesque emphasis is given by having the Jews object that the Roman soldiers were using their hands to make the metal images bow and the entrance is made all over again to show that the metal images actually bowed themselves. Instead of image worship, the images are worshipping! All sorts of imaginary developments are added to the Gospel accounts. Charges are made against Jesus which are not mentioned in the New Testament and witnesses testify for Jesus, even though they have to be protected by Pilate from death at the hands of the Jews. See how contradictory this is to the account of the New Testament

where “they all forsook him and fled,” and even Peter denied the Master. This dream of Pilate’s wife attracted their fancy and caused the apocryphal writers to describe conversations in which she is represented as a convert to Judaism.

Pilate

Protests from a judge that he is being compelled by mob violence to commit murder by passing the death sentence upon an innocent man may show the weakness of the judge, but they constitute very strong evidence for the Prisoner. “I find no crime in him...will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?” “Behold, I bring him out to you, that ye may know that I find no crime in him.” “Behold, the man.” “Take him yourselves, and crucify him: for I find no crime in him.” These desperate protests are recorded in John’s narrative. In Matthew’s Gospel we read: “What then shall I do unto Jesus who is called Christ?...Why, what evil hath he done?...I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man; see ye to it.” Lacking the courage and character to risk his fortunes and his life, Pilate yielded to mob pressure, but his protests against the crime bear witness to the righteous character of Christ and to the profound influence of His divine personality upon the hardened Roman governor. The Mocking

John tells of the mocking of Jesus by the soldiers before the death sentence was passed; Matthew and Mark describe it after the death sentence. The soldiers probably continued their cruel sport after the condemnation. Bernard objects that Jesus would not have been scourged twice, but this is pure assumption. The only limit to the torture inflicted was that it must stop short of death, else death would be by scourging rather than by crucifixion. We do not know how long He was scourged, but the extreme cruelty applied to Jesus during the trials explains why He probably fell under the cross and why He died so soon after being nailed to the cross.

Matthew and Mark tell of the crown of thorns at the close of the trials in what is evidently a summary of what had happened shortly before, when the torture of the soldiers had been begun at the command of Pilate. He had hoped by this means to stir pity in the hearts of the enemies or vigorous, vocal protests from the strangely silent friends of Jesus so that he might manage to spare His life. The absence of any effort whatsoever in the Gospel narratives to give a lurid account of the torture of Jesus is most remarkable. The scourging was usually done while the prisoner was tied to a pillar and sometimes lead pieces were attached to the thongs. In arraying Jesus as a King the soldiers put a royal robe upon Him and a crown of thorns upon His head (the thorn branches of the Dom tree which abounds throughout Palestine would have been easily obtainable), and a reed instead of a scepter in His hands. To kneel before Him in mock humility and then leap to their feet, snatch the reed from His hand, smite Him with it and then spit upon Him was sport for these Roman soldiers.

Simon The attitude of the people of the city as Jesus was led forth to die seems to have been stupefied silence. The statement of John that Jesus “went forth bearing the cross for himself” taken with the declarations of the Synoptics that Simon of Cyrene was seized as he was coming in from the country suggests that Jesus fell under the weight of the cross at the city gate; and “as they came out” they seized the nearest man who happened to be Simon “coming from the country” and compelled him to carry the cross. The mention in Mark’s Gospel of the sons of Simon, Rufus and Alexander, suggests that they were prominent members of the early church and that Simon probably became a disciple. This stirs interesting reflections as to Simon’s emotions as he looked

back upon the time when he carried the cross of Christ. If the Rufus of Romans 16:13 is the same man as this Rufus, the son of Simon, we have some slight evidence that Mark's Gospel was written and sent to the Church at Rome. There is a touching reference to the mother of Rufus in Romans 16:13. The Women of Jerusalem The fact that a great multitude of women, who were not of Galilee where His strongest support was found, but from Jerusalem, followed after Him wailing and lamenting, shows that the vicious mob of hirelings, who had served the Sadducees and Pharisees in bullying the Roman governor, had not represented all the people. Afraid to take a stand, but broken-hearted at the condemnation of Christ, the great multitude of His friends had endured in silence. Were the women in less danger or braver than the men, or more emotional and unable to control their grief that they so openly expressed their protest against the death of Christ?

Instead of joining them in their weeping and wailing or expressing appreciation for their sympathy, Jesus' words to them were so calm and self-possessed that they almost amount to a rebuke. It is like a mighty sermon full of terrific warning delivered to the nation over the heads of these devoted women. They need not weep for Him. He is not being overwhelmed and destroyed by superior, godless force. He is voluntarily giving Himself in fulfillment of God's will. To those who are slaying Him, not as doing God's will but as inspired by the devil, He issues a terrible warning of doom. Even as Jesus caused His judges to feel in a mysterious manner that they were the ones who were on trial, so now He caused the nation to meditate upon the solemn warning that He is not the One in need of sympathy, but the Jewish people themselves who are about to face destruction unparalleled and incalculable. "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold, the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the breasts that never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" As at the triumphal entry, so now Jesus predicts with terrible emphasis the judgment of God which is to come upon the nation in the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans.

He does not weep now as He did at the triumphal entry. The time for weeping is past. Doom portends, for the nation has rejected God's Son and is slaying Him. The times of distress will be so great that mothers will have double distress in witnessing the cruel butchery of their children by the Romans as well as in meeting the same fate themselves. The enigmatic saying about the green tree and the dry is one of those "hard sayings" in which the teaching of Jesus abounds. It would stick in the memory and tantalize the hearer to prolonged meditation as to the meaning. "If they [the Romans] do these things [torture and crucifixion] in the green tree, [Jesus — hard to burn, for no fault was found in Him] what shall be done in the dry [the Jewish nation, godless and rebellious — easy to burn]?"

Golgotha

Bernard denies that the crucifixion took place on a hill, but he can find no valid explanation for the name, "The Place of a Skull." Gordon's New Calvary just outside the Damascus Gate to the north of the city is shaped like a skull and two caves facing the city on the side of its rugged cliff look like eyeless sockets. Cyril of Jerusalem, one of the early Christian writers, describes Golgotha as "rising on high and showing itself to this day." "Calvary" is the Latin name; Kranion, the Greek;

Golgotha, the Hebrew name for the hill. The wine offered to Jesus just before the crucifixion was rejected by Him because it contained an anesthetic. A charitable organization of women in Jerusalem was accustomed to provide this wine for men about to be crucified so as to dull their senses and relieve the agony. Jesus would not avoid any of the suffering and would keep His mental faculties alert to the end. Matthew names one of two ingredients; Mark, the other: myrrh and gall. The Crucifixion The Romans used crucifixion as the method of execution for vicious criminals and notorious rebels. The cross was laid upon the ground while the victim was nailed to it, and then lifted and dropped into the hole which had been dug for it. Usually rough, unhewn timbers were used for the cross, which sometimes was shaped like a capital X or a capital T or with the cross piece in the position which tradition has handed down. Justin Martyr very clearly affirms in his Dialogue with Trypho the exact manner in which this crosspiece was placed. The fact that the inscription was placed above the head of Jesus also confirms the form of the cross to which the church has always held rather than a T or an X. Kirsopp Lake, in a class on Early Christian Literature at Harvard, insisted that this passage from Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho simply could not be translated because the Greek could not be construed. One of the students volunteered that he had construed all the Greek words in the passage without difficulty. The professor asked him to translate. When the student had finished a perfectly grammatical translation of every word, the professor objected that this could not be correct because the cross was in the form of a T and not as the church has always held. Thus does prejudice, desperately determined to develop and prove new theories, seek to obliterate the straightforward testimony of this early Christian scholar.

Sometimes the feet were tied to the cross as well as nailed, but both the hands and feet of Jesus were nailed to the cross (Luke 24:39). Sometimes a small seat in the nature of a rough projection on the tree or main timber of the cross enabled the victim to rest the weight of his body upon it as he was dying. There is no indication of this in the New Testament. The cross was frequently tilted forward to increase the agony by throwing the whole weight of the body upon the hands and feet. The cross of Christ was probably not so high as is usually pictured, but it was high enough to necessitate the use of a reed to reach a sponge full of wine to His lips. His Garments The royal robe had been removed and His own clothes had been placed upon Him at the close of the torture by the soldiers in the barracks. Now, as was the custom, His clothes were removed and became the spoils of the executioners. A quarternion of Roman soldiers always had charge of crucifying a victim (John 19:23). The beautiful, seamless robe, which was Jesus' outer garment, seems to have been the only thing He possessed at death in the way of earthly goods which was worth a quarrel. It was probably the gift of some devoted friend. The four soldiers divided the other garments of Jesus, but gambled for this one in order not to tear it. Thus did rude pagans fulfill intimate prophecies concerning the death of Christ written centuries before. Certainly no one can claim that these soldiers, as they cast their dice in the shadow of the cross, were really trying to fulfill an Old Testament prophecy (Psalms 22:18; John 19:24). The Inscription

We learn from classical writers that it was customary for the criminal to bear a scroll containing the record of his crimes, as he went forth to be crucified. No specific mention has been found in classical writers of the custom of nailing these charges over the head of the victim as he was dying. No mention is made of such charges being nailed over the heads of the robbers. This increases our speculation as to whether Pilate was showing his violent resentment against the

crime he had been compelled to commit by nailing the charge against Jesus over the top of His cross. The four narratives differ, but indicate that the full statement was: “This is Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.” This was both a protest and a cynical taunt as Pilate wrote the words with his own hand preparing to meet the furious hostility which was sure to result from his action. The fact that no fault had been found in Him which could be proved is most solemnly attested by this inscription placed above the dying figure. Whether because it was customary or because Pilate desired to give the widest publicity to the title, he wrote it in the three current languages: Latin, the official language of Rome; Greek, the universal language of all the Roman Empire; Hebrew, the language of the Jews. Probably the latter was in Aramaic so the uneducated might read, since the common people did not know Hebrew and the educated would have been able to read the Greek. The Jewish leaders were enraged when they saw this title because it sounded too much like a statement of fact and was manifestly a charge against them instead of Jesus. They made a bitter protest to Pilate, but since they had staked all on the charge that Jesus claimed to be a King, they could not ask for a different charge. They did ask for a different statement of the charge, but Pilate having rendered his legal decision and written the title himself, refused to be bullied any further. “The perfect tense (Gr. ‘I have written’) marks the permanence and abiding character of his act.” To have rewritten the title that Jesus said He was King would have shifted somewhat the burden of the crime from the Jews to Pilate and have shifted from the real convictions of Pilate to the venomous claims of the Jews. The only recourse the Sadducees and Pharisees now had was to station themselves in front of the cross and interpret the title for all present by their sarcastic jibes. This well suited their plans and mood. Thus did the forces of evil colliding over the death of Christ produce an immortal epitaph written over the cross itself.

Taunts that Offer a Tribute The malicious Jewish leaders who had at last encompassed the death of Christ were the ones who supplied the unusual cruelty of the execution. No matter how wicked a person has been, as he dies people usually have a way of at least withdrawing and leaving that which belongs to God in God’s hands. Least of all do people with the slightest spark of self-respect attempt to slander and ridicule a good man as he is dying. Something of the almost unbelievable depths of diabolical wickedness into which these hypocritical leaders had sunk is seen in the hideous venom and spleen which they cast upon Jesus as they walked back and forth before the cross jeering at Him, inviting Him to come down from the cross, and offering to believe upon Him, if He would do so. The One who was dying knew better, for it was He who had revealed how Abraham said to the rich man in torment: “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, if one rise from the dead.” And then, in spite of their evil intent, these wicked leaders offered by their insults a tribute for all the ages to ponder: “He saved others; himself he cannot save.” So He had saved others! They admit it in their rash attack which finds them telling the truth in spite of themselves. Moreover, they call attention of all the world to the fact that although He actually had the miraculous power (as they admit), yet He did not use it to save Himself. Nay, He could not, if He would save lost men for whom He had come to die. In a most notable manner the infuriated attacks of these base men tell a supreme truth of which they in their blindness are not conscious. The Prayer for Forgiveness

“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” This, the first of the sayings on the cross, was uttered in the midst of the early agony of death and the insulting taunts hurled by His enemies. It is the world’s supreme revelation of forgiving love. Stephen’s imitation of Christ as He

died praying for his enemies is most remarkable. It is hard for us to understand how it could have been possible for Jesus to say: “they know not what they do.” They had seen the miracles of Jesus and had admitted they were miracles and that they were unable to deny it, yet they had sought to deceive the people, to pretend that Jesus was in league with the devil and, utterly rejecting the teaching and earnest appeals of Jesus, to overthrow His influence with the people and finally to destroy Him. This prayer of Jesus should warn us to leave the judgment of the world in the hands of God who alone knows the hearts and lives of men. If, under such circumstances, it was possible for Jesus to pray for the forgiveness of those who were murdering Him and leering and jeering at Him as He died in agony on the cross, how simple it should be for us to forgive those who wrong us. The idea of this prayer is repeated by Peter on the day of Pentecost and following. In depicting the death of the Messiah, Isaiah had predicted that He would make intercession “for the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:12). This prayer is not based on the philosophical error that knowledge is virtue. It does not teach that if the Jews had known they necessarily would have done right. It rather shows that the measure of guilt is determined by the measure of understanding and willful intent. It does not prove that any sin against knowledge cannot find forgiveness. Jesus prayed that these wicked men might be forgiven, but we are not to understand that this means an appeal for their forgiveness in their present unbelieving and unrepentant state. God does not force forgiveness and mercy upon those who are rebellious. Man must change his heart and life, if he would be reconciled to God. The prayer rather means that they may be spared to hear and accept the full gospel when it is preached at Pentecost. The very mercy and justice of God which were manifested in Jesus’ voluntary death on the cross would have prevented Him from praying that they might be forgiven apart from their acceptance of God’s love in giving His Son to die for them. While doubtless taking in its compass the Roman soldiers who were compelled to crucify Him, the main current of His prayer seems to reach out to the Jewish leaders who had plotted and achieved the crucifixion. The Penitent Thief The first words of Jesus after He was nailed to the cross do not reveal the slightest tinge of hatred or bitterness toward His hateful enemies. At every turn we see not only Jesus, the perfect Man, but Jesus, the Son of God. His second word is just as clear a revelation of His divine character. Matthew and Mark tell that both the thieves joined the crowd in reviling Him. Why they should have done this is not clear, unless they resented the fact that their execution had been hastened to furnish evil company for Jesus in His death. Perhaps in their agony they joined in the jibes without depth of thought. As time passes, however, one of the thieves finds himself strangely moved by the conduct of the mysterious Person who is dying beside him. Perhaps he had heard Him preach in the days when crime had seemed more desirable than virtue, and now it all comes back with tremendous power. Whatever were the mental processes that lie back of the change of heart of this thief, when he addresses his fellow criminal, his words are very pointed and show deep reflection: “Dost thou not even fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: But this man hath done nothing amiss” (Luke 23:40, Luke 23:41). No witnesses had been permitted to appear in defense of Jesus at the six hasty and headlong trials, but now, in spite of all, protests arise. What a protest and tribute is this from lips unaccustomed thus to defend the Saviour of men!

It is curious how many people have become confused over this incident; some, seeking to pattern their own salvation after that of a dying robber; others, even denying that the robber was saved. The following items emerge from a careful study of the text: (1) The robber was repentant (Luke

23:40). He was not ashamed to voice his self-condemnation and the justice of the fate he was meeting. (2) His repentance was based upon his belief in Jesus as the Messiah (Luke 23:40-42). The manner in which he addressed Jesus and spoke of “thy kingdom” shows that as he looked at that inscription over the head of Jesus, he saw more of its true import than many who had had more opportunities to learn. Does not approaching death sometimes open the eyes of the blind to see the futility of sin and the true merit of the Saviour? As to how God will regard such changes as this new slant on life, in what we are accustomed to call “death bed repentance,” is for the great Judge of the world and not mere man to declare. (3) The robber publicly confessed his faith (Luke 23:41). (4) He appealed to Christ to save Him. Since he was dying, he must have believed that Christ could raise him from the dead. He must have had considerable insight into the heart of mercy of the Son of God to have asked Him to “remember me.” The prayer of Jesus for His enemies to which the robber had just listened would have given him a marvelous revelation of the scope of Jesus’ love even if he had not often witnessed similar indications of Jesus’ mercy. Since Christ was dying, the robber must have believed that Christ would survive death in a glorious kingdom. His prayer did not suggest that Christ was about to come down from the cross in answer to the challenge of His foes any more than it suggested that the robber be saved from his present condition on the cross. His petition was remarkably spiritual. The faith of the robber was very great. Plummer says: “Some saw Jesus raise the dead, and did not believe; the robber sees Jesus put to death, and yet believes.” (5) Christ promised to save the robber. In his humble petition, the thief did not openly ask for this, but it is strongly implied: “If there is to be found any mercy for such an abandoned sinner as I am, justly dying for my sins...remember me. Christ promised more than was asked. The request was indefinite; the reply, definite: “Remember me” — “be with me”; “When thou comest” — “Today”; “in thy kingdom” — “in Paradise.” (6) Jesus promised to take him with Himself to a place of blessedness that day. Christ was an impostor, if this was not fulfilled. Christ Himself was in the place of punishment, if the robber was not saved, for they were to be together. The robber, once in Paradise, could not have been sent to hell, for there is an impassable gulf. The Bible continually warns that death ends man’s opportunity to change his character and his relation to God. The thief was not baptized, but Christian baptism was not yet instituted. The church had not yet been established. Until the New Will was probated, men could not be held accountable for its conditions. While the Testator, Christ, still lived among men, He could grant salvation as He would. After His death for our sins, it is granted according to the terms of the will. The Son of man had power on earth to forgive sins. To the paralytic He said, “Thy sins are forgiven thee”; while to the sinful woman who anointed Him in the home of Simon in Galilee, He said, “Her sins which are many are forgiven….Thy sins are forgiven.” To the robber He declared: “Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise.” This statement shows the inaccuracy of the current text of the Apostles’ Creed which affirms (because of failure to discern the difference between hades and gehenna): “He descended into hell.” No! He went into paradise, the temporary place of abode for the righteous. Some hold that Jesus went into hell and endured the torments of the damned as part of His redemptive work. But Jesus cried on the cross as He was dying: “It is finished.” As he died, His sufferings to redeem us from our sins ended. It would have been a cruel deceit practiced upon the thief if, after having been promised that he would be with Christ in Paradise, he actually found himself enduring the torments of the doomed in Tartarus. 1 Peter 3:18-22 offers a discussion of the death, resurrection, and coronation of Jesus. Between the discussion of His death and that of His resurrection, there is this cryptic declaration of what Jesus did: “in which also

he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, that aforetime were disobedient, when the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah This suggests the scene of Jesus talking with the saints in Paradise concerning His redemptive death by which He had just achieved man's salvation. Some nine months before this Jesus had talked with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration of His approaching death and return to heaven (Luke 9:31). What could be more appropriate than that He should now discuss His death with these saints in Paradise? The passage in 1 Peter suggests that just as Abraham and the rich man talked across the impassable gulf, so now Jesus addressed the lost in Tartarus. He had no good news for them. The Greek verb used in 1 Peter 3:19 is not euangelizomai ("to proclaim good news"), but kerusso ("to announce"). The message Jesus announced to these lost souls in Tartarus was the same that Abraham had announced to the rich man: confirmation of condemnation and doom. The generation of Noah may have been selected for mention by Peter out of all the other generations because of their exceeding sinfulness. We can see the use he makes of the generation of Noah as he compares the ark with Christian baptism. If we knew more about this scene, we might know that the generation of Noah was recorded as receiving this announcement for the same reason that the rich man was recorded as hearing the announcement of Abraham: they had made an appeal and protest. The Apocryphal Gospels show that the imagination of the romancers was strongly stirred by the account of this penitent robber. The Gospel of the Infancy attempts to give the names of two robbers: Titus (the good robber) and Dumachus. They kidnap the family (Mary, Joseph, and Jesus) on the flight to Egypt, but Titus bribes Dumachus to release them. in the Acts of Pilate, the penitent robber is called Dysmas; the other is nameless. In the Latin recension of this work the two are called Dismas and Gestas. The Disciples

After Peter left the palace of the high priest and wept bitterly over his failure, we are unable to trace the course of any of the apostles until the hour of crucifixion. Peter seems to have rejoined the others immediately. The group stood and watched the crucifixion from afar. Unless their emotions were so utterly exhausted as to leave them dull and helpless, they must, at times, with tightly clenched hands and eyes filled with tears have strained to see the execution and watch the conduct of His enemies. The multitude probably "stared as at a spectacle, full of vulgar curiosity." While the rulers sneered and mocked, the soldiers joined in mocking Him (Luke 23:36). The Greek tenses indicate that the Roman soldiers did not continue in the mocking as the rulers did (aorist tense — the soldiers; imperfect tense — the rulers). We find no unnecessary cruelty on the part of the soldiers and except for this solitary mention by Luke we would not know that they joined in the mocking. It is not to be implied that the centurion joined in this mocking.

Luke probably refers to the anesthetic offered to Jesus at the first when he tells of their mocking, rather than the vinegar which was given to Him as He was dying. Luke says of their mocking as the vinegar was given: "offering him vinegar." This seems to imply that Jesus did not accept it. They probably indulged in pantomime repeating the offer of wine. The records are so brief, however, that this may be an entirely different incident from the two recorded by Matthew, Mark, and John.

Gathered in a little group by the cross were some of the disciples of Jesus: some women and the apostle John. Mary of Nazareth, the mother of Jesus, was present, also Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Jeses, and the sister of Jesus' mother, Salome, who was the mother of the sons of Zebedee (Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40; John 19:25). Only John notes the presence of

the mother of Jesus at the cross. The fact that there is no mention of her following the body to the tomb would lead us to suppose that at the death of Jesus she collapsed and was taken to the home of John, according to the tender instructions which were given from the cross. John was the maternal cousin of Jesus and the nephew of Mary, His mother. Since Joseph is not mentioned in the Gospel narratives after the visit to the temple when Jesus was twelve years of age, we conclude that he was now dead. The sons of Joseph and Mary were unbelieving (John 7:5). In her extreme agony their home would be intolerable. Her sister, Salome, was in complete sympathy with her and John, the beloved disciple, would be quite able to care for Mary. The Gospel writers always mention essential facts about Mary in such incidental fashion as to leave no ground for any special reverence for her such as Roman Catholics indulge. Jesus is never quoted as applying the title “Mother” to Mary. On the cross He uses the dignified title — gune — “Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold, thy mother!” (John 19:26, John 19:27).

Since his hands were nailed, Jesus must have indicated to whom He was speaking by a movement of His head and eyes. If this instruction was given before the darkness came over the earth, as seems probable, it would not have been difficult for Him, speaking in a quiet tone, to make known His wishes. The disciples were undoubtedly very close to the cross. As the darkness came and the multitudes dispersed, the disciples would have come closer. Bernard notes how the sayings of Jesus decrease in scope from the wider circle of a prayer offered for all His enemies, to a word of forgiveness to a dying robber, to the instructions as to care for His mother, and then the personal petitions and consolations as He was in the last throes of death. While this suggestion is very impressive, it needs to be checked by the fact that the saying which has the widest reach of all came next to last — as He was actually dying: “It is finished!” This saying took in the whole world and all the ages in its vision. The Darkness

“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour” (Matthew 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44). Mark tells in Mark 15:25 that it was the third hour when Jesus was crucified, while John declares that it was about the sixth hour as the trial before Pilate drew to its close. Since John quite evidently used the Roman method of counting time in writing for world-wide circulation about two decades after the destruction of the Jewish nation, these seemingly contradictory figures are seen to fit perfectly. The third hour by Jewish count from sunrise would be 9:00 a.m.; the sixth by Roman count, which was like our method, would be 6:00 a.m. The trial was still in progress at 6:00 a.m.; the crucifixion, after the torture and the journey to Golgotha, was at 9:00 a.m. For a more detailed examination of the complicated data on the day when Jesus was put to death, see chapter entitled “The Date of the Crucifixion”. When the darkness came it is not certain from the Greek noun used (which can mean either land or earth) whether the darkness extended over all the land of Judaea or over all the earth. The plague in Egypt when darkness came over all the land is usually cited as a parallel case. Victor of Antioch, an early Christian writer, says: “This is the sign from heaven for which the Jews had been asking.” This is probably the kind of sign they had in mind when they demanded a sign from heaven, but inasmuch as Jesus said no sign should be given them except that of Jonah (His resurrection), the darkness evidently had a further purpose than to impress the evil rulers of the nation.

Various explanations of the darkness are offered: (1) Some early Christians say that nature was throwing a veil over the sufferings of Jesus or expressing sympathy with them or protesting against the conduct of the Jews, as they reviled Jesus after nailing Him to the cross. This explanation,

however, personifies nature and suggests pantheism. (2) G. Campbell Morgan holds that the devil brought on the darkness in this hour of his triumph and, by means of the darkness and the suffering, wrung from Jesus out of the encompassing darkness the cry: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” But the darkness had been over the face of the land for three hours before Jesus uttered this cry of anguish (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). Furthermore it is doubtful whether the devil had the power to work such changes in the face of nature. Was not God using His power to add further proof of the divine character and mission of His Son rather than allowing the devil to use miraculous power to tempt His Son? (3) Skeptics, ancient and modern, have attempted to explain this miracle away as a natural phenomenon which by merest coincidence happened at the time Jesus was dying. This position was advanced by hostile critics very early in the history of Christianity. Early Christian writers discuss it at length. Julius Africanus argues against the pagan historian Thallus who had tried to explain the darkness as an eclipse. He shows that an eclipse was impossible at this time. The Acts of Pilate states that the Jews tried to explain away the darkness as an eclipse. Origen and Eusebius tell that a Roman historian named Phiegon recorded both the darkness and the eclipse. (4) The darkness, then, was a direct act of God and the probable purpose was to veil the dying moments of His Son from the reviling multitude. Jesus did not answer their insults except to pray for them, but God answered them, and in such a manner as filled them with terror. Somewhat parallel is the voice from heaven and the descent of the Holy Spirit at the time of His baptism and the bright cloud that enveloped the group on the Mount of Transfiguration, a cloud from which God spoke. In each case God was confirming His Son by His miraculous manifestations, as here at the cross. The foolish proposal of Peter to build three tabernacles on the mountain, giving as much honor to mere men — Moses and Elijah — as to God’s Son was answered by God from the cloud. The darkness that enveloped the earth as Jesus died seems another manifestation of miraculous support of the Son by the Father. The Cry of Anguish

Hardest to fathom of all the sayings on the cross is this cry of anguish: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” The fact that it is a direct quotation of the twenty-second Psalm helps our understanding, as we see Jesus clothing his utterance of suffering in the language of the Old Testament. It is hardly satisfactory, however, to accept the interpretation of those commentators who suggest that Jesus was quoting this Psalm not as an expression of His own suffering so much as for the instruction of those who heard and would be stirred to read again the Old Testament and see that it predicted the suffering of the Messiah. It may be that there is some truth in the suggestion, but it hardly sounds the depths of such intense agony as Jesus expressed. Certainly Jesus is not casting reproach upon God in this cry. He does not accuse God of having forsaken Him in any sense that is not compatible with God’s love and mercy’ for all, most of all for His only begotten Son. It is rather a word of intimate understanding and appeal even though clothed in the form of a protesting question. Radical critics like to refer to this cry and the prayers in Gethsemane as evidence of “the disillusionment of Jesus.” Such a phrase is not compatible with the deity, and especially the miraculous foreknowledge of Jesus.

It is easy to read much into such a cry as this. What is read into it ought to come out of the rest of the record of Jesus’ life among men and not out of our imagination or preconceived ideas. The cry had more of profound content than any mere man may hope to encompass. When we seek to understand God completely, there is always a depth we cannot sound; even as when we try to

imitate His righteousness, love, and power, we fall far short of His glory. We should not be distressed that we cannot understand all about God or all the content of this cry of anguish. It is exactly what finite man should expect in facing the Infinite. Jesus was bearing the sins of the world in His own body on the tree. He was doing this in a sense in which God, the Father, was not. According to God's plan of redemption, Jesus was left to bear this crushing burden unto death on the cross. The cry of Jesus was misunderstood by some who stood by and thought he was speaking of Elijah instead of crying to God. The similarity of the words, and the swollen tongue and parched lips that would have made speech less intelligible, may have caused this confusion on the part of some. Still toying with the thought of the miracles and the divine claims of Jesus, some cried: "Let be; let us see whether Elijah cometh to save him."

Thirst In the agony of death, Jesus made the request common to mortal man in that final hour: "I thirst." The action of the one who brought Him some of the sour wine or vinegar which the soldiers were accustomed to drink seems to have been humane. Lew Wallace makes Ben Hur to be a hero who rushes up to give Jesus a drink before any one can interfere. It is hard to tell whether there was any of this heroic color in the actual event. When they had offered Jesus wine mingled with myrrh and gall just before nailing Him to the cross, He had refused it because it contained an anesthetic. He now accepts the wine offered because it does not contain such elements. A reed was used to lift the sponge full of vinegar to His lips. Bernard holds that hyssop (John 19:29) does not afford a long stem on which a sponge might be tied and he emends the text by suggesting that the word in the original was issos or javelin on which the sponge was tied. This suggestion, of course, rests purely upon Bernard's idea as to how high the cross was. A chorus of suggestions went up from the crowd as one ran forward to give Him a drink. The ejaculation "Let be" seems to mean: "Wait, let us see what happens or if it will happen" — wondering if Elijah is going to appear in answer to what they understood as an appeal of Jesus for Elijah to come to His rescue. The bystanders who are quoted by Matthew (Matthew 27:49) apparently mean: "Stand back! Do not interfere! We desire to see whether Elijah comes to help him." Mark quotes the words of the man in response as he gives Jesus a drink. He is defending his course and indicates that they must permit him to perform this ministration to Jesus as the means of lengthening His life with further opportunity to see if Elijah will come. Luke 23:36 in describing the same incident indicates that some made it the occasion of adding a sneer at Jesus. The accounts taken together give a very vivid picture of the people in the crowd with their different ideas, character, and motives. Hence the varied, excited comments and appeals. The Last Words

Seemingly in quick succession come now the final words of Jesus as He cries, "It is finished," thinking of His great divine commission to procure the redemption of man from eternal doom and, "Father into thy hands I commend my spirit," as He dies in complete and absolute communion and harmony with God. If Jesus' last word had been, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" it would have been more difficult to understand, even considering the struggle of the human and the divine within Him. But the last word is one of absolute trust and peace.

These last two dying utterances of Jesus contain nothing of a question mark. He speaks with absolute knowledge and divine assurance. The meekness and humility which characterized His whole earthly life mark His dying statements, but there is also that finality of statement which bespeaks the Infinite. If the cry of anguish can be called a revelation of His humanity which makes Him exceeding precious and near to us and proves that His death was real agony and not

play-acting, then we might call His final statement a revelation of His deity. His oneness with God is at the heart of His last words which concern His personal relationship with God. Then the saying, “It is finished,” might be called the bridge which unites man and God for it is the saying which announces the fulfillment of that divine sacrifice which makes possible the reconciliation to a loving but outraged God of sinful but repentant man.

He died a thousand million deaths on the cross as He died for all of us. We cannot comprehend how great was His suffering for us. If we could multiply the agony of death by as many millions of people as have lived in this world, we might approach the sum-total of His suffering: He bore the sins of all mankind as He died. As His life was absolutely unique, so was His death. His death was actual and real, but His suffering was so much greater than any of us can ever know that we can scarcely comprehend it. Jesus did not say: “I am finished.” This saying (or words to the same effect) is so often heard from mortal man in the hour of death. He has done all he can to fend off the fatal hour, but he cannot fight on any longer and so he cries: “I am finished.” Not so with the Son of God. The voluntary character of Jesus’ death is everywhere seen in the record of these hours on the cross. He says: “It is finished.” His thought is of the supreme work of God which He left heaven to accomplish.

Sometimes a man gives his life to save some one from a burning building or from death by drowning or some other tragic manner, and lapsing into consciousness at the last, asks: “Did I manage to save them?” This is very noble. Jesus, Himself, said of such: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” But Jesus had no question mark about His statement and there is a depth of love that we cannot measure. He knew that the divine part of man’s redemption had been accomplished. Men might still crowd one another down the broad way that leads to destruction in spite of God’s tender and urgent appeals, but God’s part in the giving of His Son to die in our stead was finished. Of this wonderful moment, the Epistle to the Hebrews says in majestic language: “looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross) despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2). He sang a hymn in that upper room as He was facing the cross, and now as He dies there is in His heart the joy of saving lost men so precious that He despises the shame which wicked men heap upon Him and the suffering which they bring to Him.

Physical Cause of Death The statement is almost identical in the four narratives that He “gave up the ghost.” Matthew says He “cried again with a loud voice, and yielded up his spirit”; Mark records “Jesus uttered a loud voice.” John adds the touching detail that “he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit.” Some hold that this unanimous declaration concerning giving up His spirit means that Jesus voluntarily ended His life. But this sounds too much like suicide to allow one to read such a meaning into so general a statement. It certainly should not be taken to mean more than that as the physical resistance to the tide of death weakened, He refused to use His will and miraculous power to fend off that death by any supernatural means and hence “yielded up His spirit,” dying as the result of physical causes which He did not attempt to overcome miraculously.

Stroud in his book, The Physical Cause of the Death of Christ holds that the death of Jesus resulted from a rupture of the heart (Westcott, Commentary on John p. 279). That He did not die from exhaustion is evident from the great cry which He uttered as He died. He did not grow weaker and weaker until He could not speak above a whisper. If Stroud’s analysis is correct, then this

would explain why Jesus died so soon after being nailed to the cross. No explanation is needed, however, in the light of all He endured before He was crucified. Men often lingered for two or three days in dying condition on the cross. The death of Jesus came swiftly and suddenly. Yet He clearly realized and declared that death was at hand. Stroud held that death by rupture of the heart explains why, when His side was pierced, blood and water came forth for this was the “separated clot and serum of the escaped blood in the pericardial sac, which the lance had pierced.” Bernard presents at length the view of Roman Catholic tradition that it was the right side of Jesus which was pierced. Stroud’s opinion supposes the left side to have been pierced. The Scripture does not say, but inasmuch as the soldier with his own life at stake was assuring himself and the guard that Jesus was dead beyond any shadow of doubt, then it seems most probable that it was the left side which was pierced to the heart.

Some physicians have rejected Stroud’s view, notably Dr. C. Creighton, who is quoted by Bernard (Commentary on John., Vol. II, p. 646). Creighton holds that “the blood escaping into a serum cavity from rupture of a great organ remains thick dark-red blood” instead of being separated into a clot and serum. Creighton suggests that there was only a light touch of the spear against some “discoloured wheal or exudation, such as the scourging might have left.” He thinks this use of the spear “was a thoughtless rather than a brutal act.” This last certainly misses the point of the narrative. The act of the soldier was anything but thoughtless. It had a very definite, imperative design. The Scripture does not represent it as particularly brutal above the act of slaying Jesus. Roman soldiers were executing men condemned to be crucified. It was their business to see that the men were slain. They made no mistake and took no chances. Creighton further holds (as quoted by Bernard) “Water not unmixed with blood from some such superficial source is conceivable, but blood and water from an internal source are a mystery.” And so, as often, the doctors disagree. The Spear Thrust The Greek word for spear means “a long slender spear, not so heavy as the hyssos or pilum which was the usual weapon of Roman legionaries.” Bernard suggests that this lighter weapon fits the idea that the soldier only gave the silent, still body a light prod with his spear to see if there was any living reaction, but while the verb used here is found in passages in the Apocrypha and classical Greek where it means a light touch of “pricking the eye” or “prodding a sleeping person to awaken him,” or “touching a man with a dagger to see if he were dead,” it is also found where it describes a spear wound which kills a man. Origen in commenting on Matthew 27:54 “seems to say that a lance thrust was sometimes given as a coup de grace to hasten the death of those who had been crucified.”

Bernard admits that the Gospel of John plainly sets forth that the purpose of the soldier was to make sure Jesus was dead, whether the thrust was light or deep. Some manuscripts of Matthew insert between Matthew 27:49 and Matthew 27:50 the similar statement “And another took a spear and pierced his side, and there came out water and blood.” Inasmuch as the next verse declares: “And Jesus cried again with a loud voice, and yielded up his spirit,” this would make the spear thrust the direct cause of Jesus’ death, instead of being the method the soldier used of assuring himself that Jesus was already dead. Bernard shows clearly that Chrysostom is misquoted by those who try to claim his support for this interpolated verse. Chrysostom refers to the spear thrust as “their madness so far as to insult a dead body.” Bernard also shows that Tatian is falsely cited in support of this insertion in Matthew, as there is no trace of it in Tatian’s Diatessaron.

Blood and Water

Westcott maintains that we cannot expect a complete physical explanation of the causes of Jesus' death. What if the blood and water flowing from His side is a mystery? Was not His life unique? And His death, while real and actual, must have been unique since His body did not see corruption, a thing which sets in immediately with man's death. Origen seems to have been the first to argue this position, and it has been frequently held. Origen held that in dead bodies the "blood is clotted and water does not flow" and that the flowing of water and blood from the body of Jesus is a miracle. Bernard, reciting this, expresses the opinion that John probably noted this phenomenon of the blood and water flowing from the side of Jesus, along with his very solemn affirmation that he himself witnessed the act and can give direct and indisputable testimony to it, as a very effective means of destroying the Docetic heresy prevalent in the churches of Asia Minor. These heretics held that the body of Jesus was a mere phantom. 1 John 4:2, 1 John 4:3 shows how strongly he was contending against this false doctrine. The statement of 1 John 5:6 "This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood" seems to refer to our baptism in water in obedience to Christ for the remission of sins, by which act of obedience we are baptized into the death of Christ (Romans 6:4). The passage from 1 John is often cited in connection with the water and blood which flowed from the side of Jesus (John 19:34) as indicating the two inseparable elements which God in His mysterious wisdom has decreed shall prevail for our salvation, if we will accept His mercy. The Veil of the Temple

John makes clear that the piercing of the side of Jesus did not take place until after the death of Jesus had been reported to Pilate, and the soldiers sent to investigate the report and accomplish the speedy death of the victims. The rending of the veil of the temple was immediate upon the death of Jesus. The earthquake, also, occurred at this juncture. Many readers do not perceive that, according to Matthew's explicit statement, the resurrection of various godly people and their appearance to friends did not occur until after the resurrection of Jesus (Matthew 27:53). Hebrews 9:3 speaks of the second curtain which separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place in order to distinguish it from the first curtain which was at the entrance of the Holy Place from the outer court. Jewish traditions declare that this second curtain was really double curtains a cubit apart. The veil was rent from top to the bottom as God would rend it, not from the bottom to the top as man might attempt to rend it. Plummer cites a passage in the Talmud which tells that some forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem, the heavy gates of the temple, which could with difficulty be moved by many men, and which were locked at the time, flew open about midnight at the Passover. But this reminds one of Peter's miraculous release as much as it does of this rending of the temple veil. Josephus tells of something like this happening just before the destruction of the city. Neander is cited by Plummer as saying these sketchy references seem to indicate that some marvelous event happened which was remembered in connection with the crucifixion. The rending of the veil by a miracle, at just the moment Jesus died, seems to indicate that as the law was nailed to the cross, the very holy of holies, which was the center of the worship established by the law, was no longer sacred. It further shows that the temple will no longer be defended by God and will be trampled under foot of the godless Romans. Jesus had predicted this at the triumphal entry in lamenting the unbelief of the nation and the resultant destruction. It demonstrates that the way is now made open for the Christian to enter into God's presence by the death of Jesus: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say,

his flesh; and having a great priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith" (Hebrews 10:19-22). The Centurion A comparison of the accounts shows that the Roman centurion in charge of the crucifixion made at least two distinct statements concerning Christ. Matthew makes clear that those who were associated with the centurion agreed with him in his emphatic statement. The manner in which Jesus died (Mark 15:39) and the miracles that accompanied His death (Matthew 27:54; Luke 23:47) caused the centurion to arrive at his conclusions. One of his statements concerned the character of Jesus and the other His divine personality. "Certainly this was a righteous man" matches the protest and the tribute of the dying robber. The centurion heard the worst the enemies of Jesus were able to weave into slurs and jeers against Him, and he had heard the prayer of Jesus for them in response. The more he reflected upon what he saw and heard as Jesus died in his presence, the more convinced he became of the terrible crime in which he had been compelled to take a leading part. His faith and penitence are alike expressed in his outcry.

"Truly this man was the Son of God" is his estimate of the origin and person of Jesus. Did ever the deity of Jesus show itself so clearly as when He died, unless it be in His resurrection? It is true that the definite article "the" is not stated in the Greek, but this is frequently the case where it is plainly implied. A basic rule of Greek grammar declares that the definite article may be written or omitted with a proper name. The names "God" and "Son of God" are used freely with or without the definite article. Those who feel the Roman centurion was merely expressing superstitious, pagan ideas about Jesus being one of the sons of the gods face an arresting fact in the use of the singular instead of the plural: not "son of Gods" but "Son of God." The singular urges the monotheism of Israel rather than the polytheism of Rome. The centurion had just heard the Jewish scholars deriding Jesus: "If thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross." The least that can be affirmed of his statement is that he snatches up their proposition and declares his belief in the righteousness and the divine character of Jesus, even though He had not saved Himself from death at their hands. Moreover, while the centurion probably was not a proselyte to Judaism and hence could not be expected to express as much depth in the tide "Son of God" as those about him, he certainly had heard over and over this strange charge during the trials and, associating it with the marvelous teaching and miracles of Jesus, would have come to deep conclusions as he saw Jesus' conduct and heard His words on the cross. The centurion of Capernaum with faith so great that Jesus had not seen its like in Israel (Luke 7:9) and the centurion of Caesarea obeying the Old Testament Scriptures, praying, and receiving the commendation of God in having Peter sent to preach to him the first gospel sermon directed to the Gentiles, should quite definitely make us hesitate in affirming this centurion was expressing pagan ideas. Translators have certainly done well in translating his words "Truly this man was the Son of God." After all, the depth of meaning in those words challenges a life-time of study for the mind of the profoundest Christian thinker. To grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus is ever the challenge to him who approaches the Son of God. In passing it may be noted that here is another deadly blow to the Two-source Theory for it is Mark who is presumed to present Jesus merely as an heroic man, and it is supposed that the gradual development of the worship of Jesus took place through Matthew and Luke to John as the Gospel narratives were written. Yet, here, it is Mark, as well as Matthew, who reports "the Son of God" and Luke, who is supposed to represent the fuller development of ideas, reports "a righteous man."

Witnesses

Strange indeed is the assortment of witnesses who spoke for Jesus of Nazareth as He went to His death! Formal defense was not permitted at the trials, but impromptu and irrepressible testimony in his defense was given in the most unexpected manner and from most surprising sources. His chosen disciples, who had been with Him through His ministry and had expressed such great faith in Him as the Son of God and the Messiah, all forsook Him and fled. Those who were His leading followers were silent. But the impact of His divine personality wrested from most unlikely sources the strongest imaginable declarations. The contemptible traitor who sold his Master into the hands of His enemies was driven to bear witness and then rush out to end his worthless life. The cynical Roman judge, before whom Jesus was tried, offered repeated and desperate protests and tributes, but he was not willing to stake his life on the issues. A robber whose life was ebbing away in its last fleeting hours cried out in amazing faith and insight. The centurion who had charge of the cruel task of execution spoke in a voice of awe whose depth we cannot sound. In all of these men the tides of worldly desires and prejudice must have been running strongly against Jesus of Nazareth, hence the power of their testimony is the greater.

It is not possible for us even to imagine all of the heavenly joy and the divine glory which filled Paradise on the day when the Son of God returned after having conquered the devil and having achieved the forgiveness of man’s sins. Of all the thrilling events which transpired in Paradise on this day, we know but one: “Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise.” What a poor, lost sheep was this, the Good Shepherd brought back to the Father’s house on the day that the Messiah died for the sins of the world.

“Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?” Did you see what happened? “Sometimes it causes me to tremble.” Did you hear and witness what I saw and heard? How did you feel when you looked into the face of the Son of God as He was dying? Could you see through your tears? How did it seem to you when you realized that it was for our sins He was dying, that we were the ones who should have been nailed to the cross? What did you do? Did you cast down your burden of sins at the foot of the cross? Did you joyously seize the flaming torch and lift it high that the dark corners of the world might see? Did you commit your life to Him and take up your own cross to follow Him even to Golgotha?

131. Chapter 18 - The Death of Christ (Divine Purpose)

Chapter 18 - The Death of Christ (Divine Purpose) Matthew 26:28;Mark 10:45;Luke 24:46;John 19:30 According to the Scriptures

“Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3). In this magnificent summary Paul reduces to nine words the central doctrine of the gospel: the atonement — the fact that Christ offered Himself as the propitiation for our sins by which we are reconciled to God. His summary is so sweeping that it includes the entire revelation of God: “according to the scriptures.” Isaiah 53:1-12 immediately comes into view, even as it was uppermost in the preaching of the first Christian messengers. Philip needed no other Scripture from which to begin his proclamation of “Jesus” to the Ethiopian eunuch. But other passages are also cited by the apostles in their preaching and by the New Testament writers. Ethelburt Stauffer points this Out: “In this way the pattern of the martyr psalm Psalms 21:1-13 runs through all the passion narratives like some brilliant trail. ‘Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into his glory?’ says Luke 24:26 as in confirmation….The ignominious raising on a cross is really a majestic elevation to glory (John 3:14; John 8:28; John 12:34). The sculptors of the early Church made these ideas their own, and like to represent the cross as a sign of triumph flying over the globe, or as brilliantly illumined by a martyr crown.” (New Testament Theology, English Translation, 1955, p. 130). The apostles and their inspired colleagues did not make “these ideas their own” by mere logical deduction, but they preached and wrote by divine inspiration. They, too, have given us “the scriptures.” Paul is very clear in his declarations that he is placing his own record of the revelation of the purpose of God in Christ alongside that of the Old Testament prophets as included in “according to the scriptures.”

According to the Critics The usual perversity of the modernist is seen in the persistent effort to remove all these passages from the Old Testament and the Gospels. They would invent the myth that Paul is the originator of the doctrine of the atonement. In December, 1949, The Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis met at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. On the evening of December 29, a round table discussion was held on the topic: “The Jewish Messiah and the Pauline Christ” with Ralph Marcus (University of Chicago) as moderator, and Samuel S. Cohon (Hebrew Union College), Morton S. Enslin (Crozier Theological Seminary), and Paul Schubert (Yale University) as the other members of the panel. Surprisingly enough it was Samuel S. Cohon who confronted the other three with a denial of their contention that the Old Testament predicts merely a political messiah. In spite of his extreme radicalism Cohon seems to have been the last representative of pietism in Reform Judaism. He insisted that the Old Testament predicted that the Messiah would also offer spiritual redemption. The labored efforts of the speakers to strip the atonement from the Gospel narratives and to derive it from Paul’s writings alone, brought forth a dramatic challenge at the close from a man of faith in the audience. His final question was directed at M. S. Enslin: “I am going to pin you down with one quotation: ‘For the Son of man also came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many’” (Mark 10:45). By provoking a laugh from the unbelieving crowd, Enslin attempted to escape the dilemma: “All right.

You have me pinned." The moderator then closed the discussion.

Modern Admissions In recent years there has been a considerable movement among some radical scholars toward admission of both the necessity and the fact of the atonement. The current heilsgeshichte ("Sacred History"!) after the fashion of Neo-orthodoxy attempts to divorce ideas from facts and to discuss the ideas, while denying the historical verity of the facts. Even while admitting that such passages as Mark 10:45 and Luke 22:32; Luke 23:34, the accounts of the Lord's Supper in the Synoptics, and John's record of the instructions in the upper room, all declare that "Jesus goes to his death 'for many,'" Stauffer declares that these ideas are "built into the idea of the passover" by the New Testament writers. On the contrary we find the clear declarations of the Scripture that God gave the Passover lamb as the type to prepare the hearts of the worshippers for the anti-type, the final sacrifice of His own Son. (New Testament Theology, English Translation, 1955, p. 131). The Radical View

Miller Burrows of Yale gives the typical modernistic interpretation of the purpose of the death of Christ: "the Cross by demonstrating Christ's love, in which is seen the love of God himself, breaks down the sinner's hostility and evokes his corresponding love. It does this, however, only because of the interpretation which faith puts upon it: 'the love of Christ constraineth us because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died, and he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again' (2 Corinthians 5:14.). Here we have the heart of the Pauline doctrine of the atonement and the explanation of Paul's frequent references to Christ's dying for or on account of sin, and for or on behalf of us" (An Outline of Biblical Theology, 1946, p. 224). Again Burrows declares: "The idea of constraining love is the most specific and satisfying explanation offered. From this point of view the death of Jesus was a 'price' or 'ransom' for others, not because on the basis of retribution it provided a fund of merit for sinners to draw on, nor because it satisfied the demands of retributive justice, but because, being the result of the sins of others, it revealed the enormity of sin and at the same time showed how far God would go to reconcile sinners to himself" (An Outline of Biblical Theology, 1946, pp. 226, 227). Burrows advances the idea that the death of Christ for our sins is not the ultimate emphasis in John' Gospel: "In John the emphasis is on the incarnation rather than the cross as the means of salvation. As the incarnation is for John not an emptying but a manifestation of glory and life, so Christ's death is a voluntary throwing off of the partial and temporary limitations of his life in the flesh in order to he lifted up and glorified and to be where he was before (John 3:14.; John 8:28; John 12:23; John 17:5). At the same time this deliberate laying down of his life is regarded as the greatest possible demonstration of love (John 10:15; John 15:13; 1 John 3:16; 1 John 4:9, 1 John 4:19)" (An Outline of Biblical Theology, 1946, p. 225). The Deity of Christ This reminds one of the sharp exchange between two German theologians. A radical scholar had ridiculed the idea that Jesus was divine in any unique sense and had down-graded His whole influence on history. He said that it was only the death of Christ as a martyr and under such horrible circumstances which had given Him His place in history. A conservative scholar responded: "It was not the death of Christ; it was the death of Christ." Both sublime elements of the gospel are central in the proclamation that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." The incarnation and the atonement are inseparable. All four of the Gospel writers set forth that both the deity of Christ and the fact He died for our sins are the foundation of our faith and our salvation: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Reconciliation

Alan Richardson of the University of Nottingham attempts to set aside the use of “atonement” and “propitiation,” but he does leave an actual work of reconciliation in the death of Christ. “Paul stresses the fact that it is the actual death of Christ which effects the reconciliation (Romans 5:6-10; Ephesians 2:13; Colossians 1:20); and he emphatically stresses that Christ’s death is an act of God on man’s behalf and is in no sense a human act of propitiation offered by man to God. God ‘reconciled us to himself’ (2 Corinthians 5:18); the rebels were obviously in no position to effect the reconciliation….It is God alone, God in Christ, who makes reconciliation….It does not say that God needs to be reconciled to man; St. Paul speaks only of man’s having to be reconciled to God. What it does positively affirm is that God had reconciled rebellious man, who was unable by anything that he could do to establish ‘peace’ or a right relationship with God” (An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament (1958), pp. 216, 217).

Significant Admissions

Emil Brunner represents a partial return of radical theologians to the admission that the death of Christ is necessary as an atonement of man’s sin. He is not afraid to speak of the wrath of God. He boldly charges that the tendency to deny there is such a Person as God and to make God merely an idea vaguely identified with pantheism, is the basis for the radical abandonment of the atonement. “The rejection of the doctrine of the wrath of God — as ‘anthropopathic’ — is the beginning of the Pantheistic disintegration of the Christian idea of God. In the whole of the Scripture, in each of its parts, and in all the classic forms of Christian theology and of the Christian message, the full conception of the personality of God carries with it, indubitably, the recognition of the divine wrath” (The Mediator, English translation, 1934, pp. 445, 446). “The more seriously guilt is regarded, the more it is realized that ‘something must happen,’ just because forgiveness is not something which can in any way be taken absolutely for granted. The more real guilt is to us, the more real also is the gulf between us and God, the more real is the wrath of God, and the inviolable character of the law of penalty; the more real also the obstacle between God and man becomes, the more necessary becomes the particular transaction, by means of which the obstacle in all its reality, is removed” (The Mediator, English translation, 1934, p. 451).

Brunner speculates that we might have achieved atonement if our repentance were perfect, but this is like speculating that if man had never sinned, then no atonement would have been necessary. “If we could repent as we should no atonement would be needed, for then repentance would be atonement. Then the righteousness of God would have been satisfied. But this is precisely what we cannot do. We can only do this where we can ‘be righteous’ for to be ‘righteous’ and to repent mean the same thing. The point or ‘place’ at which this happens is Christ. We are baptized into His death. We are ‘buried’ with Him into His death. This is not sacramentarian mysticism but simple faith in the Word. We must let God tell us in the death of Christ what our position is. The fact that we take this Word from Him is itself faith, repentance, the state of being ‘buried’ and ‘dying’ with Him….The Atonement means our redemption and our life, as well as our humiliation and our death. Death and resurrection, judgment and liberation constitute the content of the word of reconciliation” (The Mediator, English translation, 1934, pp. 534, 535). The Opposing Views The critical question is: was the death of Christ (1) merely God’s great appeal to the human heart by His demonstration of the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the sublime nature of

God’s love? His method of bringing man to repentance? or (2) was it primarily connected with the forgiveness of sins, not merely winning man by its revelation of God’s desire to forgive sin, but upholding God’s holiness by expressing his condemnation of sin and by providing means of man’s redemption? The Social Aspect The former theory is Socinian in character. It emphasizes the profound truth that the death of Christ shows the love of God to the world and His willingness to forgive sin, and that this representation of His death is supremely appealing to the human heart. But when this theory asserts that this exhausts the function of the death of Christ, that it was only representative in function, to show that God is love; and that, out of pure goodness without any special work at all God forgives the sins of the penitent, it opens itself to the following objections: In the first place, the objection is “at once theological and ethical that it annihilates the moral order of the world altogether. God is conceived as an individual who deals with other individuals, each by himself, in a way of good nature and consideration; there is no principle in the forgiveness which he dispenses; no conception of a moral organism, the constitution of which must not be arbitrarily dissolved; of a moral system, the integrity of which must be maintained by and through all God’s dealings with men.” (James Denny, Studies in Theology, p. 129). Here modern theology seems to turn back on itself. It has a most splendid emphasis, in some ways, upon social service; it insists upon the wide social aspects of sin, but when it comes to forgiveness, the vision is suddenly narrowly contracted to the individual, and it is insisted that forgiveness is entirely individual in its aspect. The representation of God as a King or Judge forgiving, emphasizes in a powerful way the social aspects of both sin and forgiveness. While forgiveness is certainly first of all personal and individual in character, as is sin, yet it is also social; and if God forgives a man upon mere repentance alone, then He treats sin as if it were unreal; He absolutely disregards the moral elements, basic both in His own nature and ours. He disregards the social effects of such action, making in reality each man a law of forgiveness unto himself, and thus completely overthrows the entire moral order of the universe.

Christ’s Death: Vital Meaning In the second place, it robs Christ of any essential place in the work of redemption. The parable of the prodigal son is considered a complete representation of the gospel. God stands ready to receive the sinner without any propitiation, and Christ’s death is only necessary to reveal further this willingness. Many are at great pains to point out that sinners repented and were forgiven during the lifetime of Christ, and, since this was before His death and is not mentioned in connection therewith, therefore His death has no direct connection with the forgiveness of sins (C. R. Brown, The Main Points, p. 38).

If this is so, then His death is absolutely meaningless. It becomes a mere show, as Dale points out in the following illustration: “To take an illustration which comes a little closer to the subject at hand. If my brother made his way into a burning house to save my child from the flames and were himself to perish in his heroic exertions, his fate would be a wonderful proof of his love for me and mine, but if there were no child in the house, and if he entered it with no other object than to show his love for me the explanation would be absolutely unintelligible. The statement that Christ died for no other purpose than to reveal His love to mankind is to me equally unintelligible” (Dale, Atonement p. 38). Tymms, (Christian Idea of the Atonement p. 181) points out certain defects in this illustration, but, after all, if Christ’s death were merely to prove the Father’s love for us, and men are fully forgiven without any reference to His death, then both its necessity and purpose remain meaningless.

Under such an interpretation the death of Christ loses its attracting power. It is no longer foreseen as inevitable because of its purpose, nor considered voluntary as is asserted in the Gospels. It is merely the triumph of sinful men, inevitable because of a conjunction of events. His death has then no more significance than a mere martyrdom for the truth. Gethsemane's agony is either a fear of physical suffering, an anomaly when we call the roll of Christian martyrs or it is a despairing grief over His premature death and the failure of His plans, which is tantamount to a denial of all His prophecies concerning His death and resurrection, the coming of His kingdom, and all His assertions that His death was voluntary. The same is true of Calvary if it be robbed of the wealth of significance with which it is clothed by the Gospel writers in that Jesus bore our sins, and, while guiltless Himself, underwent the condemnation of our sins.

Under such a view of Christ's death, "He proclaims forgiveness, but He does not procure it; He is not the gospel, but only its supreme minister….If our religion is to come from the New Testament, Christ must have a place in it that no other can share. Not apart from Him, but in Him, the apostles declare with one voice, in Him we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of our trespasses….God's forgiveness does not come to us independent of Christ, past Him, over His head, so that we cannot count Him as one of those who best knew and most fully proclaimed an unimaginable mercy, which would have been all that it is even had He never lived; it comes only in Him and through His death for our sins" (Denny, Studies in Theology, p. 129). The Gospel Impotent

Lastly, this theory robs the gospel of its power. The death of Christ is deprived of its deeper and more appealing significance. As Denny says, men may still go fishing with such a message, but the barb has been broken off the hook, and their efforts will be largely fruitless. Moreover, it weakens the power of the gospel because it is too lenient toward sin; it treats sin as if it were unreal. No room is left for a doctrine of propitiation; sin is forgiven just as if it had never occurred, on no other basis than mere repentance, which cannot even suggest reparation for God's broken law. Tymms begs the question when he says that the "question is not 'What does sin deserve?' but, 'Is God forced by His own righteous nature always to deal with us after our sins, and to reward us according to our iniquities?'" (Tymms, Christian Idea of the Atonement, p. 201). All admit that God has not dealt with us in a quantitative way after our sins, else had not Christ come and died, but the question is: Could God absolutely disregard sin and the moral order of the universe? The New Testament asserts most positively that He could not. Was Christ's death necessary because of God's righteous nature before right relations could he established between man and God? That is the question.

Tymms' theory strikes at the finality of the gospel itself. If the premise "God is love" warrants the conclusion that all men are forgiven as man to man on the basis of repentance alone, then not only is the death of Christ meaningless and unnecessary, but the gospel itself is robbed of its finality; there is no longer any necessity for accepting the gospel message at all. The inherent weakness of this theory has been admitted by some of its greatest advocates. Bushnell says: "If the question arises, 'How are we to use such a history (as that of the cross) so as to be reconciled by it, we hardly know how to begin. How shall we come unto God by the help of this martyrdom? How shall we turn it or turn ourselves under it, so as to be justified and set at peace with God?'" (Horace Bushnell, Atonement, p. 460). His only answer is: "Plainly there is a want here, and this want is met by giving a thought-form to the facts which is not in the facts themselves" (Horace

Bushnell, Atonement, p. 463). In other words, the gospel without a real doctrine of the atonement is so woefully weak that the only hope is for the preacher to put into the facts a thought-form that they do not contain, and use “the altar terms” just as though he believed them. A more complete admission of the abject failure of this theory to meet either the demands of the New Testament or the needs of man would be difficult to frame.

Jesus’ Declarations

Even those who regard the New Testament as merely a human record of the Christian consciousness of early centuries, not to speak of those who believe in the finality of the gospel and the divine inspiration of its writers, must admit the importance of its specific statements concerning this great central doctrine of the gospel it proclaims. What did Jesus think of His death? Was it merely forced upon Him by a combination of circumstances or was it premeditated, foreseen, voluntary? Was it merely a demonstration of God’s love, or was it a bearing of the sins of the world? Was it the making plain of a means of salvation already existent or the procuring of salvation for those who would accept?

Christ Himself represented: (1) That His death was neither the incidental nor the inevitable consequence of His collision with the passions and prejudices of the Jewish people (John 10:17, John 10:18). (2) That laying down His life was a voluntary act (John 6:51; Matthew 20:28). (3) That to lay down His life was one of the ends for which He came into the world (John 12:27; Matthew 20:28). (4) That His death is immediately related to the deliverance from condemnation of those that believe on Him, to the remission of sins, and to the establishment of His sovereignty over the human race (John 6:51; Matthew 26:28; John 12:31, John 12:32). (5) He accepted the testimony of John the Baptist that He was the Lamb of God “that taketh away the sins of the world,” and He associated His death with the sacrifice of the Passover lamb (John 1:29; Matthew 26:28). (6) He described His death as being for others, and more specifically He said that He gave His life a ransom for others (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; John 6:51).

Declarations of New Testament Writers

These statements might be accompanied by innumerable quotations from the New Testament, showing that the writers had this same conception: that Christ bore our sins, and that there is a direct relation between the forgiveness of sins and the death of Christ. “The blood of Jesus, his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1:6, Ephesians 1:7). “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood” (Revelation 1:5, Revelation 1:6). “Christ was offered to bear the sins of many” (Hebrews 9:28). “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24). Again the purpose of His coming is thus described: “God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Romans 8:3). Such clear and positive statements as these might be multiplied almost without number, for this doctrine permeates the entire gospel. Nor can such sayings as that Christ gave His life “as a ransom for many” be discredited by speculations as to its minute details that would reduce it to an absurdity, for it has long been an established canon of exegesis that the central thought of a parabolic saying is its message, and that a forced interpretation of its details always ends in absurdity. Moreover Dale declares that this doctrine of atonement “penetrates the whole substance of the apostles’ theological and ethical teaching, and is the very root of their religious

life. If, instead of selecting passages in which it is categorically affirmed that Christ died for us, died that we might have the remission of sins, died as a propitiation for sin, we selected those that would lose all their significance if this truth were rejected, it would be necessary to quote a large part of the New Testament" (Dale, Atonement, p. 28).

Propitiation

It is evident from the testimony of the New Testament, then, first, that the death of Christ was not merely to represent God's love to the world, but that it had a direct relation to the forgiveness of sins. If the parable of the prodigal son is a complete representation of the gospel, then it is remarkable, as Denny suggests, that Christ did not go back to heaven as soon as He had proclaimed it, or did not live to a ripe old age repeating it over and over in different forms. That "God is love" all are agreed. But all are not agreed in interpreting "love" in such a shallow and sentimental manner as to affirm that, therefore, he must deny His own righteousness in His dealings with sinful man. Denny declares that those who deny that Christ died for our sins oppose propitiation to love. "In opposing love and propitiation to each other they run directly counter to the whole teaching of the New Testament….God is love, say they, and therefore, He dispenses with propitiation; God is love, say the apostles, for He provides a propitiation" (Denny, Studies in Theology, p. 133). Again he says: "In the New Testament the propitiation is the content of love….That 'God is love' is in the New Testament a conclusion from the fact that He has provided in Christ and in His death a propitiation for our sins. The whole proof, the whole meaning, contents, substance and spirit of that expression are contained in propitiation and in nothing else" (James Denny, Studies in Theology, p. 131). Says Forsyth: "Is it possible to have any adequate sense of the actual love of God in Christ without an equally real sense of His actual condemnation of sin? Its condemnation in act, note, not in mere hatred, and its condemnation, not in our experience, but in Christ's! 'God is love' has in the New Testament no meaning apart from the equally prominent idea of righteousness of God as author and guardian of the moral, holy law" (Forsyth, Atonement in Modern Religious Thought, p. 76).

Christ's Experience and Ours In the second place, it is evident that the New Testament does not proclaim any quantitative or equivalent doctrine of Christ's sufferings, but affirms that forgiveness is by the grace of God. It does not proclaim that forgiveness is actually secured by the death of Christ without any action on our part, but by the union of the two — Christ's experience and ours. "The two polar experiences, joined in one spiritual and organic act of mystical union, form a complete type of Christian faith. The repentance is ours alone; the penalty is not, the judgment is not. The final judgment or curse of sin did fall on Christ, the penitential did not. The sting of guilt was never His, the cry on the cross was no wail of conscience. But the awful atmosphere of guilt was His. He entered it and died of it' Our chastisement was upon Him, but God never chastised Him. The penalty was His, the repentance ours. His expiation does not dispense with ours, but evokes and enables." Thus this doctrine is not open to the criticism that it renders faith and repentance unnecessary, for the two experiences, Christ's and ours, are supplementary and not mutually exclusive. Christ's death makes it possible for God to fulfill His eternal desire to forgive man and at the same time be true to His own righteous nature and maintain the moral order of the universe. It reveals to man not only God's love, but also His hatred of sin, and impels man to accept God's gracious offer to make Christ's death, not the equivalent of the penalty of our sin, but to accept it as reparation for broken law, and impels him to accept this means of forgiveness

through faith, repentance, and obedience.

God's Grace This doctrine, then, is no denial of God's grace, for "it is persistently overlooked that it is an act of grace and not of debt on God's part to accept even the satisfaction and atonement for Christ for human forgiveness" (Forsyth, Atonement in Modern Religious Thought, p. 84). Christ's death does not mean a placation of God, for God was already desirous of forgiving sin, but because He loved holiness at least as much as He loved man, it was necessary for him to maintain His own moral nature and the moral order of the universe while forgiving man. It is necessary to maintain, then, that the atonement is both penal and substitutionary, in spite of the fact that these terms have been abused. Forsyth says: "Atonement is substitutionary, else it is none. The suffering of Christ was penal to Christ's personality, to His consciousness, but not to His conscience. It was not penitential. There was no self-accusation in it. He never felt God was punishing Him, though it was penalty, sin's nemesis, that He bore. It was the consequence attached by God to sin — sin's penalty" (Forsyth, Atonement in Modern Religious Thought, p. 85). Nor were the apostles involved in the artificial difficulty that sin cannot be both forgiven and punished. For they do not assert any quantitative or equivalent doctrine of Christ's suffering, and they make it very plain that the union of both Christ's experience and ours is necessary' for forgiveness. "Of course, an expiatory amount of penalty purges the offense, and the debt being paid the culprit is beholden to no grace for his open door. But if we say that God, who had the right to destroy each sinner, offers pardon to those who really own in the cross the kind (not the amount) of penalty which their sin deserved, then the contradiction vanishes. Grace is still sovereign, free, and unbought. It is grace in God to accept an atonement which is not an equivalent, but a practical, adequate and superhuman acknowledgment in man of the awful debt foregone" (Forsyth, Atonement in Modern Religious Thought) p. 72). In the death of Christ, then, we see the supreme revelation of God's hatred of sin, His love of man, and His sovereign grace. Christ's death was a bearing of our sins and procured the forgiveness of sins for those who will accept God's gracious offer.

Substitution The Epistle to the Hebrews offers the most profound discussion of the atonement. In this letter Paul gives a detailed contrast of the high priest in the Old Testament and of the perfect High Priest, Jesus; of the sacrifices of animals under the law and of the final and perfect sacrifice as Jesus gave Himself to die for our sins; of the tabernacle with its Holy Place and Holy of Holies and of the church and the final blessedness of heaven. The citations from the Old Testament set forth that death was the penalty for man's sin; that the continual sacrifices were to remind the worshipper of his sin and of the required penalty; that the innocent animal being sacrificed was dying the death which was the just punishment of the man who had sinned against God. Inherent in the entire system of sacrifice is the idea of substitution. With powerful repetition the New Testament writers affirm that Christ "bare our sins in his body upon the tree" (1 Peter 2:24); that He died for us (John 10:17-19); that He gave "his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45); that Christ also was "once offered to bear the sins of many" (Hebrews 9:28); and "when he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:12).

Hebrews sets forth the basic proposition that "apart from shedding of blood there is no remission (Hebrews 9:22). The Scripture does not offer any explicit explanation as to why the shedding of blood is required. Some suggest the reason is given in Leviticus 17:11 : "For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the

blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life." This passage shows how appropriate it is that the shedding of blood should be required, but the necessity of sacrifice — the reason why God did require it — is left a secret in the mind of God. Hebrews affirms that the shedding of blood was necessary for remission of sins, but the author stops at that proposition and does not declare why this is true, other than it is God's will; it is His divine plan. A second elemental proposition is most emphatically stated: "For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). Paul proves this proposition by the fact of the continued repetition of these sacrifices and by the necessity for the perfect sacrifice which Christ offered. But Paul does not explain why the blood of animals could not take away man's sins. Again, we may reflect that man does not own the animals; they belong to God. Man does not even own his very life. This is the sort of reason which Christ gives for the stern prohibition against swearing (Matthew 5:33-37). We may reflect upon the fact that animals do not have spiritual life and hence make an imperfect sacrifice. But these are not given as reasons in the Scripture. We are not told why the blood of animals cannot take away sin. Again the mystery lies hidden in the mind of God. Someone has said: "Anything we can define, we feel superior to; anything we cannot define, we resent." But this is the pattern of worldly wisdom. The simplicity of Christian faith does not expect complete understanding of God and His purposes and program.

It is not surprising, then, that the sublime mystery should be the necessity of the death of God's Son for the sins of man. The fact of this necessity and of the actual offering of the perfect sacrifice of the One who was without sin is affirmed with solemn repetition. We view with awe and humility the death of Christ on the cross for our sins. We are moved by the infinite love of God and are drawn to Christ as we behold Him lifted up to death on the cross, lifted up to life from the tomb, and lifted up to heaven at His ascension. We believe with all the intensity of the human heart the declarations of Christ and the apostles that He bore our sins on the cross, that He died for us, that by His death we may gain forgiveness of our sins. But we do not understand why this was necessary, except that this is God's will. Here, as elsewhere, we walk by faith and not by sight. But as we walk the Christian way of life, we thank God for the infinite glory and majesty of Jesus our divine Lord and Master dying on the cross for our sins.

"Beneath the cross of Jesus, I fain would take my stand... My sinful self my only shame, My glory all the cross."

132. Chapter 19 - The Resurrection

Chapter 19 - The Resurrection Matthew 28:1-15;Mark 15:42-47;Mark 16:1-14;Luke 24:1-43;John 20:1-31 Significance of the Burial The great emphasis placed upon the burial of Jesus both as a vital part of the history of Jesus' work on earth and an all-important doctrine in the gospel should seem surprising only to those who have not comprehended the supreme fact of the resurrection. Paul declares with the most deliberate emphasis: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3, 1 Corinthians 15:4). The fact of His burial together with the identity, nature, and location of the tomb furnishes one of the powerful proofs of His resurrection: the empty tomb. What greater confirmation could be added to the repeated presentation in Acts and the Epistles of the gospel as centering in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, than the solemn command of the Master that all who would follow His teaching and share His life, must die to sin through repentance, be buried in the waters of baptism for the remission of their sins in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and be raised to walk in the newness of a life completely dedicated to the service of Jesus? Each time a person gives his life to Christ, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus are re-enacted. Like the Lord's Supper, baptism keeps continually before us the great facts of the gospel.

Joseph and Nicodemus The first move was made by the enemies to secure the immediate dispatch of the victims (John 19:31-37). The apostles and the most devoted disciples were still scattered, defeated, and silent. Joseph of Arimathea, who had secretly been a disciple of Jesus, now found himself driven by his conscience to risk all by boldly approaching Pilate with a request that he be permitted to bury the body of Jesus. He could not have offered any motive for this course other than the very apparent implication that he was a disciple of Jesus. The Roman governor must have eyed with cold contempt this friend of the crucified One who had failed to speak up at the trials and give him popular support in his efforts to save Jesus from death. Joseph and Nicodemus were men of wealth and distinction, and one of them possessed a rock-hewn tomb which had never been used and which, by strange coincidence, was in the very same section outside the city where the Romans had seen fit to execute the three condemned to death (John 19:41). Their place as leaders in the national assembly of the Jews gave ready access to the Roman governor to present the request. All of this must have made them feel strongly the urge to declare themselves for Jesus. Nicodemus had already engaged in heated debate in His defense in the Sanhedrin (John 7:50-53). This may be the reason he did not accompany Joseph in the interview with Pilate. They evidently were attempting to avoid stirring up the Jews to block their move. The open declaration of their devotion to Jesus which they had failed to give during His life, they offer now at His death. That which no one else who believed on Him was in a position to do as well as they is the heart-broken gift they now present to their Lord.

Details of Pilate's reaction to Joseph's request are not recorded. Pilate did express surprise that Jesus should have died so soon. The Jewish leaders had already requested that soldiers be sent

to hasten the death of the victims by breaking their legs. The law of Moses (Deuteronomy 21:23; Joshua 8:29; Joshua 10:27) required that the dead bodies of criminals should not be permitted to remain hanging upon a tree over night. The immediate approach of the Sabbath gave them additional ground for seeking fulfillment of this law. The Jewish leaders would be anxious to secure the speedy death of Jesus as well as the meticulous fulfillment of the regulations of the law. The fact that the Passover was being observed would make them the more anxious to have the bodies removed. They had the further and deeper motive of watching with intense vigilance what became of the body of Jesus in order to prevent any false rumors about a supposed resurrection. Neither the Jews nor Pilate had made any move as to the burial of the body. That would come later. A pauper's or a criminal's grave could be supplied readily.

Prophecies Fulfilled

John is careful to point out the powerful evidence which inheres in the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies by the Roman soldiers. Sometimes it is suggested by critics that Jesus and various others in the New Testament looked back into the Old Testament, saw what was predicted, and deliberately sought to fulfill these predictions. That such a procedure is entirely contrary to the character of Jesus is to be seen on the surface. The God who inspired the prophet to predict, directed Jesus' speech and conduct. The fulfillment was minute and continuous. In the case of these Roman soldiers sent to finish the execution of criminals, certainly no one can make any claim that they understood the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. What caused them to halt and hesitate with uplifted club ready to beat the legs of Jesus into a pulp? They proceeded without hesitation in the case of the two robbers. Was it the radiating influence of a life which they had felt, but did not understand? Since Jesus was plainly dead, it may have been nothing more than an avoiding of unnecessary effort. And yet one of them reflecting upon the fact that they had been sent to break the legs of the three and that their own lives would be at stake, if they should be mistaken in their judgment that Jesus was dead, thrust his spear into the side of Jesus. John does not discuss the probable motives of the soldiers in the striking independence of action which they showed when sent forth with instructions to break the legs of the three men dying by crucifixion. In the most impressive manner he simply states the historic facts as to what they did and then lays alongside the explicit predictions of the Old Testament that were fulfilled (cf Exodus 12:46; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Numbers 9:12; Psalms 34:20; Zechariah 12:10; Psalms 22:17). When one adds the consideration of Isaiah 53:1-12, which is filled with the most minute particulars of predictions fulfilled in the trials, torture, death, and burial of Jesus, the most amazing thing is how any one can reject the divine evidence and the divine message which God has revealed. The Burial The request of Joseph was granted as readily as had been that of the Jews. Everything seemed to be working out very smoothly for the Roman governor to rid himself of the last details of this whole troublesome affair. Bernard cites a passage from Philo in which the Jewish philosopher tells of occasions when the bodies of criminals were taken down from crosses and "handed over to relatives for burial on the occasion of the emperor's birthday or the like." The courtesy offered to these friends of Jesus was being nicely balanced by a clever Roman politician with favors granted to the chief priests. At least the governor would settle this case without a riot or rebellion among the people. The winding sheet provided for the body of Jesus must have been as beautiful and costly as the seamless robe for which the soldiers had just cast lots. When we remember the gift of love which Mary presented as she broke the alabaster box of ointment over Jesus in the home

of Simon, we should not forget these other loving gifts that seem so appropriate in the hour of tragedy. Both Nicodemus and Joseph, being men of wealth and high position, could afford such costly provisions as a hundred pounds of spices. It was customary to mix the sweet smelling gum called myrrh with the powdered aromatic wood of aloes. They are mentioned in Psalms 45:8; Proverbs 7:17; Song of Solomon 4:14; 2 Chronicles 16:14. The burial was done in haste, and the work of embalming was not completed, for the women came early on the first day of the week with other spices to complete the embalming. As the winding sheet was wrapped about the body these spices were scattered in its folds. That the burial took place in the garden of Joseph which was in the same section or place in which the crucifixion had been located, may seem surprising, but the Romans probably commandeered with some freedom an open space on a hilltop.

Only John comments on the coincidence that the Romans had selected a location which was near the very place where these two disciples buried the body of Jesus. We are not told how the body was removed from the cross — whether the cross was lowered first or the body taken down and the cross left standing. “The women, who had come with him out of Galilee” (Luke 23:55), are named as watching the sad ministrations and following the men who carried the body and laid it in the tomb (Matthew 27:55, Matthew 27:56, Matthew 27:61).

Poor people were simply buried in the ground with stone slabs placed over the grave and sealed with concrete so that animals could not disturb the body. Only rich people could afford a rockhewn tomb. Such a tomb consisted of a main chamber which was entered by a low door that usually required a stooping position for entering. Loculi were dug into the solid rock on three sides of this main chamber. Each loculus was just large enough to allow a body to be thrust in and sealed up with concrete. The body of Jesus was not placed in such a loculus, but was left in the main chamber. This befitted the honor His friends would bestow upon Him. The angels seated at the head and the foot of the place where His body had been laid, show plainly that the body was in the main chamber and not in a loculus. Since the tomb had not been used as yet, no loculi may even have been dug.

Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Jesus, followed to the tomb, watched the burial, and then sat for a while in solemn contemplation. As they saw the costly gift of spices used, did they think again in tearful thanksgiving of the thoughtful gift of Mary of Bethany, which Jesus had said had been for His burial? We are not told who carried the bier. If the apostles had helped in this sorrowful mission we would expect it to be mentioned. Happy at the prospect of an honorable burial of their Master they may have remained at a discreet distance to avoid stirring interference by the hostile Jewish leaders. Servants and retainers of Joseph and Nicodemus may have assisted in carrying the body. Roman soldiers on guard might have assisted in removing the body from the cross, but they would not have helped carry the body to the tomb. All of this was before sunset, but the day was rapidly drawing to a close. The Guard at the Tomb The Jews had just made one request to hasten the death and to bring about the speedy burial of the victims, but they were watching every move of any of the followers of Jesus with an eagle eye. No sooner was the burial of Jesus completed by His friends (what furious words of hate and rage they must have bandied about as they talked of the disaffection of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea), than the Jews countered this move by seeing that the burial was made permanent by securing a guard of Roman soldiers to watch the tomb until after the period of three days, frequently predicted by Jesus, should have passed. The Roman governor granted a third audience in quick succession as

the chief priests came with their request for a guard to be placed at the tomb to prevent the disciples of Jesus from stealing His body and then pretending that He had been raised from the dead even as He had predicted.

Radical critics attempt to claim that a Jewish and not a Roman guard was placed at the tomb; in other words, Pilate refused their request for a Roman guard. The implication behind such a perverted interpretation is that a Jewish guard would not be so well disciplined nor so dependable nor backed by such a strong authority, hence it seems to ease the pressure of the evidence in favor of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. But that fanatical Jewish soldiers would not have been so zealous to keep the body in the tomb as would Roman soldiers is a point to be proved. It is very plain from the narrative, however, that the guard was Roman. The crucifixion and the hastening of death, together with the examination to see that the victims were actually dead, had been in the hands of Roman soldiers and one would certainly expect that the Romans would maintain the guard at the tomb. Pilate must have been on edge for days over the whole matter to see that no public riots occurred relative to it. The fact that the Jews came to Pilate and asked for a guard to be placed at the tomb shows it was still in his hands, and that they were asking for a Roman guard. The Greek verb can be either indicative or imperative: “Ye have a guard” (“You have one of your own — the temple guard; use your own guard to make it as sure as you can; do not trouble me about such matters”) or “Have a guard” (“Take a guard of Roman soldiers — by all means do not let us have any more trouble over this matter; make it as sure as you can”). That the latter is correct and that the guard was Roman is absolutely proved by the fact that when the soldiers came to the chief priests (as they naturally had to do since they had been placed at their command by Pilate) and reported what had happened at the tomb, the chief priests plotted and bribed, but they had to promise to protect the soldiers from the wrath of Pilate “if this should come to the governor’s ears.”

It meant death to a Roman soldier to go to sleep on guard. This is not peculiar to the Romans. Look at the short shrift given by Herod Agrippa I to the soldiers who were guarding Peter, when the angel led him forth from the prison during the night (Acts 12:19). If the soldiers guarding the tomb had been Jewish, the chief priests would have handled them without any reference to Pilate at all. There would have been no need to promise Jewish soldiers protection from a Roman governor. The number of soldiers placed at the tomb is not stated. Acts 12:4 states that Herod Agrippa placed four quarternions of soldiers to guard Peter, and such a detail of sixteen soldiers to guard a tomb would seem to be a reasonable number. From the fact that Roman soldiers constituted the guard and that it was done with the consent and authority of Pilate we conclude that a Roman seal was placed across the entrance to the tomb, “sealing the stone.” This was done, according to the appeal of the Jews to Pilate, lest the disciples should steal the body of Jesus and claim He was raised from the dead as He had predicted. The terrible crime they had committed had so sharpened memory and conscience that they kept meditating fearfully over the predictions of Jesus concerning His resurrection on the third day. The apostles failed to recall or realize these profound declarations. The Jews knew very well that the apostles were not the kind of people to steal the body of Jesus and lie about it. The real reason for that guard at the tomb was something else. Call it superstitious fear, if you will, in the case of Pilate. As far as these Jewish scholars were concerned it was a nameless dread and a purpose more cunning and more diabolical. They had seen the miracles of Jesus. The Resurrection The tomb was empty on the

third day as He had predicted. In spite of the shrewd forethought of His bitter enemies, stirred by hatred and a haunting fear, the tomb was empty. Even though the tomb was dug out of solid rock, was located within the environs of the capital, was owned by a prominent national leader, had never been used up to the hour that with loving care Jesus' body was laid to rest in it in the presence of a number of witnesses, and was sealed and guarded by the armed might of Rome procured by determined enemies, yet the tomb was empty on the third day. The Roman soldiers were obligated upon penalty of death to see that the body of Jesus was in the tomb when they sealed it and to see that it remained in the tomb. Even though a great stone filled the entrance and they stood on constant guard before the door, they found that their might and vigilance were in vain, for a power they could not resist caused them to fall to the ground as dead men. And when they arose, they found that the tomb was empty. They reported the facts to the high priests who had commissioned them to see to it by every means possible that the body of Jesus was kept in the tomb. These high priests did not report them to the governor for execution as faithless to their duty. Why? Because they wanted to keep secret from the people how the tomb had become empty; they wanted to bribe and use these very soldiers to spread a false rumor as to what had happened to the body of Jesus. How transparent was the lie they concocted and yet what skeptic has ever invented any more plausible explanation through twenty centuries of continuous effort!

It is only the first half, the negative half, of the evidence that the tomb was empty and that it remained empty, while Jerusalem was filled with the bold proclamation of the apostles. While the infuriated foes of Christ sought every conceivable means to silence them, even to the extreme limit of slaying the witnesses, the apostles stood ready to die for the truth they proclaimed. They might have silenced Peter and the rest in a moment if they only had brought in the body of Jesus and laid it there in the temple area face to face with these who claimed He was risen from the dead; but they could not produce the body of Jesus — the tomb was empty. The Predictions

If the chief priests and the scribes felt the powerful pressure of the predictions of Jesus before the resurrection actually occurred, what shall we say of this evidence in the light of the historic fact? The angel who announced the resurrection to the women used the predictions of Jesus to clinch the declaration of the fact: "He is risen, even as he said." Those who have regard for the words of Jesus and for the records of the New Testament still find this most convincing proof. Even those who scorn Jesus and the Gospels must attempt to explain the facts or rest purely on their hostile prejudice. The utter simplicity of the predictions and of the records of the fulfillment, immediately sets them apart from any efforts of invention by a forger. No one writing a fairy tale could ever have been satisfied with such meager and matter-of-fact details. And the predictions of the Old Testament make this side of the evidence all the more impressive. Peter and the rest of the apostles were quick to seize and drive home this phase of the evidence. Jesus Himself in talking to the two going to Emmaus carefully unfolded the whole powerful array of prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the death and resurrection of the Messiah. On the day of Pentecost Peter welded together at the climax of his sermon the testimony of the eyewitnesses as to the resurrection, with the prediction of David that the Messiah should not see corruption when His body was placed in the grave. Peter proceeded to argue with keen emphasis that David could not possibly have been speaking of himself, but that he was predicting the resurrection of the Messiah. The Battlefield

Those who reject the resurrection have found themselves facing the thorny dilemma of charging the apostles with fraud and deceit and the New Testament records with utter unreliability or of holding that the apostles were themselves the dupes of their own distorted imagination. It is no wonder, as they have turned and twisted under such embarrassing facts, that they have so desperately sought to place the writing of the Gospel narratives late, after a long period of development of mythical ideas supposedly had taken place. But this simply cannot be done. Even the radical leaders themselves are now forced to admit that there is not an iota of evidence to lead anybody to assign the New Testament writings to the second century. The gap between the dates assigned to the Gospels by the radical and conservative scholars has gradually narrowed as the discovery of ancient manuscripts, such as the recently unearthed Ryland fragment of John's Gospel, has forced the modernists to retreat and reform their lines on the admission of much earlier dates for the Synoptics and John. This is no new line of argument. Paul used it most effectively in writing his tremendous argument on the resurrection in 1 Corinthians. The scholarly Greeks at Athens had mocked at Paul's proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus and in writing to the Greeks at nearby Corinth, Paul plainly recounted the indubitable evidence. When he cited the fact that five hundred brethren at once had seen Jesus after His resurrection, Paul was quick to point out that this submission in writing of the evidence of the fact was being made in the very lifetime of many of these witnesses so that there was the possibility of investigation of the testimony and no possibility of fraud or development of fanciful ideas through the lapse of long ages: "then he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:6).

Vacillating Attacks

There has been a general swing away from the open charge of falsification against the apostles and the New Testament writers. That sort of attack upon the resurrection is so utterly insufficient in the presence of the nobility of life and the simplicity of testimony one meets in the New Testament records that it never could have been anything more than the resort of desperation. The radicals of this century have swung to the other angle of pity instead of accusation against the apostles. But the moment they follow this trend they face the unalterable fact that the disciples did not expect the resurrection. They not only were not quick to accept the historic fact; it literally had to be hammered into their heads by the actual presence of the risen Christ. All the means available to men for testing the validity of human knowledge and historic facts were used. The appearances of Jesus occurred over such an extended period and in so many different places and to so many people that the positive evidence is overwhelming. The negative evidence of the empty tomb had to undergo the most rigid and bitter efforts of the enemies of Christ. Every effort they made to prevent any sort of fraud in stealing and hiding the body makes the evidence all the stronger that this could not have occurred. Nor can the modernistic jibe stand that Jesus never appeared to any but a select group of people who were friendly to Him, that He never appeared to His enemies! Jesus appeared to His unbelieving half-brother James, the son of Joseph and Mary. His brethren had resolutely refused to believe upon Him up to that time, but from this meeting between Jesus and His half-brother, faith resulted and James became one of the great leaders in the New Testament church. Jesus also appeared to the greatest enemy Christianity ever had, Saul of Tarsus. At the high moment of his wrathful hostility and determination to destroy the church, root and branch, Paul was met by the risen Christ on the way to Damascus; and Saul of Tarsus

became Paul the great apostle to the Gentiles. The Bodily Resurrection

Every possible emphasis is laid upon the fact that it was the very body which had been nailed to the cross, that was laid in the tomb, treated with such respect by His friends, and guarded with such care by His foes. Death had brought the separation of soul and body, but the resurrection brought a reunion of soul and body. The body that had been nailed to the cross and buried in the tomb is again the tabernacle in which the Son of God appears to men.

All the attention given to the body both by friends and foes, as recorded in all four narratives, heaps up the evidence for the bodily resurrection. A request to the governor; a removal from the cross; a winding-sheet and costly spices of great price and quantity; a burial in a rock-hewn tomb never before occupied (there could be no question of various bodies confused in this sepulcher); a group of witnesses who watched and remained; a second request from the governor (this time from His enemies) to get a company of soldiers to see to it that the body remained in the tomb; the waiting and planning to give further care to the embalming of the body; the preparation of spices and the buying of a further supply; the journey of a number of women to the tomb at dawn to put these spices around the body; the discussion of the women as to how they could move the great stone and get into the tomb where the body lay; the declaration that an angel descended from heaven and rolled away the stone (as the women were in the midst of their journey, but still some distance away); the repeated declarations that the tomb was immediately empty and Jesus was raised from the dead, by the writers, by angels, by Jesus; the report of the guards to the high priests as to how they had been suddenly and mysteriously overcome and had recovered to find the tomb empty; the silly tale which the high priests of the Jews bribed the soldiers to tell that the disciples had come and stolen away the body while they slept — here it is: a whole mountain of accumulated evidence! How can any person deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus and persuade his hearers that he has not torn the New Testament to ribbons and vilified the writers, the apostles, yea, the Christ Himself? A Spiritual Resurrection? The unbelievers of a modern faithless generation, sitting in their high places, undertake to defend their belief in a “spiritual resurrection,” instead of the bodily resurrection of Jesus, in the following language: “The disciples had an experience which was as effective and powerful in restoring their confidence as if Jesus had been raised.” “Experience?” what sort? If Jesus was not actually raised from the dead, the experience was an hallucination. Christianity, then, is based upon a delusion instead of a fact! And these skeptical leaders who hold such a view solemnly affirm that it constitutes “an implicit belief in the resurrection of Jesus”! “Weasel words” that arise out of conscience seared as with a hot iron! Deception as base as that of the Jewish national and religious council that devised the murder of the Son of God!

What sort of “experience” was this that worked just as well as if Jesus had actually been raised from the dead? What caused them to have such an experience? They had given up hope. They had to have the resurrection driven into their minds and hearts by repeated appearances of Jesus in their midst and all the possible evidence that could be demanded. If Jesus was not raised from the dead, but the disciples had an “experience,” did they just think that the tomb was empty? Did they just think they saw, heard, and touched Jesus? And the soldiers — they had an “experience,” too, did they? How about the high priests? Would you call their conduct an “experience”? This whole empty theory of the modernists is of one piece with their philosophy that says there is no such person as God, but that the idea of “god” is a useful piece of mental furniture. It is nowadays

considered shocking discourtesy to call any one an atheist. He is only a “humanist” — usually a “theistic humanist,” if you please, for he has a “god,” an idea, the image of his own distorted self A theistic atheist!

Lake’s Theory

Just how do those who reject the resurrection of Jesus undertake to explain the empty tomb? Kirsopp Lake offers the following theory. The women who followed the funeral cortege from the cross to the tomb were weeping and their tears and grief blurred their sight as they came to the tomb so that when they returned in the early dawn of the first day of the week, they were not certain as to its location. They lost their way as they came bringing their spices and arrived at a different tomb where a young man was standing dressed in white. He offered to direct them to the correct tomb farther up the hill saying: “He is not here — He is off up yonder….” The women frightened at thus being addressed in the early dawn amid such lonely surroundings did not stay to hear his full explanation, but fled at the first words of the young man. In their excitement they imagined he had declared that Jesus was not in the tomb and they reported, when they arrived among the disciples, that Jesus had been raised from the dead. The radicals declare that in this manner the entire story about the resurrection had its beginning. This tissue of misrepresentation falls apart upon examination. There is no mention of the women weeping as they went from the cross to the tomb. The fact that they sat awhile in solemn contemplation by the side of the tomb after all the others had gone would have given them ample opportunity to impress indelibly upon their minds the exact location, if any such effort was necessary. And the young man dressed in white standing by an empty tomb in the outskirts of the city at dawn, whence came he? Out of Kirsopp Lake’s fertile imagination under the desperate necessity of finding some way to deny the evidence of the empty tomb. The young man is manufactured at will and placed in the proper stance. But he was either known or unknown to the women who came. If unknown, how could he have foreseen that they were seeking to complete the embalming of the body of Jesus? If known, why should the women have been frightened at a word of kindly direction from him? And what of the further examination of the tomb?

Professor Lake has to obliterate all the rest of the testimony of the New Testament as to how the first report of the empty tomb sent the disciples running to examine it. Are we to suppose that all the nation was in ignorance as to the location of the tomb of a famous national leader, a tomb which had been recently excavated from solid rock in the environs of the capital? The enemies of Jesus had set a Roman guard before the tomb to see that the body of Jesus was kept secure therein. Are we to suppose that they would have rested under the tremendous proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus by the apostles, if all they had to do was to produce the body of Jesus? If the whole story arose from the fact that the women lost their way and were directed aright by a young man who frightened them and caused them to bring home an excited report, then the body of Jesus was still there in the right tomb. Why did not the enemies of Jesus produce it? Well does James Orr declare that the fact the enemies of Jesus did not produce the body of Jesus, spells could not.

Ryder’s Theory

Professor Ryder of Andover Seminary had another explanation. He held that the Gospel of Matthew offers the key to the explanation of the empty tomb. Matthew 27:62 explicitly states that

the Jews did not go to Pilate to secure a guard for the tomb until “the morrow, which is the day after the preparation.” Thus the tomb, according to Professor Ryder, was left unguarded the first night and that is when the body was removed. This explanation overlooks several facts. “The morrow began at sunset and there is not the slightest suggestion in the text that the action of the Jewish leaders was not immediate, as soon as they learned of the burial. Thus the guard was placed at the tomb after the women had departed from their lonely vigil, but it was not long after. The tomb was not left unguarded that first night. Furthermore, there is this interesting fact which Matthew supplies: the Jewish scholars themselves went to the tomb with the Roman guard to see to the examination of the tomb, to make sure that the body was in it and the seal properly placed upon the tomb (Matthew 27:66). Thus Professor Ryder assists in demolishing Professor Lake’s theory and has nothing left that is substantial in its place.

Even if the tomb had been left unguarded the first night, this theory would still face all the obstacles of trying to conjure up some one with sufficient motives to lead them to steal the body, conceal it, and leave it hidden, while the whole nation rang with the declarations that Jesus was risen from the dead. To suppose that the disciples of Jesus did this, runs counter to the whole moral structure of the gospel they proclaimed. To suggest that the enemies of Jesus did it, accuses them of imbecility. No motive has ever been suggested for any one else, such as Pilate or the gardener, having the body removed, and such action would have had to run the gauntlet of both friends and foes of Christ in their resultant search. It is hard enough to transport and conceal a body today with all the amazing means of communication and travel. The only means then of moving a body would have been on a bier borne by men or in an ox-cart. To suppose that such a thing was done through the midst of Jerusalem crowded with hundreds of thousands of excited pilgrims to the Passover and studded with bitter enemies of Jesus is a confession of how desperate is the determination of modern enemies of Christ to deny the fact of the resurrection. The Noncommittal Attitude

Professor G. F. Moore of Harvard took the position that we do not possess sufficient facts to enable us to determine how the tomb became empty. This is to declare that the eyes are to be kept closed tightly and the step quickened until we have safely passed the overwhelming evidence and then we can open them again with the precious theory of denial of the resurrection in hand. This is to confess the utter failure of all the skeptics through the ages to conjure up any sort of rational explanation of the facts which will enable them to deny the fact of the resurrection with a logical recital of events. Professor Moore is at least to be congratulated in that he did not attempt the impossible. But the refusal to accept the actual evidence is another exhibition of how modernism rests upon theory instead of fact. The Tests by the Disciples The fact that Jesus had to convince each group of disciples and each individual that He was actually raised from the dead, makes the case grow stronger with each series of tests. When Mary came with the news of the empty tomb, she was doubted and Peter and John ran to investigate. When she reported and when the other women later reported that they had seen the risen Christ, the disciples did not believe their report. It was not a case of their getting excited and grasping at a straw like a drowning man. They stubbornly refused to believe. They could not go to investigate these reports for Christ had suddenly disappeared in each case. All they could do was to examine the empty tomb and to wait for further evidence. This came in due time and in overwhelming measure.

During the day the appearances to the two going to Emmaus and to Peter occurred. The appearance to the ten disciples, Thomas being absent, was the last of five appearances on the day of the resurrection. Thomas felt that the others had been too easily persuaded and had not thoroughly tested the reality of Jesus' resurrection. They had thought He was present, but Thomas knew of a method which would give him absolute proof: he would put his finger in the print of the nails and thrust his hand into the scarred wound in His side. No fancied voice or presence would influence or confuse him. On the following Sunday evening (notice the profound emphasis upon the first day of the week as the sacred day of Christianity, since the resurrection, by God's choice, was not on the Sabbath, but on the first day of the week; so these successive appearances) when Jesus appeared again in the midst, He immediately addressed Thomas and offered to meet His challenge, holding out His hands for the touch of Thomas and commanding him to reach out his hand and put it into His side. The miraculous knowledge of Jesus which was evident in His knowing what Thomas had said when Jesus had not been visibly present, and the actual presence of Jesus now accepting his challenge, caused Thomas to fall at the feet of Jesus crying: "My Lord and my God." Was not the test of touch applied, then? It was in the case of the women who were met by Jesus on the resurrection morning as they were returning from the empty tomb: "And behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and took hold of his feet, and worshipped him" (Matthew 28:9; cf. also Luke 24:39).

Much confusion has arisen over the statement of Jesus to Mary earlier on this resurrection morning: "Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turneth herself, and saith unto him in Hebrew, Rabboni; which is to say, Teacher. Jesus saith to her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father: but go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God" (John 20:16, John 20:17). Why this refusal to allow Mary to touch Him? When it is known, however, that the Greek verb may be translated "detain" as well as "touch," the difficulty disappears. The marginal reading in the American Standard Version subtly suggests, but does not quite make clear, the alternate translation: "Take not hold on me."

Westcott maintains (1) the Greek verb, hapto, means "to cling to"; (2) the use of the present tense in this verse, indicating continued action, shows that Mary was already clinging to Jesus; (3) the passage should be rendered: "Do not continue to cling to me" (Commentary on John, p. 292). There was much to be done before the final ascension to the Father, therefore Mary was sent in haste to carry the specific report of the resurrection to the disciples now and without delay. Jesus also quickly disappeared and made a second appearance, this time to the rest of the women. They were permitted to lay hold of His feet as the assured test of touch was used. Mary had already been sent with the first report of the resurrection and there was not now the same necessity to send these women in haste. The same logic applies to the offer to the apostles and to Thomas to touch His hands and side. The fact that the appearances to the ten and the eleven on successive Sunday nights occurred in an upper room, where the doors were shut and barred against hostile intrusion by the Jews, has caused many to wonder at the nature of Jesus' resurrection body and to suppose that His body "had different properties after the resurrection." This whole scene which seems to have taken place in the same upper room, where the last supper had been shared and the last precious hours of instruction given before the betrayal in Gethsemane, is full of intense drama. Luke 24:36 indicates that the two disciples from Emmaus had just delivered their report and were in the midst, as were some other disciples (Luke 24:33.) John merely reports the most

important fact that the ten apostles were present and Thomas absent. The first words of Jesus to the apostles after the resurrection stir our interest almost as much as His final words before His death: “Peace be unto you.” This was the ordinary salutation of the East, but no salutation could be ordinary on the lips of the Son of God, least of all on such an occasion as this. What words could have spoken more of life’s deepest desires and needs in such condensed form? How different the impact of these solemn words now than when He had spoken them in this upper room as He was about to go forth to die. While the questions about the resurrection body, and how and where Jesus spent His time during these forty days when He was not in the presence of His disciples, and yet had not ascended to the Father, lie quite beyond our knowledge, the suggestion that Jesus’ resurrection body had different properties which enabled Him to pass through closed doors does not seem satisfactory. It is no more possible for us to walk on the water than for us to pass through closed doors. Are we then to conclude that Jesus’ body before the resurrection, when He was carrying on His ministry in Galilee had “different properties”? The absurdity of this solution which so many commentators offer, is reached when we ask, Did Peter’s body have “different properties” when he walked on the water? It was simply a miracle in each case.

Every time we read either in the Old or the New Testament of an angel appearing — a young man standing by Gideon in his threshing floor or by the aged Zacharias in the Holy Place of the temple — a miracle of translation has taken place as the angel changed from heavenly into earthly form. When suddenly the angel disappears, a reverse translation has taken place. The only alternative is to suppose with the modernists that these appearances were not actual, but only subjective in the mind of the person who thought they saw somebody standing by them in white garments. Such a view is a plain contradiction of the statements of the Scripture and of the miraculous manifestations which accompanied such appearances. If, then, we see this miracle of translation take place so many times in the appearance of angels, why be disturbed or perplexed about it in the case of the risen Christ entering a room where the doors were closed and bolted? This introduces the whole question as to what became of the body of Jesus. We contend that the modernist must explain what became of the body of Jesus which was laid in the tomb, if He was not actually raised. But the Christian must also explain what became of that body which was laid in the tomb when the ascension of Jesus took place, inasmuch as the earthly and the heavenly bodies are different according to the repeated declarations of the Scripture. The answer to this is again that there was a double miracle in that the body which was nailed to the cross and laid in the tomb, was actually reunited with the spirit of Jesus and, when the ascension took place, the earthly body of Jesus was translated into the heavenly. The translations of Enoch and Elijah offer further illustrations. This is the same problem we face in regard to our own resurrection, the problem which Paul discusses with such vigor and clarity in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians. To the troubled Corinthians perplexed as to the life after death, Paul wrote this immortal discussion of immortality. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the solid rock upon which the whole discussion rests.

There is a multitude of other proofs of the life after death which God had given in the miracles recorded in the Bible. There are those logical conclusions from the facts of our earthly existence which the poet has aptly called “Intimations of Immortality,” but they are just that — “intimations.” The foundation for our belief in the resurrection and the life after death is the revelation of God in the Bible, His promises and revelations substantiated by the miracles He has graciously accorded

us. The climax of all these is the resurrection of Jesus. “With what manner of body do they come?” had been one of the perplexities of the Corinthians. Paul explained that even in this world we see a wide variety of bodies and flesh of birds, fish, beasts (the same physical elements of vegetable and animal matter entering into their diet produce strangely diverse manner of bodies); so in heaven there are celestial bodies. What these bodies will be like has not been revealed to us (1 Corinthians 15:35-53). Standing before the empty tomb and in the midst of the many appearances of the risen Christ, we join in the hallelujah chorus: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” Beyond the sunset in God’s tomorrow, we shall be like our Savior when we see Him as He is. “O death, where is thy victory?”

133. Chapter 20 - A Geographical Study of the Final Week

Chapter 20 - A Geographical Study of the Final Week Walk about Zion, and go round about her;

Number the towers thereof;

Mark ye well her bulwarks; Consider her palaces: That ye may tell it to the generation following.

(Psalms 48:12-13).

Jerusalem

Besieged, battered, overthrown, demolished, rebuilt, Jerusalem has been the most fought over city on earth. The fearful predictions of Jesus that the city would be utterly destroyed by the Romans were fulfilled, and the succeeding centuries have added frequent repetitions of that frightful siege. The Modern City The fact that the city has been destroyed and rebuilt so many times makes more difficult the effort to locate the scenes in the life of Jesus which are the source of the imperishable fame and glory of the city. Today the inundation of Zionist immigrants and modern tourists has covered the hills and valleys about the ancient city with all sorts of new buildings which range from the luxurious Zionist buildings west of the Joppa gate to all sorts of residences that now reach halfway to Bethlehem and also far out on the Joppa Road. In the midst of all this modern development still stand the ancient walls of Jerusalem, frowning sternly, but helplessly, in the face of modern artillery. The present walls were built (in a.d. 1542) by Suleiman, sultan of the Ottoman Empire. The city enclosed in these walls is shown by archaeological excavations to be much smaller than the Jerusalem of the time of Jesus. The fundamental landmarks, however, are easily discerned, and a study of the geography of the city throws much light upon the Gospel narratives and helps to clear up some problems very difficult to understand as one reads the four independent accounts of the final week of Jesus' ministry. The Garden of Gethsemane The Mount of Olives, ranging east of the ancient city, with the Valley of Kidron between, has not been modernized as much as the territory on the other sides of the city. This is due in part to the sacred scenes that make it famous and in part to the fact that it has been for many centuries the burying ground of both Jew and Mohammedan. The most famous site, and the most clearly identified, is the Garden of Gethsemane on the western slope of the mount not far across the Kidron Valley from Stephen's gate. If the original garden was not exactly on this spot, it must have been very near. It probably was somewhat larger than the territory now enclosed by a ten-foot wall, and controlled by the Roman Catholic Church. While the decadent, age-old olive trees now in the garden hardly can be so old as the time of Christ, they still remind us that, as the name "Gethsemane" suggests, this garden probably was an olive orchard. It was not by chance or unusual procedure that Jesus went to the garden from the upper room on the night He was betrayed, for Judas, knowing that Jesus was accustomed to spend much time in the seclusion of this garden, was able to guide the soldiers to Gethsemane. To the East of the City

Three main routes lead over or around the Mount of Olives to the east. The ordinary route to Bethany and on to Jericho leads south along the western base of the Mount of Olives to the break

in the range between the Mount of Olives and the Hill of Offense, and then swings sharply east and northeast over the mountain. This affords a gradual ascent. The usual route for entry into the city from the mount is straight down from the summit. This is the probable route which Jesus followed upon the occasion of the triumphal entry, since He started from Bethany after having secured the colt and its mother from Bethphage, also on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. The place at which He paused and lamented the fate of Jerusalem is usually thought to be the point where the full panorama of the city comes into view. The entrance to the temple area was undoubtedly made through the Golden Gate, which Josephus tells us was reached from the Mount of Olives by a wonderful viaduct across the Kidron Valley. The Mohammedans have had a tradition that the city would be captured only through the Golden Gate. In order to prevent this, they walled it up. The towers of the gate are still visible in the wall. The Site of the Temple The temple area was built with tremendous effort by Solomon, as he constructed retaining walls along the narrow crest of Mount Moriah and filled in the space with dirt so as to make a level place broad enough for the temple and its related buildings. The northwest corner had to be cut down to the level. The eastern and southern ends had to be raised to a great height. The character of the work necessary, as seen in the archaeological remains, the detailed descriptions of its location and nature in the Bible and in Josephus, together with the unbroken line of testimony of tradition as to the nature of the sacred buildings that have been erected on the temple area, make this whole location indisputable. Beyond all question the Mosque of Omar today covers a part of the space occupied by the temple of Solomon and its successors built by Zerubbabel and his helpers, and by Herod the Great. The Mosque of Omar is also called the Dome of the Rock, since it is really not a mosque, but a shrine covering an immense rock, evidently the spot on which the brazen altar was located for the sacrifice of animals in the court of Solomon’s temple.

Archaeologists differ as to the location of Solomon’s palace, and we cannot be absolutely certain where the high priest’s palace was located, the palace in which Jesus was tried three times and in which Peter denied his Lord. It probably was closely adjacent to the temple area, if not in some part of this area which covers about thirty-five acres. Although various reconstructions of Herod’s temple have been attempted, it is not possible for us to locate the exact limits of the various courts and buildings of the temple where so many stirring and supremely important events in the ministry of Jesus occurred. Most of His preaching in the temple area must have been done, not in the court of Israel, where only male Israelites over twenty years of age might enter or the court of women which was open to Jews of both sexes, but the larger court of the Gentiles where the largest crowds would gather. The New Testament makes it clear that preaching services were not uncommon in the great temple court. It was doubtless equipped with a pulpit for preaching and teaching. Even without the lengthy and detailed descriptions of Josephus concerning the glory of the temple which Herod the Great built, we should have some idea of its splendor and magnificence from fleeting glimpses given in the New Testament. When the Bible student attempts to trace, as best he can, the geography of those tragic hours which accompanied the end of Jesus’ ministry, he walks with somewhat uncertain steps, because the Gospel accounts do not consist of a dry collection of dates and places, such details being only introduced incidentally and when essential to the all-important facts recorded, because the repeated destruction of the city has obliterated many landmarks, and because the locations pointed out by tradition are so often contradictory to the information given in the New Testament. The Upper Room

We should like to know just where Jesus met in that upper room with the twelve for those final hours of precious fellowship and instruction. Catholic tradition points to the second story of a building outside the Zion gate, south of the city. But when they tell us that this building (called the Coenaculum) is also the tomb of David and that the building just across the way was the palace of Caiaphas, the concentration of points of interest in one spot immediately uncovers the absurd custom of making up for lack of evidence by quantity of assertions and by the identification of the place with a plurality of Biblical events. The Coenaculum is a possible location of the scene of the last supper, for archaeology has uncovered paved streets and walls south of this point on Mount Zion, indicating that this section was formerly within the city limits.

Almost any other part of the city as far removed from the temple area and the concentration of enemies of Jesus is just as possible a location. We can be very sure, however, that the upper room was not in any building just across the street from the palace of the high priest. Jesus took every precaution to prevent these very precious last hours with His disciples from being interrupted. Not even the disciples knew where they were to meet, with the exception of the two sent with strange instructions to go into the city and follow a man with a pitcher on his head who would be passing down a certain street at a certain point at the very moment they arrived. The house into which the man would enter they would find to be owned by a disciple who would gladly furnish the upper room for their observance of the Passover. Thus Judas was prevented from knowing where the group would meet until after they had assembled in the room and there was no chance for him to withdraw and guide the soldiers of the high priest to the place. When Jesus finally drove him from the upper room, revealing to Judas, but not to the other disciples, his treachery, Judas evidently made his way immediately to the temple authorities. The time occupied by Judas in making this journey, awakening the authorities and securing an audience with the high priest, and collecting the company of soldiers, gave further leisure to Jesus for supremely important instruction to His disciples. Much of this was delivered to them as they walked through the night. Westcott supposes that Jesus was standing in the deserted court of the temple itself when He uttered the prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John. If this is true, then Jesus led His disciples there on His slow journey from the upper room to the Garden of Gethsemane. We are not told whether Judas led the soldiers first to the building where Jesus had been meeting with His disciples for the Passover and then, finding Him gone, led them to the next likely place — the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus was accustomed to go. If Judas followed this course, then further time intervened — time which was spent by Jesus in prayer.

It has been surmised that the upper room was the commodious chamber in the home of Mary, mother of John Mark. We know that this home was the meeting place of the church in the early days of persecution, a few months later. It has also been conjectured that John Mark was the young man who followed the soldiers after the arrest of Jesus and who fled away naked into the night when the soldiers attempted to seize him. If Judas went first to the upper room with the soldiers, this would help to explain how the young man (John Mark) happened to know of the movement to arrest Jesus and to be present near Gethsemane when the arrest occurred. He had heard the soldiers and the crowd of temple guards and servants moving through the streets. The Roman Citadel The Tower of Antonia is pointed Out by tradition as the place where Jesus was tried before Pilate. Here is shown an ancient arch called the Ecce Homo (“Behold the Man”), built over the street called Via Dolorosa (“The Way of Sorrow”). This tower was situated at the

northwest corner of the temple area. Nehemiah mentions a castle as being there — to the north of the temple (Nehemiah 2:8). In the Maccabean period, the high priest, Hyrcanus, made his headquarters here. A projecting rock scarp of the mountain made this point a powerful location for a fortress. Herod the Great built a prodigious fortification here and named it in honor of Mark Antony. It was the last place in the city to fall into the hands of the Romans during the final siege of the city. Josephus says that the fortress was built “on a great precipice” — a rock over 87 feet high, and 120 feet high at the southeast corner. Two passages were built underground, which gave access to the temple area. When the Romans captured the city in a.d. 70, they left some of the powerful fortresses standing so that future generations might see this mute testimony to the prowess of the Romans, but when the Jews revolted again in a.d. 132, under Bar Cochebas, and were defeated at Bethur, the Romans razed Jerusalem utterly and plowed over the temple area. A part of the great rock scarp on which the Tower of Antonia was built is still visible today, but the natural site of the fort may have been greatly reduced in this effort to prevent the city from ever again being a military menace. The tower standing today on this same location covers a mosaic floor which may have been part of the very building in which Jesus was tried. Mark 15:16 and Acts 21:34 seem to indicate that the Praetorium was part of the Tower of Antonia, which Luke calls “the castle.”

Golgotha

Catholic tradition declares that the Via Dolorosa was the street along which Jesus carried His cross and that the scene of the crucifixion and resurrection was in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, located off the Via Dolorosa and Christian Street in the northwestern part of the city. It is indeed probable that the journey to Golgotha started from the Praetorium in the Tower of Antonia and proceeded along the Via Dolorosa as far as Valley Street and then up this street to the Damascus gate. The Church of the Holy Sepulcher is a very old building, dating from the time of Constantine in the fourth century. The location of this building far inside the present walls of the city, however, renders it highly improbable, to say the least, that it is at all near to the scene of the crucifixion. Mark 15:20-22 suggests, and John 19:17-20 and Hebrews 13:12 make absolutely certain, the fact that the crucifixion occurred outside the city walls. Those who defend the tradition that the Church of the Holy Sepulcher is over the actual site of the crucifixion argue that the city was much smaller in the time of Christ, and that the northern wall was along the side of the hill inside the present location of the church. They point to certain archaeological remains to substantiate this view. When the foundations of the Grand New Hotel were dug, a short section of what some supposed to be the second wall was unearthed, but the remains were too slight to be conclusive. Shick found some such remains where the German Church stands today. North of the German Church and east of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher were found extensive ruins which have been treasured by the Greek Catholic Church as proving the case. Archaeologists, however, declare that these ruins are not like city walls at all and are probably the fragments of Constantine’s great Basilica. At the close of a.d. 1960 some further foundation walls have been found, but it seems highly improbable that they will prove to be of significance.

Josephus only speaks briefly of this second wall, and its location must remain uncertain. Building a city wall along the side of a hill such as this would have left the city quite defenseless so that it is practically impossible for the wall to have been inside the location of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Some archaeologists have uncovered such feeble fortifications in the case of one or

two Greek cities, but these cities could never have been the tremendous military stronghold which Jerusalem was even from the earliest times. Moreover, in the years just preceding the final destruction of the city in a.d. 70, Agrippa began to build with prodigious effort the famous third wall. The Romans compelled him to cease, and the rest of the wall was constructed in wild haste as the Romans, during two years, fought their way from the coast to begin the siege of the city. Some scholars think this third wall was on the identical location of the present northern wall of the city, but archaeologists have discovered remains of this third wall still further north. This completely shuts out the possibility of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher's having been outside the walls in the time of Christ, for this would suppose practically no growth of the city through many centuries and then suddenly an enormous expansion in the brief space of forty years from a.d. 30 to a.d. 70. The English general, "Chinese" Gordon, was the first to point out the hill outside the Damascus gate as the most probable location. The hill is shaped like a skull with two caves facing the city that look like eyeless sockets, and even the sight of a picture of the hill plainly suggests "Golgotha" — "the place of a skull." It is generally agreed by Protestant scholars that the crucifixion occurred outside the northern wall of the city — a view that in recent years has caused a general acceptance of "Gordon's Calvary" as the most likely location. The ability to locate exactly even these supreme events is not essential to our faith, but a study of the geographical background greatly strengthens our understanding of the life of Christ and helps immensely in clearing up many difficult variations in the narratives. Even the skeptic Renan, when he visited Palestine after many years of attacks upon the Gospel narratives, was so profoundly impressed by the way the land fits the narratives of the New Testament and makes them live anew that he called the land of Palestine a "fifth gospel" which illumined and confirmed the other four.

Geography and the Difficulties in the Narratives The specific purpose of the map accompanying this chapter is not merely to present the contour and outlines of the city and its environs and the problematic location of various scenes in the final week of Jesus' ministry, but also to offer a detailed geographical solution to the vexed collection of difficulties which confront one in the four independent narratives of the swiftly moving events on the resurrection morning. The map offers a tentative arrangement of the various journeys and events of the day Jesus was raised from the dead. It must be freely admitted that we cannot even prove absolutely the exact location of the crucifixion; the journeys laid out definitely on this map are only conjectural; but they offer an illustration of how the geography, if we had the exact data, could make seeming difficulties in the narrative disappear at sight. We know that the body of Jesus was buried in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, which happened to be in the same general section where the Romans had taken Him for execution: "Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new tomb wherein was never man yet laid" (John 19:41). How extensive a territory John meant to indicate by this word "place," we cannot tell, but it must have been the same general section outside the city. The Women That the women started from Bethany to go to the tomb very early on the first day of the week is implied, although it is not definitely stated in the narratives. Jesus had been accustomed to spend the night at Bethany during that last week of His public ministry. The home of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha had been headquarters for the inner group of disciples. Mark mentions the names of Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James, and Salome; Matthew says simply, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary; Luke adds to the two Marys the name of Joanna, and mentions the fact that the group contained others, "the other women with them"; John simply tells of Mary Magdalene, since he concentrates on the exciting experiences of

Mary and the fact that the first resurrection appearance was to her. Such variations show the absolute independence of the accounts and destroy single-handed the current radical theory that the Gospel accounts were copied from one another. The Journey

Luke declares the journey of the women to the tomb occurred “at early dawn”; John says, “Now on the first day of the week cometh Mary. Magdalene early, while it was yet dark, unto the tomb” (John 20:1); Matthew has, “Now late (the Greek word also means “after”) on the sabbath day, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week” (Matthew 28:1); but Mark declares, “And very early on the first day of the week, they come to the tomb when the sun was risen” (Mark 16:2). Now the difference between “early dawn” and “while it was yet dark” on the one hand, and “when the sun was risen” on the other, is quite considerable. (Notice the absurd situation of the two-source theorists who hold that Matthew, Luke, and John copied from Mark.) But how is such a surprising variation in the accounts to be explained, even admitting the independence of the accounts? Here is where the geography helps. Bethany was on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, about a mile from Jerusalem. The journey from Bethany to the tomb would have consumed considerable time, since the women were heavily burdened with spices, since they had to stop on the journey to buy more spices (Mark 16:1 a.s.v.), and had to encircle the city to the north to reach the tomb. Matthew, Luke, and John emphasize the very early hour of the departure from Bethany; Mark mentions the journey with emphasis upon the time of arrival at the tomb (“when the sun was risen”). The Time of the Resurrection In a most remarkable way, the writers emphasize the fact that the resurrection of Jesus occurred during the time between the departure of the women from Bethany and the arrival at the tomb, although they do not attempt to state the exact moment. The women had remained in disconsolate seclusion at Bethany during the closing hours of Friday, through the Sabbath, when they rested (Luke 23:54-56; Luke 24:1), and now, as they start for the tomb in the early dawn of the first day of the week, they do not know that a Roman guard had been watching at the tomb, for they question among themselves how they will muster the physical strength to move the great stone from before the door of the sepulcher (Mark 16:3).

Swift March of Events The enemies of Jesus may have learned of the empty tomb before His friends did. “And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled away the stone, and sat upon it” (Matthew 28:2). “For fear of him the watchers did quake, and became as dead men” (Matthew 28:4). This account immediately follows the record of the start of the women on their journey. “Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city” (Matthew 28:11), indicates simultaneous journeys, with the women arriving at the tomb after the soldiers had gone. The implication of each of the narratives is that the resurrection occurred in the early dawn, while the women were making their journey. As soon as the Roman soldiers recovered from their swoon, they went immediately to report to the high priests under whose supervision they were in action. From Calvary this would have been a journey through the Damascus gate and down Valley Street to the temple area. It is implied in Matthew that the women approaching the tomb did not meet the departing soldiers, and a study of the geography of Jerusalem helps us to understand how this was possible. Things began to happen thick and fast as soon as the soldiers started on their hurried trip to report to the high priests. The meeting resulted in their plot to spread the false report that the disciples had come and stolen His body while the soldiers slept.

Mary’s Report of the Empty Tomb

One of the most puzzling differences in the narratives is the fact that Mary Magdalene seems to have started on the journey to the tomb with the other women (Matthew, Mark, Luke). Jesus appeared to the women as they were returning to report the empty tomb (Matthew 28:8, Matthew 28:9), yet He appeared first to Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9; John 20:11.). This shows that Mary Magdalene in some way became separated from the rest of the women. A study of John's narrative and of the geographical possibilities shows how this could have happened. The women proceeded together until they came in sight of the empty tomb, then Mary instantly turned and ran headlong to carry the startling news to Peter and John (John 20:1). Luke does not give the specific details at this point that John does, and only relates in general that the women reported and that Peter investigated the empty tomb. John gives a minute account of how Mary ran to carry the news to Peter and John. This shows that Peter and John were not spending the night in the same location with the other apostles. For the sake of showing how easily Mary could have been separated from the other women, it is presumed, in the construction of the map accompanying this chapter, that Peter and John were spending the night with some disciple in the western part of Jerusalem. Running to report the exciting news to them would have caused Mary to circle the northern and northwestern walls down to the Joppa gate. The Women at the Tomb

Since the leader of the group of women had already gone to bear the tidings to the leaders of the apostles, the other women were at leisure to examine the empty tomb. "And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, while they were perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel," and these angels reported the resurrection of Jesus and instructed them to carry the news to the apostles (Luke 24:3.). Only Luke thus gives an indication that the women took their time about examining the tomb. Matthew summarizes at this point, only mentioning one angel and reporting additional elements of the instructions given by the angel (Matthew 28:5-7). As soon as the women received these commands, they went to tell the apostles, and this journey, presumably, took them back to Bethany whence they had come and where the other apostles were staying, for there is no indication that they encountered Peter and John or Mary as they went; in fact, the opposite is plainly implied.

Since some time had elapsed in their examination of the tomb, Mary had been able to complete her journey, awaken Peter and John, and deliver the surprising news.

Peter and John at the Tomb

Now ensued the exciting race between Peter and John, which is described so vividly in the twentieth chapter of John. The result of this race is taken as one of the indications that John was a young man and Peter much older: "And the other disciple outran Peter, and came first to the tomb; and stooping and looking in, he seeth the linen cloths lying; yet entered he not in. Simon Peter therefore also cometh, following him, and entered into the tomb" (John 20:4-6). The women have gone, the angels have disappeared. Mary Magdalene, exhausted from her race to tell the news, is now following Peter and John as rapidly as she can in returning to the tomb, but she has not yet arrived. The departure of Peter and John from the tomb is described as follows: "So the disciples went away again unto their own home" (John 20:10). This suggests that they now went to the headquarters for the group at Bethany, as would be natural for a conference with the other apostles concerning the surprising developments. This would explain why they do not seem to meet Mary who had been following them to the tomb.

Appearance to Mary When Mary finally reached the tomb again, Peter and John had gone. It was then that Jesus appeared to her in the interview recorded with such beautiful simplicity by John (John 20:11.). After this interview, Mary set out (it does not say that she ran or went in haste this time) to tell the news to “the disciples” (John 20:18), a phrase which again suggests the approaching concentration of the whole group at Bethany. In the meantime, as these swiftly moving events had been taking place, the women had been making their longer journey back to Bethany. Immediately after His appearance to Mary, Jesus appeared to the other women before their arrival at Bethany. To the Two at Emmaus

We cannot be sure as to the chronological order of the next two appearances: To Peter in or about Jerusalem; to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. We do know that both occurred on this same day. The two left Jerusalem during the early portion of the day or else lost contact in some other way with the group of disciples, for they knew that the tomb had been discovered empty by the women and examined by the disciples, that angels had announced the resurrection, but it seems they did not know that Jesus had appeared to Mary and to the other women. Whatever it was which compelled them to leave Jerusalem at this exciting moment and kept them from learning the full news, they had heard enough to cause them to be a good deal more interested in their perplexed questionings and discussion than in the progress of their journey. When Jesus joined them in the journey and the discussion, “their eyes were holden that they should not know him” (Luke 24:16). Mark gives us the additional information that there was something different about His appearance: “He was manifested in another form unto two of them, as they walked, on their way into the country” (Mark 16:12). Emmaus was sixty furlongs (7½ miles) from Jerusalem (Luke 24:13), and it was “toward evening”; the day was “far spent” when they finally arrived at Emmaus. There, as they sat at meat, Jesus revealed himself completely unto them and then vanished. Their Report

They arose and returned to Jerusalem. It was night when they reached the Holy City (Luke 24:33; John 20:19). They found the disciples all gathered together behind closed doors — probably in that commodious upper room which some disciples had so gladly lent to Jesus for the Passover. When the two burst in with the triumphant news of the appearance to them so curiously withheld on the journey, but fully revealed at the table, their account aroused some skepticism on the part of a hardheaded group that were slow to believe such incredible details (Mark 16:12); but there was general acceptance of the fundamental fact that Jesus was raised from the dead, for He had appeared to Peter (Luke 24:34).

Further Appearance The appearance to Peter cannot be exactly placed as to the hour or the spot. A line on the map leads to the empty tomb, but this is only a suggestion to help us visualize the events. The appearance to Peter occurred at some time during the day after the appearances to Mary and the women had been thoroughly discussed by the group of disciples, who were either amazed or incredulous (Mark 16:10; Luke 24:21-23), and before the appearance to the two going on their way to Emmaus; or else it was after the appearance to the two at Emmaus and before their arrival at Jerusalem with the news. The final appearance on this wonderful Lord’s Day was to ten apostles. Thomas was absent, but other disciples were present (Luke 24:33; John 20:19-24).

There is a thrilling and deepening sense of conviction that rises in our hearts as, with the Gospel accounts in our hands, we traverse the dark, narrow, winding streets of Jerusalem, view its hills

and valleys, circle its walls and stand in meditation by ancient ruins or sites enshrined by tradition. This map of Jerusalem with journeys and appearances definitely placed is offered not so much as an assertion, but as a suggestion. It shows how easily all the complex and varied details of the four narratives could have happened in the light of probable or possible geographical locations. Perhaps the most important conclusion we can claim for such a geographical study is not conjectural locations and arrangements, but the purely negative realization of how many things there are we do not know, things which, if we just knew them, would make all the differences in the Gospel accounts lose their perplexity and make all the variations fit together with perfect precision. The Unshakable Testimony The myriad variations in details of the four-fold Gospel account are still there: fascinating, perplexing, gripping, and convincing. But they are easier to piece together with the eye of faith as we view the city. And why do we have them? To the unbeliever, they seem hopeless contradictions; to the Christian, startling differences. Yet even John, who wrote many decades after the others and who certainly had Matthew, Mark, and Luke before him, did not follow them, did not apologize for their variations, did not even attempt to harmonize their differences. He rather told, as they had done, his own account under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He adds amazingly to the differences in minute details, but calmly assures us that he has written so we may believe and may thereby have life; that he has not written all lest the world he full of books and lose the sublime and saving message in the multitude of words.

While we cannot always identify each place or affirm with absolute certainty each solution we offer of complex difference in details, we can joyfully walk by faith and affirm a deep and abiding confidence in the historic verity of the gospel.

134. Chapter 21 - Sunrise in Galilee

Chapter 21 - Sunrise in Galilee

John 21:1-23

Sunset and sunrise by the Sea of Galilee. What a touching and exquisite setting for the closing scenes in the Gospel of John!

“O Galilee! Sweet Galilee! Where Jesus loved so much to be;

O Galilee! Blue Galilee!

Come, sing thy song again to me!” The Disciples

It is springtime in Galilee. As the evening shadows lengthen across the rippling waters of the lake, a group of men weary and travel-stained relax on the beach. The low murmur of conversation is occasionally broken by the solemn chant of a psalm which carries a ring of triumph. There are seven men in the company. Have they but newly arrived? And have the other four gone to buy bread? They have been strictly commanded to come to Galilee. How hard it had been to tear themselves away from Jerusalem, where they had seen their Lord crucified and had beheld Him risen from the dead. But they have returned to the places that throng with the memories of their blessed Master. And now they are here, what shall they do? He has promised to meet them in Galilee, but when and where? What can they do, but wait and wait?

Memories

One of the group rises with impatient movement and walks to the edge of the limpid water. The restless wash of the waves against the beach suits his mood. To the north the black basalt of busy Capernaum stands clear and distinct, encircling a beautiful white limestone synagogue. “Woe unto thee Chorazin and Bethsaida! Woe unto thee Capernaum!” Could he ever forget that wonderful sermon? How the Master’s eyes had flamed that day as He denounced the unbelieving cities! And, now — ? No, the glorious news of the resurrection must not be publicly proclaimed as yet. Patience! He moves on down the shore. The distant hills to the east of the sea are still bathed in sunlight, but the turrets and towers of Tiberias to the south are fast fading from purple to gray. Ah! Tiberias!! His hands clench. Here Herod Antipas, “that fox,” is ensconced with his luxurious and villainous court — Herod, who had joined in torturing and taunting the Master before they crucified Him. But Peter’s eyes grow dim and blurred. Who was he to think such thoughts? Had he not himself — ? Like the lash of a whip, he hears again the words, “Thou shalt deny me,” and the crowing of a cock in the distance. Hastily he glances back at the group of earnest comrades. They had been merciful toward him in his failure. They, too, had forsaken the Lord and fled for their lives. But he had openly denied — and in the court of the high priest. Ah! that look in the eyes of Jesus that drove him forth! He indeed had failed “more than these,” his comrades, in proportion to his reckless daring in entering, and his opportunity boldly to confess. A low cry is wrung from his lips: “Thank God for another chance to redeem such a failure.” Again he looks steadfastly at

Tiberias standing dark and ominous against the fading skyline. “And before governors and kings shall ye be brought for my sake.” Humbly he bows his head in prayer: “O Lord, in that day may I not fail thee again!” He seems to hear the scornful words: “And when you preach how will it seem, Peter, to proclaim a crucified Messiah — a King with a crown of thorns and a mocking reed for a scepter?” In quick imitation of his Master, Peter exclaims: “Get thee hence, Satan. He is not dead, but is risen. Men have scorned and slain Him, but He is alive for evermore. It is as eternal King we shall proclaim Him. The whole earth is but His footstool.” Peter’s rigid figure relaxes and his clenched hands are released as a snatch of conversation from the group is heard: “But we have no food.” “True, but what of that?” muses Peter as he turns his gaze from Tiberias disappearing in the gloom to Bethsaida Julias to the northeast still faintly visible across the dark-blue waters of the Sea. “O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have no bread? Do ye not yet perceive, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets ye took up?” Yonder is the very plain where the five thousand had been fed. What a glorious day was that! And the crowd had tried to make Him an earthly king that day! How many things are beginning to become clear, but how much is still puzzling! Yonder is the mountain just visible on the horizon where Jesus prayed that night. And here somewhere about the middle of that lake, amid angry wind and wave, Jesus had come to them, walking on the water. “Lord, if it be thou bid me come unto thee upon the waters.” Peter shakes his head impatiently as he muses; how impetuous and foolish he had ever been — another failure — “Lord, save me.”

“O memories that bless and burn!

O barren gain and bitter loss!

…….... And there a cross!”

Every direction Peter turns, land and sea, mountain and city cry out to him of his beloved Master — memories, memories. And always he ends by seeing his Saviour hanging from a cross, but again risen and glorious in His final triumph. The swift-moving days of Jesus’ ministry that immediately preceded the crucifixion had been so filled with action and so tense with excitement that not much leisure was possible for reflection. But now in Galilee awaiting their risen Lord the apostles “...Exempt from public haunt, Find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, Sermons in stones, and good in everything.” The crucifixion has been transcended by the resurrection and they confidently await His coming: “Lo, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him.” Even the shame of their failure in their Master’s hour of supreme need is being tempered by their growing assurance of another chance to make good their failure in a tremendous public declaration of His resurrection. The Fishing Expedition

“But why spend more time in meditation? The needs of the body must be met. We can go fishing as of old and provide for our immediate needs until the Lord appears with further orders. And if He come while we are at work, what of that? Better that He find us at work to keep our bodies strong for His service, than find us idle.” With characteristic decision, Peter strides toward the group: “I go a fishing.” A moment of silence and indecision follows and then an enthusiastic and unanimous reply from all: “We also come with thee.” The boat in which they had so often sailed over the sea with their Master stands at anchor. Quickly they equip themselves for a night of toil and set forth into the lake. Through the long hours of the night they labor in vain. Twilight merges into night. A new moon arises and sheds its soft radiance on the lake, and sinks to rest. Naught is heard but the

restless wash of the waves against the boat, the cry of a night bird in the sky, the ring of men's voices in command or encouragement as they struggle and toil at the nets, the creak of the oars in the boat, the occasional splash of the net cast into the sea. The Miracle And now "rosy-fingered dawn stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops." The shore line rises up to beckon and invite them after their night of fruitless labor. The mist rises from the water's surface and hangs itself in fantastic wreaths about tree and shrub. As the full light of day appears, they see a man standing on the beach and watching their efforts. A hundred yards away, He stands unrecognized. Was it the uncertain light, the mist, the distance, that obscured their sight and prevented recognition, or did He not will that they should recognize Him yet, even as on the way to Emmaus?

"Children, have ye aught to eat?"

Clear and distinct, His words come to them across the waters. "Children!" Their hearts leap with excitement at that affectionate title! Was He not accustomed so to address them? Could it be He? And who else would address them thus? They exchange swift glances of inquiry and fasten their gaze on the figure yonder on the beach as they reply simply, "No."

Again He speaks: "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find."

Like a bird pierced by an arrow while in headlong flight, they have halted in the midst of their labors. Now with feverish excitement they leap into action. Who else could it be? Who else would presume so to command them? Who else would attempt a hundred yards distant on the shore, to dictate to old fishermen as to which side of the boat to cast the net and to predict with such absolute assurance what would be found in the depths of the sea? They drag in the net and prepare to cast as directed. Do they not in their hearts believe it to be Jesus? How else would they yield such instant obedience to so strange a command? As they prepare to lower the net do they not recall that scene nearly three years before when they had toiled in vain through the night, but at Jesus' command had let down the nets to take a wondrous catch? Peter stands over the gunwale of the boat casting with expert hand. He has discarded his outer garment for the arduous work in which he leads. The undergarment leaves him unencumbered and his cloak will be dry when the dripping nets have been laid out on the beach at the close of the expedition. See! How his skillful hands tremble as he makes the cast! Ready and eager helpers lay hold to hoist the net. The suspense will soon be over; they will know in a moment. The net sags and drags. But wait, wreckage caught in its meshes may he the cause. What a strange lure in fishing! The uncertainty, the curious expectancy, the baffled, but stubbornly persistent, hope, the thrilling excitement of success in the midst of failure, the battle with swift-moving, splashing, fighting fish! The net comes to the surface, a mass of whirling commotion. But the excitement of fishing has been but a subconscious undercurrent unheeded and unrecognized in the overwhelming possibility of a miracle and the presence of the risen Christ.

John is the first to speak: "It is the Lord." It is a wild, ringing cry of joy rising above the clatter and splashing.

Peter drops the net, leaving his comrades at the critical moment when nets may break and all be lost. What cares he for fish? His chief interest in coming had been the necessity of food. Now his Lord has come, what matters aught else? Swiftly he casts his fisher's cloak about his half-clothed form, girds himself, tucks up the robe in his girdle and with reckless daring plunges into the sea to

swim to the shore. His Master is here! His Master crucified and risen, who had forgiven him for his base desertion! The risen Christ in Galilee! What joy! His reverence for his Master and his determination to rush to His side lead to the risk of swimming heavily encumbered by the long coat. He must be fit to stand in the presence of his Lord, but he cannot wait for fish nets or slow-moving boats. The Breakfast The six disciples cling helplessly to the straining net, looking with indecision and longing at the sturdy form of Peter swimming to the shore. Like a wavering battle line yielding under sudden assault, they begin to relax their hold on the net and yield to the desire to follow Peter in swift succession. Does not a sharp exhortation from John halt them? “Let us finish our task. He commanded it. “To obey is better than sacrifice.” Desperately they strain at the net, striving to lift the great bulk into the boat. To their amazement, the net does not break under the ceaseless battering of the great fish. But their efforts are unavailing. It cannot be done. The catch is too great to be lifted. “To the oars!” Quickly they divide forces; some seize the oars, while others cling to the net. As the boat grounds on the beach, they fasten the net securely to the boat. A net that has withstood such strain, will not break now. They disembark and eagerly walk up the beach “and they see a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.” How like the gentle and tender sympathy of their Master! He had known their hunger and their need. Had He not once said of God’s loving care, “The very hairs of your head are all numbered”? The fish in the net were not necessary. Here was food all prepared and cooked. The miraculous catch of fish had been food for hungry souls longing for their divine Master and receiving another thrilling revelation of His deity. Jesus commands them to finish the work of securing the catch. Peter rushes forward to lead in the difficult task at the slightest suggestion of Jesus. He had deserted his comrades in the critical moment of the catch, but he dashes out into the water. His clothes are already soaked and his hands are experienced at such a task. They draw up the net and count the amazing catch — “153 great fishes.” They look at them with wonder and awe. But Jesus calls them back to the fire and to breakfast. Whence this food? By whom prepared? And how? They dare not ask. But as Jesus serves each with bread and fish they gather about the fire full of awe and suppressed ecstasy.

Peter’s Love for Christ The exciting exchange between Jesus and Peter furnishes the dramatic close of the Gospel of John. The three-fold question of Jesus, “Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these?” broke Peter’s heart. It brought to mind his three denials in the palace of the high priest as well as his tempestuous assertion in the upper room that his love and loyalty exceeded that of others: “If all shall be offended in thee, I will never be offended” (Matthew 26:33). It is an inferior interpretation which suggests that “more than these” refers to the fishing boat and tackle, and that Peter had abandoned his apostleship when he went fishing. Peter had now seen the risen Christ three times. He was completely convinced. What is there to suggest that now in Galilee he lapses into doubt and despair? What was wrong with their going fishing? They were hungry and without supplies. The breakfast Jesus provided suggests this. They had been commanded to go to Galilee and await the coming of Jesus. What more sensible procedure could they have followed? Instead of rebuking them for having gone fishing, Jesus joined them in the expedition by working a prodigious miracle. When Peter replies to the question, he shows more humility than in the upper room. He does not now claim to love Jesus more than these other disciples loved Him. He affirms his love with an appeal each time to the supernatural knowledge of Jesus: “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.” This was half-confession and half-protest: why should he be asked to state that which was so obvious?

“Agapao” and “Phileo” This passage is famous for its use of the two Greek words for love, agapao and phileo. Jesus asks, agapao, the first two times; He uses phileo the third time. Peter stubbornly holds to phileo in each of his answers. It is usually affirmed that the words agapao and phileo represent a higher and a lower type of love. The first is held to represent the heavenly or divine type of love; the second, the earthly or lower type. Agapao is said to mean the noble, exalted love which God has for us and which we are commanded to maintain toward all men as contrasted with phileo, which means the intimate, personal affection we hold toward our friends and relatives. (The word for the romantic type of love is eros). When Jesus commanded us to “love your enemies” (Matthew 5:44-46), the word agapao is used three times. The immediate inference from repeated use of this word in this connection seems to be that we are commanded to forgive and to hold a kindly feeling toward those who hate us, to salute them, pray for them, do good to them as opportunity offers, but we are not commanded to make intimate, personal associates of them. We are not ordered to marry some one to show our kindness of heart; a broken home would inevitably result if the characters and dispositions were too violently opposed. We are not to go into a business partnership with one who has robbed us in order to prove our kindly feeling for him; further theft, bankruptcy or disgrace would be a natural outcome. But we are commanded to maintain a generous, kindly, helpful attitude toward all. Naturally, if life is to be profitable and peaceful we are to choose for our intimate associates and friends those whom we like, those who harmonize with our life and program. Thus we are commanded to love people we do not like, but we are not expected to make intimate companions of them if this be not possible or profitable. The fine word of Paul, in Romans 12:18, is in point here: “If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, he at peace with all men.” This whole interpretation of Matthew 5:44-46 is certainly in harmony with the teaching and life of Jesus. He taught the Pharisees and Sadducees. He prayed for them. He met them in friendly intercourse when they would permit it. He opened His heart to warmly commend one when opportunity offered: “Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.” He tried repeatedly to win them to the doing of God’s will. He wept bitter tears over their stubborn and wicked defiance of God. He died for them. But He did not select any of them to be a member of the chosen twelve. They were not fit for the task. When a Pharisee arose who was sincere, great, and suited to God’s purpose, Jesus appeared to Him; and Saul, the destroyer of Christianity, became Paul the flaming evangel of Christ.

Thayer’s Analysis

Thayer’s Greek Lexicon bears out the above discrimination in his definition of the words. He gives the following meanings for agapao: “To love, to have a preference for, wish well to, regard the welfare of; the love of Christians toward one another; of the benevolence which God, In providing salvation for men, has exhibited by sending His Son...”; “the love which led Christ to undergo sufferings and death..., of the love with which God regards Christ; it involves affectionate reverence, prompt obedience, grateful recognition of benefits received; when referring to a thing — to take pleasure in the thing, prize it above other things, be unwilling to abandon it or do without it; to welcome with desire, to long for.” For phileo, Thayer gives two general meanings: “(1) To love, to be friendly to one; (2) to kiss.” He gives the following discrimination between the two verbs. (1) Agapao denotes a love founded in admiration, veneration, esteem...as to be kindly disposed to one, wish one well. (2) Phileo denotes an inclination promoted by sense and emotion. He notes that God is said to love the world (agapao — John 3:16), but to love the disciples of Jesus (phileo

— John 16:27). Christ bids us to love our enemies (agapao and not phileo), because love as an emotion cannot be commanded, but only love as a choice. He affirms that even in some cases where the verbs appear to be used interchangeably (John 14:23; John 16:27), the difference can still be traced.

Several things are evident from a study of Thayer's definitions and citations from classical and Hellenistic literature. (1) He sustains the major contention that agapao is the verb of generous, kindly attitude, while phileo is that of intimate, personal affection. The fact that the second general meaning of phileo is "to kiss" (or "to embrace") helps to make this clear. (2) He does not sustain the oft-repeated declaration of preachers and commentators that agapao means a high and lofty type of love — the divine; phileo a lower type of love — the earthly. This contention is destroyed by the fact that John uses both words of the love of God for man — agapao, for all men; phileo, for the disciples of Jesus. Both verbs in the New Testament have a lofty content. Certainly we should not expect God to have a "lower" type of love for the disciples of His Son — those who are doing the will of God, those who have become His children — than for all men. It rather bears out the major contention noted above, while destroying the second. This is exactly the distinction which common sense would lead us to expect. Is it reasonable to suppose that the love of father and mother for their children, of children for parents, of husband and wife for each other, of devoted friends and relatives for one another would be classed in the Scripture as a "lower type of love" than that which we hold for those we have never seen or do not know personally or intimately? Is it true that our love for those we know and hold most precious to us is less noble and less self-sacrificing, less forgiving and less uplifting than that we maintain for our enemies or strangers? Does not the love of a father for his children represent the love of God for mankind and vice versa in continual figures, parables, and teaching by word and deed both in the Old Testament and the New Testament?

Bernard's Analysis

J. H. Bernard (International Critical Commentary on John pp. 702-705) offers a very careful study of the use of the two verbs in the New Testament. Bernard comes to the conclusion that the two words are used almost interchangeably, and that the only difference is that "phileo is the more comprehensive, and includes every degree and kind of love or liking, while agapao is the more dignified and restrained. But even so vague a distinction cannot be pressed very far." Thus, while citing practically the same classical illustrations as Thayer, he arrives at a conclusion practically obliterating the distinction Thayer makes. His study of the use of the word in John's Gospel is rather impressive, but it seems to lack the more careful discrimination Thayer shows. Bernard cites the following:

Both verbs are used of God's love for man: Agapao,John 3:16; John 14:23; John 17:23; 1 John 4:10, 1 John 4:19, etc.; but phileo in John 16:27 (Revelation 3:19).

Both verbs are used of the Father's love for the Son: Agapao,John 3:35; John 10:17; John 15:9; John 17:23, John 17:24, John 17:26 (cf. Mark 9:7); but phileo in Mark 5:20.

Both verbs are used of Jesus' love for men: Agapao,John 11:5; John 13:1, John 13:23, John 13:34; John 14:21; John 15:9; John 19:26; John 21:7, John 21:20; but phileo,John 11:3, John 11:36; John 20:2.

Both verbs are used of the love of men for other men: Agapao,John 13:24; John 15:12, John 15:17; 1 John 2:10; 1 John 3:10, 1 John 3:14, 1 John 3:23; 1 John 4:7, 1 John 4:20; but phileo,John 15:19. The noun agape is used for the love of men for each other, John 13:35; John 15:13; 1 John 4:7; but the noun philadelphia is used especially of the love of Christians for one another, John 13:34; Titus 3:15.

Both verbs are used of the love of men for Jesus: Agapao John 8:42; John 14:15, John 14:21, John 14:23, John 14:24, John 14:28; John 21:15, John 21:16; but phileo,John 16:27; John 21:15, John 21:16, John 21:17 (cf. Matthew 10:37; 1 Corinthians 16:22). The love of men for God: Agapao,1 John 4:19, 1 John 4:20, 1 John 4:21; 1 John 5:2 (noun agape,John 2:5, John 2:15; John 3:17; John 5:42). But in the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament, agapao,Exodus 20:6; phileo,Proverbs 8:17. The love of Jesus for the Father is mentioned but once in the New Testament: Agapao,John 14:31.

Conclusions

It can be readily seen that this analysis utterly destroys the distinction drawn by so many commentators that one verb represents a higher and the other a lower type of love. But when Bernard attempts to go to the extreme of denying any real difference in meaning and of arming they are really synonymous, his own citations disprove his contention and up-hold the position of Thayer; the two verbs represent different kinds of love. Where phileo is introduced to describe God's love for man, both times it reveals the shade of meaning of the intimate love for His own children who have been purchased by the blood of Christ. God loves all men, sends the rain and sunshine on the just and unjust, is not willing that any should perish, longs for the salvation of all, loves them so much He sent His own Son to die for them; nevertheless He loves with a warmer affection His own children who have accepted redemption at His hands and who are seeking to do His will. This is strongly reinforced by a careful reading of the citations under point (3) above, where Jesus' love for men is so frequently agapao, but the touching, personal friendship and devotion of Jesus for His dear friend Lazarus is represented by phileo. The discrimination in the use of the nouns is also very convincing. The love of all men for each other is agape. We should love the heathen whom we have never seen and strive to prove our love by sending them the gospel. We should love our enemies and seek to do them good. But the word which became well-nigh universal for the love of Christians for one another is philadelphia.

Peter's Answers The use of the two words in John 21:15-17 is most interesting. To make phileo represent a lower type of love not only makes Peter's replies anti-climax; they become absurd. Jesus asks: "Do you have a generous, kindly devotion toward me?" Peter's answer would mean: "Now I would not claim to have that much love for you, but I do have a lower earthly type of love." Peter certainly felt that he was affirming more than agapao; he affirms intense, intimate, personal affection. At the last when Jesus uses phileo in His third question, He is not coming down to a lower level and saying: "Do you even love me as much as phileo?" He is rather meeting Peter on the basis of his claim to have the deepest, personal affection for Christ.

Peter's Death This conversation had a further purpose in confirming the leadership of Peter among the apostles and in the church when it should he established. It also opened the way to the prediction of his martyrdom by crucifixion. John shows that one of his purposes in recording the conversation is to give him the opportunity to deny the false rumor that Jesus had predicted His

second coming would occur in the lifetime of John. What more dramatic ending could the Gospel of John have than this prediction of the second coming and this denial that the apostles held that the second coming would be in their life-time?

135. Chapter 22 - Final Instructions and the Ascension

Chapter 22 - Final Instructions and the Ascension Matthew 18:16-20;Mark 16:14-20;Luke 24:13-53;John 20:11-31;John 21:1-23;

Acts 1:1-10 Nature of Post-Resurrection Teaching

It is not enough that the appearances of Jesus after His resurrection should be real, actual,and thus the miracle be thereby substantiated completely. What Jesus said on these occasions must be so in harmony with the truth and with His divine Person and mission and of such grandeur and magnificence as to match the sublime record of His earthly life and of divine revelation. Glancing back over the brief recordings of what was said and done in these appearances, we find the thrilling climax of the Gospel narratives.

It is significant that Jesus does not in these resurrection appearances bring back from beyond the grave new information concerning the state and circumstances of the departed. He did not need to die and go beyond the veil in order to have such information. He had already given detailed descriptions in His towering warnings concerning hell and His precious promises of heaven. He had warned the rich, wicked Pharisees with the fearful account of Lazarus and the rich man. He had utterly demolished the sneering Sadducees' attack upon heaven by revealing the nature of life in heaven. He had created these regions. He knew whereof He spoke. In Paradise

We do have the information from Jesus as to where He was during this time that He was not on earth appearing to men. It is given incidentally in the promise to the repentant thief: "With me in Paradise." To this is added the information given to Mary: "not yet ascended to my Father." Paradise, the temporary abode of the blessed awaiting the final reception into heaven, was the place to which Jesus went at death. During these days of His appearances it seems implied He did not ascend into heaven. That would await the final coronation at His ascension. Luke tells us in the introductory statements of Acts that the appearances of Jesus after his resurrection covered a period of forty days. These appearances, so far as the records indicate, were separated sharply in time and space. But these appearances were no more limited by these elements than the appearances of the angels.

Day of Resurrection

While it was not something said during these appearances, it is a most significant and instructive fact that the resurrection and so many of the appearances were on the first day of the week. Here was basic instruction by deed rather than word. By His divine providence God might have brought it to pass that the resurrection would have occurred on the Sabbath. If the holy day set apart in the Old Testament were to be kept sacred in the New then the basic event of the resurrection could have been on this day. There were five appearances on that first Lord's Day — the day Jesus arose from the dead. There are no recorded appearances until the next Lord's Day. The disciples are represented as assembled, Thomas being with them, on that second Lord's day. There is an air of expectancy. This is significant. This day already stands apart as the day of His resurrection

and of His appearances. They await His further appearance. The church was established at Pentecost — again the first day of the week when the baptism in the Holy Spirit occurred, the first proclamation of the full gospel, and the founding of the church. The Old Testament established two great institutions: the temple and the Sabbath. The revelation that both of these are to pass now was part of the leading by the Holy Spirit of the inspired leaders of the church into all truth. God used Stephen to bring to the church the fuller realization of the passing of the Old Testament law. His martyrdom resulted from his proclamation. That the Sabbath was now to yield to the glorious first day of the week, the day of the triumph of the Messiah over man's last enemy — death, was being revealed in the most practical manner by these object lessons of the appearances.

Three Subjects of Discussion The teaching of Jesus in the resurrection appearances covers three general fields: (1) establishing the reality of His presence and of His resurrection, (2) explaining the necessity and meaning of His death particularly in the light of the Old Testament Scripture; (3) presenting the program of world-wide evangelization. The first appearances to the bewildered and despairing disciples naturally had as their first objective the restoration of their faith in Him and the full assurance of the resurrection. Mary is reported as saying just one word when she actually found herself in the presence of the risen Christ: "Rabboni"; "Master." It expressed unlimited joy, faith, and devotion. It was a most natural reaction for her to desire to gain the added assurance of touch, as she saw and heard Him. But Jesus commanded her not to detain Him for He had not yet ascended to heaven. There was much work to be done. She must go immediately to report to the disciples His resurrection. The fact that His final ascension to heaven is near is given strong emphasis. The days that remain are full of urgency. In this instruction we see the primary objective of bringing to the disciples the full assurance of His bodily resurrection, the climactic proof of His deity (John 20:16, John 20:17). The appearance to the other women immediately after this carries the same urgent command to go and report to the disciples His resurrection. The disciples are commanded to go into Galilee where they, too, shall see Him (Matthew 28:10). This had been the content of the instructions they had received from the angel shortly before this. The promise that they should see Him in Galilee at some future time with no indication that He is to appear to them this very day in Jerusalem, is to assure by repetition that they will actually leave the capital, hard as it will be for them to go away. Moreover, they are left to wrestle with their doubt until He actually appears to them later in the day. The evidence is the stronger because they are not expecting Him. The instruction Jesus gave to Mary concerned His ascension. In these appearances Jesus gave instructions to help solve the perplexing problems in their minds and to prepare them for the thrilling experiences ahead. The disciples had found it very difficult to understand the teaching of Jesus concerning His going away to prepare a place for them and His coming again to take them to the Father's house. The message Mary brought informed them that Jesus had not yet fulfilled this mission: He had not yet ascended. But they were not to expect that He would go back to the continuous fellowship of the years of His ministry. The triumphant joy in His resurrection must be tempered with the realization that the hour of parting at His ascension is at hand. The present tense is used instead of the future as emphasizing the immediate approach of the time of the ascension: "I am ascending." The sense of urgency inherent in His prohibition to Mary not to cling to Him, but to carry the news of the resurrection would impart itself to the disciples.

Meaning of His Death

We know nothing of what Jesus said to Peter when He appeared to Him on this first Lord's Day. The brevity of the Scripture lies quite beyond mere human achievement. The most extended accounts which we have of what took place in any appearances are of the two going to Emmaus in Luke and to the seven by the Sea of Galilee in John. It is in the appearance to the two that the final instructions of Jesus are seen in the second phase of explanation of the necessity and the purpose of His death. Instead of shame, it is glory; instead of defeat, it is victory.

Evidence from Old Testament

Instead of revealing Himself to them immediately Jesus added now to the increasing evidence He had given to Mary and to the other women, the powerful confirmation to be found in the Old Testament predictions of His death and resurrection. How wonderful it must have been to have heard Jesus, still a mysterious Stranger to them, quote the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah and point out the detailed fulfillment of its many specific predictions. No wonder the hearts of the two burned within them when the mysterious personal power of the Son of God expressed itself in discussing the majestic predictions of the Old Testament.

How thrilling it must have been to have heard Jesus give as added proof of the resurrection the prediction of David, which Peter later presented with such power at Pentecost. But Jesus began with Moses. He must have cited the symbolism of the Passover lamb and all the law which showed the necessity of the shedding of blood for the remission of sins. His presentation of the divine plan for man's redemption which was now being fulfilled must have included the glory of the second coming also: "Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?" In these appearances is seen increasing force of evidence. At first, the empty tomb was allowed to speak for itself as Mary ran to carry the news, and Peter and John came to investigate. In the meantime, the actual appearance of the angels to the other women and the message to the disciples increased the evidence. The appearance of Christ to Mary was sufficient in itself, but the appearance to the women added a plurality of witnesses and the emphatic testimony of touch. The hours spent on the journey to Emmaus enabled Jesus to expound the clinching evidence from the Old Testament prophets. Since Jesus "interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" the entire range of His earthly mission came into view with the things that had been contrary to popular expectation and hard to understand. But the primary emphasis must have been upon the death, burial, and resurrection. The two rushed back to Jerusalem arriving in the early hours of the night. There "they rehearsed the things that happened in the way." The entire account of how he had explained that the Old Testament Scriptures had predicted His death and resurrection must have been repeated by the two. The assembled disciples are by now assured that Jesus has been raised from the dead for He has appeared unto Peter and his testimony was so strong that they had been unable to reject it (Luke 24:34). They doubt, however, the strange details of this report from the two (Mark 16:13). How could Jesus have been in their presence talking with them for hours without their knowing who He was? How could He have suddenly been revealed to them in the breaking of the bread at the table? The two, themselves, would have been in great difficulty trying to explain how it could have happened. How could it be that they had not recognized him? Their eyes had been miraculously veiled (Luke 24:16), and He had appeared in a strange form (Mark 16:12). But they would hardly have been able to explain this as yet. And how had it happened that when they finally reached the home in Emmaus this Stranger should have been allowed to preside at the table and ask the blessing? They were so

completely in His spell that their concurrence seemed inevitable. And when He had blessed and broken the bread did not the nail-scars on His hands now suddenly become plain to them as He reached forth His hands in offering the bread to them? The disciples may have asked the two some very earnest and pretty difficult questions about their whole account.

Appearance to the Disciples in Upper Room In the midst of this exciting exchange between the apostles and the two disciples, Jesus appeared in the midst. While they were still terrified and unable to explain how He could possibly be present (John tells us of the locked doors), Jesus gave them further reassurance. After permitting them to touch His body, He gave to them the testimony of the senses of taste and of smell, by eating of the remains of the supper. Then Jesus gave them the same powerful evidence from the Old Testament which He had given to the two. We are apt to think of this appearance as merely lasting a few minutes, but it may have lasted for hours. Luke is very emphatic in declaring that Jesus covered the whole range of the Old Testament in His exposition of the necessity and purpose of His death and resurrection: “all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me” (Luke 24:44). By His extended explanations of the Scripture Jesus “opened their mind” that they might understand “that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead on the third day.” At this point in the development of their faith, the primary question became not: “Is He actually risen?” or “Why did He have to die?” but “What are we to do about this glorious news? May we tell it? Where and when shall we proclaim the good news?” Thus the instructions which Jesus gave in these appearances proceed in logical sequence.

Matthew and Mark

If we only possessed the Gospel of Matthew, we might conclude that the great commission was not given until at the very last of these resurrection appearances and that the ascension took place from a mountain in Galilee. We would have to imply that the ascension did take place. The many references in the Gospel to His going away and His second coming would justify such a conclusion. If we only possessed the accounts of Matthew and Mark, we would feel that Mark confirmed the conclusion of the giving of the great commission only at the very close of the period of resurrection appearances. We would observe that Mark gives a clear-cut historic declaration of the ascension. We might conclude that the ascension actually was only a vanishing from the room where they had been seated at meat together, as He had done on other occasions. Since we would now see clearly that Matthew does not tell of the ascension and thus does not locate the ascension on a mountain in Galilee, we might conclude that the ascension took place from Jerusalem. Mark tells of an appearance while they are at meat, but does not say where this was. He tells immediately of the ascension, but does not give a geographical location.

John

If we had only the three accounts of Matthew, Mark, and John we would marvel at the independence of the accounts that boldly declare, as does John, that they have not attempted to tell all that Jesus said and did, but that they have told sufficient for man’s redemption. We would see more clearly that each writer did not feel any necessity for closing his narrative with the ascension, but only to give a satisfactory, thrilling conclusion to the glorious account. On a mountain in Galilee, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee where they share a meal together, or in a meeting where the ascension occurs — here are the dramatic conclusions of these three

accounts.

Luke

It is Luke who gives the detailed descriptions of the ascension in the close of his Gospel narrative and in the opening of Acts. He definitely places the ascension from the Mount of Olives. This immediately confirms our conclusion that Mark had been describing at the close a meeting in Jerusalem where the great commission had been given, but it also shows plainly that Mark is reporting two different appearances as the ascension occurs not from a room where they are eating, but from the mountain top just outside Jerusalem.

Discussions on the First Day

It is Luke, also, who shows clearly that the discussions and instructions of this first Lord's Day when Jesus was raised and appeared five times, ran the full gamut of problems before the disciples and included the ultimate task of proclaiming this climactic news of the risen Christ to all the world. Mark's account implies the same thing. When we understand that the great commission was given on a number of occasions and that this was the natural and inevitable topic of conversation, once the disciples were completely convinced of the resurrection, then the difficulties in the variant accounts disappear.

Great Commission in John's Gospel

It is sometimes said that John gives no report of the great commission, but that the nearest the comes to such a report is that wonderful word of Christ spoken on this same occasion in the upper room the night of this resurrection day: "Peace be unto you: as the Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21). This strongly confirms the account of Luke that on this very first day Jesus did give them instructions concerning carrying the good news of His resurrection out to the world. It is not quite clear from John's account whether it is a further giving of the Holy Spirit, in addition to that with which they had been endowed with miraculous power as they were sent forth on that missionary tour two by two, or whether as He breathed upon them it was a solemn promise that the Holy Spirit would be given to them in a miraculous manner at Pentecost. This was the definite promise given at the ascension as recorded by Luke (Acts 1:4, Acts 1:5). There is no logical objection to a successive giving of the Holy Spirit with the climax at Pentecost, but there is no indication in John's account of any visible result of a larger measure of the Spirit being granted. It would seem, then, that this is another promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. That they will have the authority to declare to the world God's plan of redemption by which man's sins may be either forgiven or retained, according to his obedience or rejection, is a part of this same promise of the giving of the Spirit. This was fulfilled at Pentecost when the first full gospel sermon was proclaimed. Here, then, we have a further independent statement of instructions given at this first resurrection appearance to the ten apostles which is to send them forth into the world as God sent His Christ and is to give them authority and power to proclaim God's commands for men to obey that their sins may be forgiven.

Second Appearance to the Apostles The appearance on the next Lord's Day when Thomas faced Jesus and was convinced of His resurrection, brought forth the climax of testimony of the disciples to their faith in the deity of Christ. As Thomas was the last of the apostles to he convinced, so he is the clearest in his testimony. There can he no quibbling over the meaning of "Lord" or "Son of

God.” Thomas salutes Jesus as “My Lord and my God.” The testimony is absolutely sealed against perverse interpretation. The only thing left to unbelievers is to assail the Gospel of John as a whole. It is evident that further instructions on the proclamation of the good news to all the world are given at this meeting on the second Lord’s Day. This is the plain implication when Jesus gives the final beatitude of the Gospel accounts which confers a blessing upon those “that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:29). Those who have not seen, yet have believed, are to believe through the word of these who are sent forth into the world by Christ, even as Christ had been sent by the Father.

Third Appearance to the Apostles The final appearance recorded in John offers instructions given specifically to Peter. But by implication the tasks assigned to him are shared by the other apostles. The tender care for those that believe is as important as the initial proclamation which is to bring them to salvation. Both the sheep and the lambs are to be fed and guarded The measure of love for Christ is to he seen in the fidelity to the task of caring for the believers. The grave embarrassment which Peter faced in the three-fold question as to his love for Christ was the result of his three-fold denial in the palace of the high priest. But now before all the world Peter is to have another chance to make good. The plain prediction that this tremendous task of declaring the risen Christ as Lord to all the world and of being a faithful shepherd of the flock to those who believe is to bring martyrdom to Peter by crucifixion, must have had a powerful impact on all the group. They evidently all felt that the same privilege of dying for Christ was being set before them, even as the same task of proclaiming to the world and ministering to the church. They, too, had failed before, when they had been so sure that they were ready to die for Christ.

Close of John’s Account The question which Peter asked concerning the fate of John must have been the very question which each was asking of his own future. Peter was not asking a question of idle curiosity. It was a burning issue before them. They did not know how long a time might elapse before they went to their death for Christ. In many parables Jesus had suggested that His second coming would be long-delayed and that a very considerable period would elapse. But they hardly would recall these details in this exciting interview. The reply of Jesus to Peter was a typical enigma which would invite years of reflection and produce fruitful conclusions. Critics try to make out that John does not record the predictions of the second coming of Jesus as do the Synoptics. But John closes his narratives with the clearest and most dramatic of references to the second coming.

John is attempting to correct a false rumor which has spread abroad among the churches. Jesus had not predicted on this occasion that John would live to see the second coming of Christ. John corrects this false impression by a most emphatic quotation of Jesus’ exact words: “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.” This leaves the time of the second coming indefinite just as Jesus repeatedly had declared it would be. Peter was rebuked and silenced by this reply. The church was kept in a state of expectancy. The second coming was set before them as the day of glory at a time of God’s choosing. Jesus had already predicted that James and John would share the cup of suffering with Him (Matthew 20:23). There was no need that this should be repeated now. When John wrote toward the end of the century he was the last surviving apostle. This naturally increased the interest of the church in the instructions Jesus had given by the lake shore. John wanted to keep in their hearts the glorious hope of the second coming, at the same time that he corrected the false rumors that had gone forth concerning his own future.

Appearance to the 500 The statement of John that this appearance by the Sea of Galilee was the third time that Jesus had appeared to His disciples shows clearly that he uses “disciples” to mean the apostles and that no appearance to the apostles had occurred other than on the first Lord’s Day and then a week later. This increases the probability that this appearance by the Sea of Galilee was also on the first day of the week. He had sent them to Galilee and had promised to meet them there. They did not know exactly where, and were waiting for Him to appear. It is plain that the appearance on a mountain in Galilee followed after this by the sea. It is usually held that the appearance on the mountain in Galilee was the one which was shared by 500 witnesses. It is Paul who tells of the appearance to so many witnesses at one time (1 Corinthians 15:6). He does not say where or when. This is the most probable place and time of the known appearances. The fact that only the apostles are mentioned (Matthew 28:16, Matthew 28:17) as being present is no more strange than that only the apostles are mentioned (John 20:19-26) as being present in the upper room on the night of the first Lord’s Day. Luke is very clear that the two from Emmaus were also present in the upper room and had just completed their recital of their journey with Jesus to Emmaus. Luke also states that there were other disciples present: “found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them” (Luke 24:33). John does not say that only the ten apostles were present. He uses the term “disciples” and specifies that Thomas was absent.

If the 500 were present at the meeting on the mountain in Galilee, then it is probable that the seven disciples were sent from their meeting with Christ by the sea, to go into the cities and villages of Galilee calling together the 500 who were to meet on the specified mountain on a certain day. The presence of the 500 would readily explain why “some doubted” when Jesus first appeared. The apostles who had been with Jesus on three other occasions since the resurrection should certainly be full of faith now. But if such a large number as 500 were present, it would be natural that some of them would be as hard to convince at first, as the apostles had been at the early reports and appearances. If only the eleven apostles were present at the appearance on the mountain in Galilee, then the doubt of some is to be explained as resulting from the fact that Jesus appeared at first off in the distance, where it was not easy to make sure as yet of His identity. Matthew shows that Jesus approached the group after they first sighted Him: “but some doubted. And Jesus came to them” (Matthew 28:17, Matthew 28:18).

Mark 16:9-20

Before comparing the contents of the great commission as it was given in different forms on different occasions, it is necessary to consider the genuineness of Mark 16:9-20. Radical critics reject these verses. They are included in both the Authorized Version and the American Standard Version. The latter gives the foot-note: “The two oldest Greek manuscripts, and some other authorities omit from Mark 16:9 to the end. Some other authorities have a different ending to the Gospel.” This brief summary states the case against the passage. The translators rendered their own decision on the evidence by including the verses in the text. The Revised Standard Version (1946), in keeping with its radical character, omits the passage from the text and prints it in a foot-note. This passage is omitted by Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, one important manuscript of Old Latin, and of Syriac and Aethiopic versions. A shorter conclusion is found in L, 274, the margin of a manuscript of Old Latin and Harclean manuscripts and an Aethiopic text. A statement by Jerome shows that this passage was not in most of the Greek manuscripts which he had in the fourth century. But it is found in all the Greek manuscripts we possess today with the above exceptions.

Alexandrinus and Ephraemi have it. It is cited by Irenaeus, by Tatian, by Hippolytus, by Dionysius of Alexandria in the third century. Most important is the fact that the evidence from the versions is practically unanimous in favor of the passage. The exceptions to the above are very few. The Syriac Peshito, Old Italic, Sahidic, and Coptic all contain it. These versions were made very early when a great number of Greek manuscripts much older than any we have, were available. The evidence from these translations is therefore very powerful. The fact that the absence of these verses from some texts can be readily explained is very important. A very old copy of the gospel evidently lost the last page containing these verses, as constant use wore out the manuscript. Some scribe copied from this defective manuscript and started a line of manuscripts which omitted these verse.

Internal Evidence A most conclusive argument for the passage is found in the fact that the critics who reject it, realizing that the manuscript evidence against it is too slight, depend upon an argument from internal evidence which is ridiculous. They say that these eleven verses were written by another author because seventeen words and phrases occur in these verses which are found nowhere else in the book. Broadus took the twelve preceding verses in Mark which have never been questioned and found exactly seventeen words not found in the rest of the book. McGarvey took the last twelve verses of Luke, of which there is no question, and found nine new words.

It has been pointed out in recent years an absurd ending is given to the Gospel of Mark by cutting off these closing verses: “Neither said they anything to any man, for they were afraid.” This has been called “the epitaph of the unbelieving preachers who smother the spiritual life of this generation.”

Those who would deny the Trinity and remove the great commission from the New Testament have attempted also to cast doubt upon the closing verses of Matthew’s Gospel. With customary duplicity they have published statements that some of the great manuscripts lack the great commission in Matthew. The fact is that there is not in existence in any library in the world a copy of the book of Matthew which omits these verses. In other words, a copy of Matthew which lacks all the last part of the book from Chapter 25 on cannot be cited as lacking these verse. The copy is worn out and lacks all the last chapters.

Luke’s Account

It is noteworthy that Luke in reporting the great commission as given on that first Lord’s Day gives the statement of Jesus of how the Old Testament predicted that “the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day.” Thus the basic elements of the gospel — the death, burial, and the resurrection, are introduced into the command to go and proclaim the good news to all nations: “and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47).

Repentance is used here in an all-inclusive sense, just as faith is sometimes used to include the entire committal of the life. Judging only from this quotation from Luke, repentance alone is all that is necessary for the remission of sins. This is true only in the sense that repentance is here used of the entire turning of the individual to God. Usually repentance means a change of mind arising from sorrow for sin and leading to reformation of life. Two Greek verbs are used in the New

Testament for repentance — metanoeo and metamelomai. The preposition meta carries the basic idea of change; as the noun nous means the mind, so noeo means to know; melomai relates particularly to the emotions. Where there is a difference in the two verbs, metanoeo is the one with the higher content. It is significant that in recording the remorse of Judas metamelomai is used Remorse is without hope and leads to death instead of life. The change of mind must arise from sorrow for sin. A person might decide he will break the law and park his car in front of a fireplug while he goes into a store for a purchase. But the driver suddenly sees a policeman standing on the corner and looking in his direction. The driver quickly changes his mind and drives off. This was not repentance: he did not change his mind because of sorrow for sin, but because of mere fear of punishment. His only regret as he drives off is that the presence of a policeman prevented him from breaking the law. Repentance is not reformation, but it cannot be separated from the actual change of life. If repentance does not lead to an actual reformation of life, if it ends merely in change of mind, then it is not repentance.

While Luke's report of the great commission does not mention faith or baptism and says nothing of confession, coming as it does at the close of his entire Gospel account and joined with the other great historical work from his pen, Acts, it clearly implies that all these are included in the word repentance.

Luke is very clear that they are to begin the proclamation at Jerusalem. They are now at the capital. They are commanded: "tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high." They have the facts in their possession and can present their own eye-witness testimony. They need the fuller understanding of the significance of the facts and the divinely-given power of the Holy Spirit to enable them to face the high and mighty in all the world with the truth. They are not told how long they are to continue to concentrate their preaching in Jerusalem. That will be made known in due time.

Evangelism of the Jerusalem Church The Jerusalem Church is sometimes criticized as being selfish and lacking in missionary passion and world-wide vision. They continued to concentrate their proclamation in the capital until persecution drove them Out. But what were they doing in the capital and what did they do when they were driven out? From Pentecost on they were on fire to tell the message to any and all who would hear. Daily from house to house and in the temple they taught and preached. They had enormous success. While the ends of the earth were coming up to the temple at the three great feasts each year and could be evangelized, these first Christians could send Christianity forth into all the world, just as Philip sent it into Ethiopia when he won the eunuch. These first Christians did not suddenly become evangelistic when they were scattered by persecution. They had been preaching day and night all the while. The length of their concentration in Jerusalem, where Christ had instructed them to begin, was a matter for their inspired leaders to direct.

Great Commission Understood The command to preach to "all the nations" and to every creature" was clear to all the Christians. It was not a matter of their failing to understand that Jesus had commanded them to preach to all. Their difficulty was in understanding how they could do this in the light of the prohibitions against going into the homes of Gentiles and eating with them. The hard thing for the church to understand was that the Old Testament had passed. This continued stay in Jerusalem was necessary until the church was led into all truth by the inspired leaders.

Stephen was God's instrument in making clear the passing of the Old Testament. This opened the door of their understanding as to how they could go among the Gentiles with the gospel. The death of Stephen brought the storm of persecution which scattered the church, even as his preaching had brought the new understanding of the relationship between the law and the gospel.

Luke gives two accounts of the commission: the first, in the city of Jerusalem (Luke 24:44-49); the second, on the last day He was with them just as He was about to ascend (Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:6-11). His emphatic presentation of the evidence in the magnificent historical preface to Acts brings out the fact that Jesus appeared to His disciples over a period of forty days and that He offered many infallible proofs and gave them much instruction concerning the kingdom which was about to be established. Again he quotes Jesus as urging them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They are to be His witnesses to testify of the historic facts of the gospel and His chosen messengers to declare its commands, promises, and warnings. In both statements of the great commission given by Luke there is strong emphasis upon the fact that the apostles are to be His witnesses. In the preface to Acts the expanding circle of their testimony is clearly set forth: "in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). It was most important that the testimony should be offered first in Jerusalem itself, face to face with the wicked leaders who had crucified Jesus and had used every conceivable means to keep His body sealed in a rock-hewn tomb. This was not to be a vague, formless rumor which rises out in some remote region and gradually spreads. It is to be clear-cut historical testimony of eye-witnesses in the very presence of the most vicious enemies. If these enemies are able to deny the facts, they now have full opportunity. Failing this, they will have the way open to persecute and kill the witnesses, but in no other way can they silence them. In slaying them they will forever seal the truth of their testimony.

More Complete Understanding

It is plain from the preface of Acts that the apostles were in need of further instruction which the Holy Spirit would give them. We cannot tell just how much of a worldly idea of the kingdom still lingered in their minds as they asked: "Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). That word "restore" seems to suggest the glory of David and Solomon on a world-wide basis. But this is not so certain as is generally held The Old Testament repeatedly declares the world-wide spiritual nature of the leadership of Israel under the Messiah. Jesus had explained these prophecies to them after His resurrection. It is noteworthy that Jesus did not condemn them now for making a remark which had a longing for a worldly Messiah, such as He had used in rebuking Peter at Caesarea Philippi: "thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men" (Matthew 16:23). Now at the time of the ascension He only rebukes them for inquiring as to the time: "It is not for you to know the times or seasons." We cannot tell how far their question was based on reflections as to whether the setting up of the kingdom is to wait upon His second coming. They had been promised the baptism in the Holy Spirit "not many days hence." Was this to be the occasion of the establishment of the kingdom or would it wait upon His return to the world? As in the Old Testament predictions of the first and second comings of the Messiah there was difficulty in interpretation, so now in the predictions of the initial establishment of the kingdom at Pentecost and the final consummation at the second coming. The apostles are commanded to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Both the necessary information and the power would be bestowed for the tasks before them.

Matthew's Account

Matthew gives profound emphasis to Jesus' declaration of His universal authority as He gave the great commission. But it is a mistake to think that this was the only time He affirmed His divine authority. It is implicit in all that He did and said. Before issuing the great invitation as well as before giving the great commission, Jesus declared He had divine authority: "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father….Come unto me all ye that labor…."(Matthew 11:27, Matthew 11:28). Explicit claim to this authority is recorded many times in the Gospel narratives. The disciples were commanded to go to all the nations. Although "go ye" is a participle in the Greek and carries the secondary idea, yet it is as clearly a command as the verb "make disciples," for a participle takes on the color of the verb upon which it depends. The main purpose of the campaign is to carry the message of salvation to all. The verb "make disciples" means by giving them instruction. Thus they are commanded to preach, baptize, and teach. The verb baptizo means to immerse, just as the verbs cheo and rantzzo mean respectively "to pour" and "to sprinkle." Even the figurative meanings of baptizo such as "dyeing" make clear the action, for a garment is not dyed either by pouring or sprinkling. Although in classical Greek the verb baptizo is sometimes used of ships "sinking," it is made very clear in the New Testament that baptism is a resurrection as well as a burial (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12).

Baptized into Christ The name stands for the person: "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." In the solemn act of baptism the person is baptized into the body of Christ: he is joined with the Person of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Hence we are baptized "into Christ." The fact that Luke does not choose to repeat these words when he records a baptism in Acts, does not at all imply that the apostles disobeyed this command of Christ. Luke simply records that the person was baptized into Christ which was all that was necessary for his brief history. Modernists feel obligated to deny the genuineness of this passage because of its clear-cut testimony to the Trinity. Advancing their theory that the Trinity was a late development, they center their attack upon this passage. But the manuscript evidence for these closing verses of Matthew is unanimous. Furthermore the Pauline Epistles which set forth the idea of the Trinity in doctrinal discussions and in specific fashion in benedictions are too early to allow for mythical development such as the modernists suppose. The word "Trinity" is not found in the Scripture, but the idea is fundamental to the Gospel narratives and the entire New Testament. Strong support is to be found also in the Old Testament.

Teaching Them to Observe All Things A complete understanding of all the teaching of Jesus is not essential to conversion but only an understanding of the fundamental elements. A lifetime of study with ever increasing knowledge and faith leads the Christian on in the gradual mastery of the life and teaching of Jesus. We are to "grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus." The process is not complete until eternity affords perfection.

Divine Help

Exceeding precious is the promise that Jesus would be with them. They were to have the presence and help of the Holy Spirit, but Jesus would also be their constant Companion and Guide. A seemingly impossible and incredible task has been calmly assigned to an insignificant little group of people who have been ordered to go out and conquer the world by the simple proclamation of the gospel to each individual. The promise of Christ's presence and help fulfilled a

desperate need, as they were about to face the Jewish leaders who had just crucified Jesus and the endless opposition and persecution of an unbelieving world.

Time and Place of Mark's Account

Mark's account of the great commission presents the apostles sitting at meat when Jesus appeared to them. If this is the same occasion which Luke 24:26-43 describes, then there is no difficulty in the rebuke which Jesus gave to the apostles for their unbelief and hardness of heart in failing to accept the first testimony of His resurrection. We are accustomed to place this giving of the great commission in Mark as at the close of the forty-day period and make it closely parallel in time to the giving on the mountain in Galilee recorded in Matthew. But if it be the same occasion as Luke records, then the apparent difficulty of the rebuke of Jesus disappears. It seems plain, however, that Mark is giving a general summary of post-resurrection teaching of Jesus in Mark 16:19 and is recording the fact of the ascension without giving the time and place. The Method The commission in Mark shows how the nations are to be made disciples: by preaching the gospel to every creature. As repentance in Luke's first report was used of the entire turning of the life from the world to God, so "he that believeth" in Mark uses faith to cover the entire spiritual revolution in the heart. Both Matthew and Mark give the strongest emphasis to the solemn ordinance of baptism. Just as Luke had associated with repentance "forgiveness of sins" so Mark declares faith and baptism the way of salvation: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16). Disbelieveth in this last clause covers the entire rejection of disbelief and disobedience. The Miracles The miracles which Jesus promised would "accompany them that believe" and were to give the seal of heaven to the truth of their proclamation were fulfilled in the apostolic age. The scene on the Island of Malta, when Paul was bitten by a deadly serpent and suffered no harm, is an illustration. The speaking in tongues on the day of Pentecost, many miracles of healing, the casting out of the demon from the girl at Philippi, all show the fulfillment of this prediction. At the time of the first sending forth of the apostles two by two a similar prediction of miraculous power had been given and fulfilled.

Translation of Elijah The ascension of Jesus brings to mind the translation of Elijah. There is deep pathos in the second chapter of 2 Kings as Elijah makes his last journey with his faithful helper Elisha. Repeatedly he tests the faith and devotion of Elisha by suggesting that Elisha should stay behind now on this additional stage of the journey. But Elisha answers resolutely: "As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee" (2 Kings 2:2). Young students of the school of the prophets eager to exhibit their prophetic power, predict to Elisha that Elijah is to be taken away from him that day. Petulantly Elisha responds: "Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. In the final hour of parting Elijah asked his faithful successor to ask what he most desired. The response was magnificent: "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me" (2 Kings 2:9). As Elijah was swept up into heaven in a chariot of fire drawn by horses of fire in a great whirlwind, Elisha cried: "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof" (2 Kings 2:12). Elisha understood now that the real secret of the strength and security of Israel was not in man's might, but in God's.

Silence of the Apostles In contrast with this, there is a strange silence which is upon the apostles in approaching the final hour. They utter no such magnificent outcry of anguish or triumphant joy in the moment of parting. They are completely under the spell of their divine Master. Although Luke

does not specifically state that the apostles knew that this was to be the day and the occasion of the ascension, yet the repeated warnings of Jesus must have made them realize that the hour of final parting was imminent. At the first appearance Jesus had said to Mary “I am not yet ascended unto the Father; but go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and my God and your God” (John 20:17). The sudden, mysterious appearances and disappearances of Jesus must have made them wonder which would be the last and what would it be like. If they recalled the manner of Elijah’s translation in the midst of their reflections, they would have been filled with tense expectation. The miraculous manifestations at the baptism and on the Mount of Transfiguration had been so tremendous as to increase their present wonder. As the appearances themselves were on each occasion by surprise rather than by meticulous appointment, so the element of surprise must have been present in the ascension. But it was against the back-drop of excited expectation. Their question: “Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” was no routine request for information. It was filled with the excitement and anxiety which crowded these appearances. Jesus had repeatedly warned them during His ministry that He would leave them and return to God. Now He had made it evident by the message to Mary that the time was close at hand. They must take over the awesome responsibility of leadership and carry on His campaign in the face of cruel opposition. When and how should they begin? It is no wonder they attempted to question Jesus as to the relation of His departure and the establishment of the kingdom. The blunt rebuke they received was joined with a thrilling prediction of the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them to give them knowledge and power for the worldwide task. The Ascension

“And when he had said these things, as they were looking, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9). The clause, “as they were looking,” is a reminder of the fact that they were actual eye-witnesses of what took place. It suggests all the grief, amazement, and triumph in their hearts as they saw Him ascend. In his previous account Luke stated that just before He ascended, “he lifted up his hands and blessed them” (Luke 24:50). He describes the reaction of the apostles: “And they worshipped him.” This was the same result which the mighty miracle of the walking on the water had produced: “And they that were in the boat worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God” (Matthew 14:32). Speechless and filled with emotions too deep for words, the disciples watched their Lord ascend. Barclay, McGarvey, Andrews, and others argue effectively that the miracle did not take place at the point tradition has marked in full view of the city, but from a more remote height on the Mount of Olives to the south. The cloud that received Him out of their sight may have been as a curtain drawn across His departure while He was still in plain view. This seems more probable than that He should have ascended higher and higher until He was still visible only as an uncertain speck in the infinite distance and became at last enveloped in clouds. The attitude of the disciples was now changed from the awe of worship to the straining of the vision toward heaven as they sought a last glimpse or a further view. The appearance of the two angels broke the spell and recalled them to the enormous task at hand with the assurance that the return of Jesus to judge the world would be in this same manner. The Coronation With all the sublime boldness of divine inspiration which affirms without explanation or defense that which man unaided by God could not know, Mark declares: “So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken unto them, was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God” (Mark 16:19). “Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord

mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory" (Psalms 24:7-10). "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength. and honor, and glory, and blessing" (Revelation 5:11, Revelation 5:12).

136. Appendix 1 The Aramaic Background of the Gospel Narratives

Appendix 1 The Aramaic Background of the Gospel Narratives The Claims of the Bible The claims which the Bible makes for itself, the authority with which it speaks, the salvation it announces, the record it presents of God's revelation of Himself in the person of His Son, focus the attention of the ages upon this book. Man's desperate need has caused him to investigate the claims of the Bible and to give heed to its instructions. This investigation was as instantaneous as was the revelation. The fact that God's messengers delivered these revelations in person to their fellows, either orally and then in written form or through the immediate use of writing, caused the most intense examination of the material presented and of the divine authority with which it was clothed. This examination came from two angles. The fact that God's messengers solemnly condemned the sins of men and announced God's coming judgment upon the sinner unless he repented, caused a hostile investigation which was as continuous through the centuries as was the revelation of the Old and New Testaments. Those who were steeped in sin and determined to continue in sin sought to find some means to question, cast doubt upon, and deny the validity of the claims and the truth of the messages. This is the reason that the record of the lives of the prophets, of Jesus, and of His apostles is one continuous account of persecution and martyrdom. Here is investigation at the time of delivery moved by the most acute personal animus and with life and death issues at stake. These hostile hearers had every conceivable opportunity to disprove the truth of the claims and the reality of the miracles which were worked in their very presence and in the presence of multitudes for the purpose of proving the divine source and authority of the messages. Then there was another type of examination made from a friendly and fair-minded approach by those who were eager to find some solution to life's problems some surcease for the misery of sin and death, and who found that God's messengers actually provided for all of man's needs and gave indubitable proof of the divine source of the revelations. As generation after generation and century after century have passed by, and uncounted millions have found the message and the evidence God has offered satisfactory, and have added the proof of their redeemed and noble lives in humble testimony, the case for the Bible grows constantly stronger. The fact that the messages delivered had to be presented and accepted at the cost of the greatest personal suffering has caused each generation to seal their testimony with their own blood.

Historical Investigation of the Bible When the modernist comes today insisting with fervent heat that the Bible must be submitted to historical investigation just the same as any other book, there is some truth and justice in his demands. No man can examine and decide for someone else; much less one generation for another. God has given us all freedom of the will and an intellect of our own. When a child grows to the years of accountability, he begins to survey the world of people and things for himself. He of necessity feels that he must make his own investigation and his own decisions. He may long to believe as his father and mother do, but he must assay the evidence for himself. This is only natural for faith comes by hearing and faith is no proxy affair. The Bible is as clear and as emphatic upon this point as possible. When the insistence is made that the Bible must submit to re-examination of its message and claims just the same as any other book,

there is this to be said: the Bible is not the same as any other book. No claims, no attacks can obliterate the facts as to what the Bible has accomplished in the lives of man and those facts are so tremendous that they make any re-examination of the Bible a somewhat different matter than is true of any other book in the world. “Tested and proved!” registered by so many generations which have been unable to find anything to add or subtract in the field of religion and morals where the Bible speaks, is a cumulation of evidence which is not easily overlooked. But the modernist protests that other generations were too easily persuaded and that he has new evidence which has never been considered. If such be the case, then man is obligated by the very God-given intelligence which he possesses to consider fairly any actual evidence which may be submitted, but by his incalculable indebtedness to God he is obligated not to take an unfriendly attitude toward the Bible In his investigation.

Attempts to Go Back to the New Testament A two-pronged attack on the Gospel narratives has arisen in late decades. These narratives are the very center of the whole Bible: all the Old Testament looks forward to the coming of Christ; all the rest of the New Testament is based upon the teaching and life of Christ. Those who deny the truth of the New Testament narratives about Jesus have sought desperately to find justification for their unbelief in the accounts themselves, but the narratives are so straightforward, guileless, and impregnable by reason of their very simplicity that they leave no possibility for anyone to deny the fact that they claim Jesus taught He is the Son of God and that they record the proof of this claim. A curious twist in this modern unbelief is that these opponents of the claims and teaching of Jesus resent furiously any suggestion that they are not Christians — followers of Jesus. This immediately shows the weakness of their whole position. Their desire to be known as Christians is a tacit admission of all the Bible’s claims; even as their actual teaching is a complete denial of the Bible’s claims. Now to bridge such a monstrous chasm has been their problem. The solution they offer which is at the same time the “new” evidence which they present, is the effort to go back of the New Testament narratives to earlier “sources” both literary and linguistic. Back of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, they attempt to conjure up earlier documents from which these were developed by a process of evolution and from which these differ in that they make out that Jesus was the Son of God, whereas the earlier documents (which exist only in the imagination of the critics) represented Jesus as a simple teacher and healer. Back of the Greek of our Gospel narratives, they attempt to go into the Aramaic background. They argue from the facts that Jesus spoke Aramaic and the documents we possess are written in Greek. They maintain here is room for a new investigation of the teaching and claims recorded therein. A good part of Book One, An Introduction to the Life of Christ is devoted to the consideration of the first of these two attacks: the problem of so-called “sources” of the Gospel narratives. The critics themselves are so completely at war with one another amid their contradictory theories and their utter lack of any concrete evidence that an incoherent Babel of confusion results from their combined efforts. It is not the purpose of this essay to cover again this discussion, but to proceed with the examination of the proposition as to whether any new light is thrown upon the Gospel narratives from the Aramaic background. The Aramaic Dialects The word “Aramaic” comes from the name of the section of Upper Mesopotamia, Aram, where the people lived who spoke the language. The section was called Aram-Naharaim (“Aram of the Two Rivers”), but is better known to us as Padan-aram (“The Plain of Aram”), the place where Jacob went in search of a wife among his own kinspeople of the family of Laban. Two principal dialects of the language arose. A Semitic idiom was used in the north-eastern section of

Mesopotamia, which finally developed into Syriac. In early Christian times Edessa was the center of the use of this language and in it many early Christian writings were published. The south-western dialect of Aramaic was sometimes called “Chaldee,” but in the Old Testament it is called Aramaic Ezra 4:8-24; Ezra 5:1-17; Ezra 6:1-18, Ezra 7:12-26, Jeremiah 10:11, and Daniel 2:4-49; Daniel 3:1-30; Daniel 4:1-37; Daniel 5:1-31; Daniel 6:1-28; Daniel 7:1-28 were written in this language, all the remainder of the Old Testament having been written in Hebrew, the language which the Jewish people used exclusively in the early part of their history. Both Hebrew and Aramaic are closely related Semitic languages; the main differences are slight variations in vocabulary and syntax, with the same alphabet and the same general structure of the language prevailing in each. The other main Semitic languages are Assyrian and Babylonian, the Phoenician and the Punic Carthaginian, the Ethiopic, the Samaritan, and the Syriac. The influence of Aramaic began to be felt among the Jewish people very early. Some scholars claim that Northern Aramaic became the language of the Kingdom of Israel as early as 721 b.c. and that it was used by the Jews until 900 a.d. To prove the earlier date they cite 2 Kings 17:1-41 which relates the destruction of the northern kingdom by the Assyrians. How immediate was the change to Aramaic in the confused conditions which prevailed with the destruction and captivity of the Northern Kingdom we cannot be sure, but we do know that at the time of the fall of Samaria the leaders in Jerusalem knew Aramaic, but the people did not: “Then said Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and Shebnah, and Joah, unto Rabshakeh, Speak, I pray thee, to thy servants in the Syrian [Marginal reading is “Aramaean”] language; for we understand it: and speak not with us in the Jews’ language, in the ears of the people that are on the wall” (2 Kings 18:26). Thus an incidental reference to the colloquy between the embassadors of Sennacherib and of Hezekiah gives us insight into the fact that the people of the Southern Kingdom did not know Aramaic in 721 b.c. How much influence it may have had in the Northern Kingdom prior to its fall is not known. The succeeding verses of this text show that since Rabshakeh insolently shouted in Hebrew to the people Sennacherib’s demand to surrender, the educated leaders of both sides knew both of the languages. It also shows that a dialect of Aramaic was used at this time by the near neighbors of Israel to the north, Assyria (and this is also true of the earlier kingdom of Syria with its capital at Damascus). The dialects of Aramaic which displaced the old Assyrian in Assyria and Babylonia prevailed until the Arab conquests in the eighth century a.d., when Arabic became the language of this whole section. Archaeologists have uncovered weights and clay tablets on which the Aramaic is written beside the cuneiform inscriptions in bilingual fashion. These evidently come from an early period of transition when both languages were being used. The Hebrew captives in Babylon began to feel strongly the influence of the Aramaic, and it steadily gained in influence even after the return to Palestine. The short sections of certain Old Testament books written in Aramaic show how strong this influence was even at a very early period. By the time of the Maccabees, Aramaic had completely displaced Hebrew as the language of the common people. In the meantime the conquests of Alexander the Great had spread Greek culture and the Greek language all over the East. The language of the educated classes, especially east of the Jordan, was Greek; the language of the scholars of the Jewish nation was Hebrew; the spoken vernacular was Aramaic. When sections of the Old Testament were read in the synagogue, they had to be translated immediately into Aramaic so that the people could understand. There were dialects of Aramaic in Judaea, Galilee, and especially Samaria. The dialect used in Galilee seems to have had an unusual amount of guttural sounds. It helped to betray Peter’s identity in the hall of the high priest:

“Of a truth thou also art one of them; for thy speech maketh thee known” (Matthew 26:73); “Of a truth this man also was with him; for he is a Galilaean” (Luke 22:59). When the Jews began to commit to writing their oral traditions, Aramaic was the language used for the various Targums or paraphrases of the Old Testament. Both the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds were written in Aramaic This is true of other earlier Jewish commentaries. Papyri written in Aramaic have been discovered in Elephantine in Egypt.

Greek Versus Aramaic A great deal of discussion has obtained among scholars as to the relative extent to which Greek and Aramaic were used in Palestine in the time of Christ. The inscriptions on the cross in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek, indicate the prevalence of all three: Latin, the language of official circles; Greek, of educated circles; Aramaic, of the common people. Westcott differentiates them thus: Hebrew — the national dialect; Latin — the official dialect; Greek — the common dialect. Greek was the universal language of the whole civilized world, but just how far it was used in Palestine at this time is debated. Strong evidence for the use of Greek is found in the fact that the inspired documents of the church were written in Greek and that even in the very first days of the Jerusalem church there were two definite groups: the Hellenists or Greek-speaking Jewish Christians; and the Hebrew Christians, who spoke Aramaic (Acts 6:1). It is generally conceded that Jesus spoke Aramaic, although He may have used Hebrew in quoting from the Old Testament on special occasions. Some vigorously deny that Jesus would have spoken Greek. It is not probable that He would have taught His disciples in a foreign language or addressed a strictly Jewish audience in anything but the vernacular, although in evangelizing such sections as the Decapolis where the Greek influence was very strong, He may have used Greek.

Aramaic Words of Jesus

Exact words used by Jesus and quoted in the Gospels afford clear proof that Jesus was speaking Aramaic Cephas or Kephas (John 1:42); Talitha Cumi (Mark 5:41); Ephphatha (Mark 7:34); Bar■Jonah (Matthew 16:17). Jesus seems to have been speaking Aramaic in the cry on the cross: “Eli■ Eli■ lama sabachthani” (Matthew 27:46); “Eloi■ Eloi■ lama sabachthani” (Mark 15:34); although the fact that He was quoting the first verse of the twenty-second Psalm raises the question as to whether He was quoting the exact Hebrew or speaking the current dialect. The difference in the forms Eli (Matt.) and Eloi (Mark) is that the former is Hebrew; the latter, Aramaic Bystanders who thought He was crying for Elijah probably did not hear Him very distinctly. Lama is Hebrew; the Aramaic form is lema, which some manuscripts carry. If Jesus quoted the Hebrew, then the Aramaicizing in varying degrees by Matthew and Mark was probably done, independent of each other, to make the words more understandable for any Jewish readers. If Jesus spoke the words in Aramaic, then the Hebraizing of the forms may have been done to bring out more clearly the fact that Jesus was quoting the twenty-second Psalm or (in the case of Matthew) to make clearer to any non-Jewish readers why the bystanders thought He called for Elijah (Eli suggests this more than the Aramaic form Eloi). Both Matthew and Mark had doubtless preached on this many times and had found it necessary to interpret and explain the words. The words are immediately translated into Greek in both narratives, and the finely drawn distinctions between the words of Jesus as they are quoted have no doctrinal importance except to give further indication that the two wrote independent of each other. When Jesus read from the book of Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth, He evidently read first the Hebrew text and then translated it into Aramaic for the benefit of the audience before beginning to speak upon it. The Record in Greek of What

Jesus Said in Aramaic The question naturally arises that if Jesus spoke Aramaic and the Gospel narratives are written in Greek, how about the accuracy of the report in Greek of what was spoken in another language. This gives radical critics the opportunity to argue that the Aramaic background of the Gospels holds the secret of the development of the worship of Jesus from the early traditions, which they suppose, to the full proposition of the Gospels as we have them, that Jesus is the Son of God. The old adage that three moves are equal to a fire because something always gets lost, strayed, or broken in a move, gives some color to the proposition that in translating from one language to another it is very difficult to avoid changes of meaning — losing or adding here and there a shade of meaning. The differences in the Authorized and American Standard Versions show something of this difficulty. One of the points of superiority of the Protestant Bible to the Roman Catholic edition is that the Protestant Bible is translated directly from the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament into the English whereas the Roman Catholic Bible comes through the Hebrew into Greek (of the Septuagint) into Latin (of the Vulgate) into English for the Old Testament; and from Greek into Latin into English for the New Testament. The Inspiration of the Gospel Accounts The problem as to whether the New Testament, written in Greek, gives us an accurate report of what Jesus said and did, when He used Aramaic, takes us back to the opening paragraphs of this essay. The solemn promises of Jesus to His apostles was that they should be given miraculous power by the Holy Spirit and that the Holy Spirit would bring to their remembrance all the things that He had said (John 14:26). “But when they deliver you up, be not anxious how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you” (Matthew 10:19, Matthew 10:20). It follows immediately that if the Holy Spirit guided them directly when “before governors and kings” on trial for their lives and when preaching the gospel to their own generation, He also guided them when writing for the ages. Repeatedly various writers of the New Testament make specific claim that they wrote by divine inspiration. This settles the question as to whether the Gospels as we possess them in Greek carry a true and faithful account of what Jesus actually said and did. It settles it for anyone who believes the teaching of the New Testament. Of what avail is an inspired origin. the critics ask, if the translations made into every language on earth lose something in the translating? But the original is still there and can be consulted for correcting and elucidating the translations. Of what avail is it, they ask, when scribal errors have crept into the oldest copies of the Bible we possess? But the original back of all the copies challenges us to the painstaking and unremitting toil in seeking to regain the infallible original. The relatively small number and slight importance of the differences in manuscript readings confirm our conviction that we have practically regained the original. Did Matthew Write First in Aramaic

If the Gospel narratives were written first and then translated into the Greek text in Aramaic? which we possess, then we have a more difficult problem. Papias, who lived from about a.d. 70-150 and was leader of the church at Hierapolis in Asia Minor and an associate of Polycarp and others who had been trained by apostles says: “Matthew composed the Oracles (ta Logia) in the Hebrew dialect, and everyone translated it as he was able” (Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History III. 39). Modernists seize upon this statement and urge that here is evidence of an earlier, shorter document in Aramaic from which our Gospel developed. But Papias plainly implies that he is speaking of the Gospel of Matthew and that the difficulty which obtained at first in translating it into Greek did not exist at the time that Papias wrote: “everyone translated.” His statement implies that

the Aramaic Gospel of Matthew was not in circulation in the time of Papias for he would not then have had any necessity of telling them that such a work did exist at first. If Matthew himself translated his work from Aramaic to Greek then our problem resolves itself. Our Gospel of Matthew if published in Greek by the author himself, is not a translation, but a product of the original author. This, also, would explain the early and complete disappearance of the Aramaic Gospel of Matthew from circulation, since the church rapidly grew in its world-wide proportions and background and, possessing the Gospel of Matthew in Greek, would have no need or purpose in preserving the Aramaic facsimile.

Search of the Critics for Aramaicisms

It is exceedingly interesting to read the declarations of Professor James Hardy Ropes of Harvard in his posthumous book, The Synoptic Gospels, to the effect that the search of scholars for some kind of impressive evidence out of the structure, grammar, style, or vocabulary of the Gospel narratives themselves proving them to be translations out of an Aramaic original or source has been utterly elusive and futile. He says: “Among the several Gospels, Mark is the one regarding which the claim of a direct Aramaic original has made the most appeal to scholars” (p. 97). Thus the lone statement of Papias, which is all the external evidence anyone can produce, and the feeling of the scholars as to the internal evidence are at complete cross-purposes: the former pointing to Matthew; the latter, to Mark. According to the miniature theory of evolution by which they attempt to evolve our Gospels from earlier sources, Mark was the first to be written and “the claim of a direct Aramaic original” for Mark naturally makes “the most appeal to scholars.” But the external evidence points in the other direction and the internal evidence is very indefinite. Moreover, if Mark has made the most appeal to scholars, then we can be certain that there is no decisive internal evidence of any kind for an Aramaic original, simply because the internal evidence to the contrary is so plain in Mark that he who runs may read. Mark 15:22 should be a sufficient citation: “And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is being interpreted, The place of a skull.” “Golgotha” is an Aramaic word and the very fact that the author interprets it for his readers shows that his readers are outside of Palestine and do not have the Palestinian background. Matthew also carries a somewhat similar statement explaining the meaning of Golgotha which is again powerful evidence that the book was written in Greek. Since Matthew cites so many Old Testament prophecies as fulfilled in the life of Christ, it is customary to say that his account was written for the Jews, but such translations of the meaning of an Aramaic word for the benefit of his readers shows that Matthew was at least not writing exclusively for such an audience.

Recent Trends The chief protagonist of the theory that the four Gospel narratives are translations into Greek from Aramaic originals, has been Professor C. C. Torrey of Yale. In this he has carried forward the earlier speculations of Wellhausen, Nestle, and Gustaf Dalman. The most scholarly recent works in this field have come from Matthew Black and C. F. Burney. Torrey’s work: The Four Gospels; A New Translation (1933) consists exclusively of his translation of the Greek text, in which he inserts his guesses as to what was in an imaginary Aramaic original. Three pages and a half of explanation and defense are offered in his preface. This defense rests on reaffirmation of mythical “sources” such as “Q,” as he builds his imaginary structure of Aramaic originals upon the phantom foundation: the Two-source Theory and Form Criticism. His second work, Our Translated Gospels, Some of the Evidence (1936), offers excellent illustration of what a paradise of

speculation the radicals have discovered in this fanciful hinterland of Aramaic originals. The process usually is to suppose that the Gospel writer made a mistake; then to imagine that the mistake was in translating an invented Aramaic original; on this foundation of suppositions, they propose to rear the structure of a new reading. This is not merely making bricks without straw, it is playing tiddlywinks with visionary bricks created out of thin air. Even the erudite work, The Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts (1954) by Matthew Black, who is friendly to the Aramaic presupposition, frankly admits the speculative nature of Torrey's work: "Torrey goes so far as to claim in his first larger work that Aramaic originals lie behind all four Gospels and on the basis of this view and of numerous conjectural reconstructions of Aramaic, has produced a new translation" (p. 4). Wellhausen had argued that Mark's Gospel, in spite of the utter simplicity of his Greek style, is also a translation from an Aramaic document. Torrey goes much farther than either of these positions. Black sets forth in the preceding criticism that Torrey has as the foundation of his work, two phantom pillars — his theory and his conjectures. He discusses "One of Burney's most valuable observations of this kind," which is to explain the assertion of the deity of Christ in John 1:18 as found in some manuscripts, "The only begotten God" (both the a.v. and the a.s.v. follow the manuscripts which read "The only begot. ten Son"), as a mistranslation of an Aramaic original. Black remarks: "It has an attractive simplicity, is free from philological difficulties, and the Greek reading is unusual. Equally remarkable, however, would be the ignorance of the translator who made the blunder, unless we look on his 'version' as a deliberate theological interpretation of the Aramaic" (The Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts (1954), p. 10).

Criticisms of Torrey's Position

Black declares that the same sort of objections "mainly philological, may be made to most of the examples of 'mistranslation' of original Aramaic which have been adduced by Torrey and Burney." Black quotes Moulton, the famous Greek Grammarian, (Gramm. 11, p. 16) as saying: "The fascinating pursuit of Aramaic originals may lead to a good percentage of successful guesses; but they are mere guesses still, except when a decided failure in the Greek can be cleared up by an Aramaic which explains the error, and this acts as corroboration" (The Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts (1954), p. 11). Black says of Torrey's translation: "He bases his conclusions mainly on examples of mistranslation of Aramaic originals. Most of his examples of mistranslation, however, and several of Burney's, are open to grave objection." He criticizes Torrey's attempt to publish a new translation of the Gospels "before any adequate presentation of the philological evidence" was available. He says that Torrey's "second larger study, in which the evidence of language is presented more fully, would have been of greater value had it been undertaken for the Aramaic scholar, and not for 'popular reading' by those who are unacquainted with Aramaic..." (The Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts (1954), p. 4). Black notes that both Burney and Torrey follow the assumption of Dalman that the Targums of Onkelos (whom Black identifies as Aquila) and the Prophets furnish the closest parallel to the Aramaic of Jesus (The Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts (1954), p. 5). He says: "In the almost complete absence of literary Aramaic writings contemporary with the Gospels, the question of the best use of the actual sources of knowledge available becomes important" (The Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts (1954), p. 26). The Palestinian Pentateuch Targum is thought by Black to be first-century Palestinian Aramaic (The Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts (1954), pp. 17-25). Black offers three criticisms of preceding work in this field of speculation. (1) Dalman was correct in

criticizing “the inadequacy of the linguistic approach of Wellhausen and Nestle, but was mistaken in the larger claims he makes...for Targumic Aramaic as the primary authority for the language of Jesus.” (2) The preceding investigation had been limited to the Greek text of Westcott and Hort or that of Tischendorf. Wensick’s extension of the investigation to Codex Bezae is especially commended. (3) The efforts of Torrey and Burney are criticized because they “attach much importance to the conjectural mistranslations of Aramaic as proof of source. Mistranslation of an original is, it is true, the best proof of translation; but it is doubtful if it can ever have scientific value as evidence except in cases where we possess not only the translation but also the original work. Even then demonstrative proof is not always possible” (The Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts (1954), pp. 6, 7).

Torrey’s Attack on Luke

After such searching criticisms of the efforts to draw Aramaic originals out of a magician’s hat, it is of interest to investigate Black’s methods and conclusions. First, let us examine one of the charges of mistranslation by Luke of a supposed Aramaic original as cited by Torrey. This case is not selected at random. It is chosen because Black heartily concurs in Torrey’s argument and conclusions. Thus we can estimate both Torrey and Black at once. Further, Black selects this case as an outstanding example of a clear and convincing passage in Torrey’s translation. He says: “The following two examples from the work of Torrey merit the description ‘brilliant,’ and deserve to rank with Wellhausen’s observation on Matthew 23:26 (Luke 11:41)” (The Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts (1954), p. 11). Torrey’s Our Translated Gospels offers the following argument on Luke 1:39 (p. 84). This is the first of the two illustrations Black selects. Torrey insists that the Greek text must be translated: “In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to the city Judah.” He comments: “There was no ‘city Judah,’ and the rendering ‘a city of Judah’” (English R.V.) is grammatically impossible; for in order to express this, the genitive case of the proper name must be shown, as in Luke 1:65, John 4:5, etc. Luke regarded ‘Judah’ as the name of a city, as is quite evident from his Greek in Luke 2:4.” (p. 85).

Torrey declares that he is the person who discovered “the obvious explanation of Luke’s mistake.” The first matter worthy of note is the blasé manner in which the Yale professor some nineteen hundred years after the time of writing presumes to charge Luke, the master-historian (not to mention Luke’s divine inspiration), with the most incessant, stupid blunders, linguistic, geographical, and historical. A glance at Luke 2:4 shows that Luke names the city of Judah concerning which he speaks — “Bethlehem.” Torrey claims that Luke, being a Gentile, misunderstood the meaning of the Aramaic word in the supposed document from which he was copying and translated “city” when he should have read “province” : “to the province of Judaea.” The sole fact on which Torrey’s entire attack upon Luke’s accuracy at this point is based is that the Greek word “Judah” (louda) is not in the genitive case and cannot be rendered “[of] Judah.” He brushes aside the English Revised translation which had the leadership of such giants as Westcott and Lightfoot. But the Authorized Version and the American Standard Version also render it “of Judah.” Torrey does not mention this. Thayer’s Lexicon lists louda as an indeclinable proper noun. In such a noun all the cases have the same ending: it is not declined. The structure and content of the sentence determines if such a word is in the genitive case, not the ending. Torrey does not mention this. It is very common for Greek proper nouns to be indeclinable and for the name of a city to be spelled in two ways, one of the names being declinable and the other indeclinable. The

two names for Jerusalem offer ready example: hierosoluma and hierousalem. The same authors sometimes use one or the other, the declinable or the indeclinable form. Thayer says: “both forms are used promiscuously (yet with a marked preference for the indeclinable form)” (p. 299). Thus we see that Luke uses either the declinable form of Judah (Ioudas) or the indeclinable form (Iouda). Torrey does not mention this mass of evidence. Thayer establishes the fact that Iouda is an indeclinable Greek proper name by citing two instances of its use by Matthew (Matthew 2:6) “land of Judah”; “princes of Judah.” He further cites two cases of its use in the Septuagint: Judges 17:8 where the usage is precisely that of Luke 1:39 — “city of Judah”; and Joshua 21:11 — “in the hill-country of Judah.” Torrey does not mention any of this evidence. Did the 72 Jewish scholars who translated the Old Testament into Greek also make two such mistakes in separate books in translating the Hebrew? They were not Gentiles stumbling over Hebrew books. Did Matthew also make two mistakes in quick succession in writing Iouda as an indeclinable genitive? Torrey does not mention any of this. He reminds one of the recruit in the parade who found all the soldiers out of step, except himself. Nathan Black is also out of step.

Black’s Position Examined A good example of the flimsy and far-fetched citations of Aramaic background by Black is found in John 1:15 : “After me cometh a man who is become before me; for he was before me.” Black bases his objection to this text upon his radical theological ideas as to what John would probably have said. He translates (correcting John’s mistaken translation of a supposed Aramaic original): “He that cometh after me is superior to me.” Black says: “This distinction between priority in time and priority in rank can only be maintained in the context of the Prologue. It could not come from John the Baptist himself, for John had no theology of the pre-existent Logos and could hardly claim that his great contemporary (and his junior in years) had existed before him” (The Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts (1954), p. 108). Again we find Luke in hot controversy with the Aramaic specialists of the twentieth century. It is not only John who is assailed by Matthew Black, but Luke. Luke declares the historic fact that the angel Gabriel made the prediction to Zacharias concerning the child, John, who is to be born to the aged couple: “He shall be filled with the Holy Spirit. even from his mother’s womb” (Luke 1:15). Jesus Himself declared that John was inspired of God: the baptism of John was not from men, but from God (Matthew 21:24-27). John the Baptist made the solemn declaration: “And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God” (John 1:34). But Matthew Black denies that John the Baptist could have had divine inspiration to know the deity of Christ. And on the basis of his skepticism he conjures up an imaginary Aramaic document which he declares is mistranslated by John.

Torrey Versus Goodspeed

Thomas Kepler’s Contemporary Thinking About Jesus (1944), which offers a symposium of radical views, publishes in successive chapters articles by C. C. Torrey and Edgar J. Goodspeed. They might be called “Aramaic vs. Greek.” They are entitled: “The Origin of the Gospels” (Torrey) and “The Original Language of the Gospels” (Goodspeed). Commenting on the discovery of the vast number of Greek papyri which parallel the Greek of the New Testament — the koine, Goodspeed declares that they have rendered of small importance the efforts to explain unusual constructions of New Testament Greek as due to “Semitism — that is, due to imitation of Hebrew or Aramaic idioms.” He says that in the presence of the Greek papyri these Aramaic idioms “have rapidly dwindled until they have lost any possible literary significance He declares that the Gospels were

not composed “in muddy Greek or an awkward patois,” but were “master-pieces of popular literature.” He argues for their kinship with vernacular Greek of the papyrus letters and documents. “It is an amazing fact that we now have definitely dated papyrus documents from every single year of the first century; not late copies, but the actual originals. If we possessed one single Aramaic text from anywhere in that century, or even a copy of one, in the language of Palestine, we should be fortunate. But none has ever been found” (pp. 62, 63).

Torrey laments his inability to produce a copy of one of the Aramaic originals of the Gospels which he supposes once existed. He admits that the advocate of an original Semitic text of these Gospels knows a great barrier is before him. While he has the Greek, the Aramaic original he postulates is gone forever. “He is inclined to say to himself that the only evidence that could make any impression on his colleagues of the Greek persuasion would be the resurrection of one of the Aramaic or Hebrew texts, say in Egypt. But on second thought he will add, doubtfully: “If they hear not my reconstructed text, neither will they be persuaded if one rise from the dead” (The Four Gospels; A New Translation (1933), pp. 56, 57). The Dead Sea Scrolls

Rising from the dead out of the caves along the wild, barren mountains of the Dead Sea in one of the most dramatic episodes of the long history of archaeology, numerous Aramaic documents out of the days of the beginning of Christianity have come forth in company with the more famous Dead Sea Scrolls. Goodspeed’s assertion: “But none has ever been found” is now gone with the wind in these reconstruction days of radical theories. Of course, Torrey’s vain wish is still unanswered. He desires more than a resurrection; he desires that a copy of “Q” or “Ur-Mark” in Aramaic be found. This would require an act of creation — producing something out of nothing. These “sources” have never been shown to exist in any place except the heated imagination of critics hostile to the claims of Christ and the Scriptures.

Eight languages are represented among the scrolls and fragments found in the caves along the Dead Sea area: Biblical Hebrew; Mishnaic Hebrew, Palestinian Aramaic, Nabatean, Palestinian-Christian Aramaic, Greek, Latin, and Arabic. Milik is cited by Burrows, More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls (p. 183), as affirming that the last five of these languages are seen only in the texts of Khirbet Mird from the Byzantine Period. Burrows says that the other three may be reduced to two, Hebrew and Aramaic, which were used together in the Qumran community and also by the Bar Cochebas revolutionaries of the second century a.d. as shown by their manuscripts from Wady Murabbaat. He says that while Aramaic had been the language generally spoken by the Jews in Palestine for some two or three centuries, Hebrew was remembered and, in the religious enthusiasm of the Maccabean revolt in the second century b.c., it had been brought into more general use, especially in the case of documents of a formal or official nature.

Burrows’ Conclusions

Burrows affirms that, excluding the Biblical manuscripts and those written in Aramaic, the majority of the Qumran texts are written in “what has been called a neo-classical Hebrew. The writers tried to use a biblical style, imitating especially the Deuteronomic writings, but they did not realize how much their language differed from that of their models.” The famous copper scroll, however, “is written in Mishnaic Hebrew, the dialect of the rabbis whose sayings are recorded in the Mishnah” (Burrows, More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls, pp. 183, 184). The Aramaic texts of the Qumran and Murabbaat caves are said by Burrows to fill a great gap in the sources for our knowledge of

Palestinian Aramaic in the Greek and Roman periods. He cites brief inscriptions, especially those of the Palmyrenes and Nabateans, as the only previously known Aramaic texts from that period. We had examples of the literary Aramaic of the Persian and Greek periods in the books of Ezra and Daniel and from papyrus documents found in Egypt, “but the common spoken Aramaic of the Roman period in Palestine had no direct attestation.” (More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls, p. 184).

Wild Theories

Seldom has there been seen such a wild jamboree of fantastic theories and conflicting suppositions and conclusions as has been caused by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The guesses as to character and convictions of the community at Qumran run the full gamut of the extremes from Essenes to Zealots. Radical critics have seized every straw and attempted to convert it into a weapon to be used against the New Testament. When a teacher is mentioned in the scrolls, (what community does not have a teacher?), the weird assertion is made by the critics that here is the teacher from whom Jesus of Nazareth learned the wisdom which has enthralled mankind for two thousand years! Artificial pools have been unearthed at Qumran (what people can be found who do not need water for drinking, cooking, and washing?) and forthwith the excited imagination of those who would deny the divine origin of the Gospel attempt to picture not ceremonial cleansings of the Old Testament, but an imagined “baptism” from which we are told John the Baptist copied his ordinance, while claiming it was directly inspired of God. In the swirl of radical theories there is no general agreement among the critics as every man’s hand appears raised against his neighbor. Until the dust settles over such fantastic theorizing, one can hardly expect the more sober work of a detailed nature on the vocabulary and syntax of the Aramaic documents. This whole field of inquiry has been vastly stimulated, and a great amount of work is sure to be devoted by the experts to the Aramaic texts recovered from the Dead Sea caves. Professor Burrows has steadily resisted the fantastic theories of dependence of Christian origins upon the sect which stored the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Professor Burrows does attempt to relate the Dead Sea Scrolls to various radical theories about the contents of Daniel and declares that the discovery of these fragments and documents will have no importance for those who believe that the book of Daniel is history (More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls, p. 169). This greatly underestimates the interest in scholarly research among men of faith. It is not necessary that a man should hold that Daniel is a concoction of myths and fables by an anonymous forger who tried to pretend he was Daniel in order for these Dead Sea Scrolls to excite profound interest. The very fact that a Christian believes that the books of the Bible are divinely inspired documents should give him the most vital interest in every possible discovery which will help in the recovery of the inspired originals. Professor Burrows sets forth in sober fashion the slow, tedious task of deciphering and translating the scrolls and fragments and of adding up the various minute details of Palestinian Aramaic of the first century and the profit which we may expect to accrue for our understanding of the New Testament.

Aside from interest in the technical details, the man of faith gives an enormous importance to the admissions of radical scholars that these fragments of Daniel found in the Dead Sea caves actually date back to within fifty years of the time of the composition of their supposed “late Daniel” (More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls, p. 35). This comes so close to the complete collapse of their entire radical theory about Daniel that it is of the utmost importance.

Claims of Lamsa

Some of the points raised in interpretation of the Gospel accounts out of the Aramaic background have been broadcast in syndicated news articles. G. M. Lamsa, a scholar of Syria, has recently gained much publicity through his bizarre writings on this theme. He claims that the Gospels were all written originally in Aramaic, and that the Peshitta-Syriac manuscript was an early Aramaic document and not a translation from the Greek. He claims that the Aramaic of Christ's time with only slight changes is still spoken by Assyrians and Chaldeans and is used in liturgy by Syrians of the Maronite and Jacobite sects. These constitute nearly one-half million people who live not far from Galilee.

Black discusses this type of Aramaic. He says: "Friedrick Schulthess found in Christian Palestinian Syriac the Aramaic dialect most closely akin to the Aramaic of the Gospels, and in this he had the support of two Cambridge scholars, Agnes Smith Lewis and Margaret Dunlap Gibson" (The Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts (1954)) p. 16).

Torrey also makes mention of this dialect. "The Old Syriac (Lewis) Gospels can occasionally give a suggestion here, for there is evidence that they were translated by Palestinian Christians who had migrated, or fled, to the neighborhood of Antioch. Very many traces of their native dialect appear in the Syriac; which, however, rarely has any great value for critical purposes" (Torrey in Kepler, The Four Gospels; A New Translation (1933), p. 56). Lamsa even claims that no traces of Greeks, or Greek language, literature, or culture are to be found in Syria, Palestine, or Mesopotamia! This last is such a complete contradiction of the actual discoveries of archaeologists, especially in the Trans-Jordan area and of the ruins of Graeco-Roman civilization which have been familiar to all travelers in this section for ages, that it hardly needs refutation. Lamsa argues for the New Testament's being written originally in Aramaic on the basis that an Aramaic speaking people would not write their sacred literature in a foreign language which was not known in these parts and would not have been understood. A curious monstrosity this, with that inscription in Greek at the top of the cross of Christ staring Lamsa in the face. Not only was the country of Palestine bilingual and the New Testament written in Greek from the Christian side, but from the Jewish side, here are the writings of Philo and Josephus. The books of the Apocrypha also were nearly all written in Greek.

Both Torrey and Black cite the fact that Josephus first wrote his works in his native Aramaic for his own people and then published them abroad to the Roman world in Greek. While this would offer some support to Papias' statement that Matthew first wrote his Gospel in Aramaic (with the implication that Matthew then published his work in Greek), it would not match the radical theory of copying from Aramaic sources which the Gospel writers misunderstood and mistranslated. For any wide reading Josephus had to publish his works in Greek. The church became world-wide in scope and encompassed both Jews and Gentiles very early. Its objective from the beginning was the winning of all the world. The Greek language was the necessary vehicle.

Over all the civilized world Greek was the universal language. Lamsa's argument presupposes that the New Testament was written for circulation in Palestine and that Greek was unknown in Palestine. Both assumptions are in self-evident contradiction to the known facts. Lamsa argues further that Christianity was firmly established in Palestine before Greeks and other non-Semites adopted this religion. It is true that a great church was established first in Jerusalem, but even a

child’s knowledge of the book of Acts would give the rebuttal as to how soon the church was scattered abroad and began to preach to the Gentiles. No books of the New Testament were written until Christianity began to reach far out into the Graeco-Roman world, with the possible exception of the Epistle of James. Lamsa reluctantly admits that Paul did travel in Greece and Italy, but claims that even here he usually spoke in the Jewish synagogues and that the work among the Gentiles followed later. But even a tyro in the study of Acts knows that the work among the Gentiles followed immediately after his preaching and rejection in the synagogue in each city: he did not cover the Roman world preaching to Jews and then start over the same Roman world preaching to Gentiles; the work among both was carried on in each city before he went to the next.

Lamsa even goes to the extreme of arguing that Paul wrote his letters to churches in Greece and Rome in the Aramaic language, using the illustration that an American Presbyterian missionary would today write to churches in India in English, not in the languages of India. This illustration, which might or might not be true according to the purposes and situation of the writer and readers, completely contradicts his absurd arguments, for Greek was the universal language and Aramaic the language of a section, just as English is world-wide and the languages of India local. He admits that Paul may have been able to converse in Greek, but would not have been able to write in Greek and claims that his defenses in Jerusalem and Caesarea were made in Aramaic because he could in this language best express himself to be understood. The assertion that Paul’s defenses at Caesarea were made in Aramaic is entirely without foundation and contradictory to the whole circumstances of a prisoner, who was such a master of Greek that he could address most eloquently in Greek the very elite of Athens itself from Mars Hill — such a prisoner being tried in a Roman court where Greek and Latin prevailed and having to use his native Aramaic! The reason for Paul’s use of Aramaic in addressing the mob in Jerusalem is made apparent in Acts 22:2. It was not because Paul was illiterate and not able to use the universal language, but he desired to overcome the Jewish prejudice of the mob, to get them to hear him, and to make sure even the uneducated understood. Lamsa further claims that the New Testament is full of Aramaic idioms and style of speech.

Review of His Position The whole line of argument Lamsa advances is so manifestly contrary to the facts that it would hardly deserve any reply were it not for the fact that his writings have been widely publicized in the newspapers of America, and a great many people have been set to talking about the Aramaic background and the marvelous new light which is being thrown on the New Testament from the Aramaic Just what light has been thrown on the New Testament? When Lamsa tries to show Aramaic idioms which he thinks he sees in the Greek New Testament just what does he cite? One of the points he emphasized particularly was that the mastery of Aramaic which he possessed had given him insight into the idiom which made so difficult the passage about the saving of a rich man being as difficult as a camel’s going through a needle’s eye. He said the Aramaic idiom showed that the original word here was not camelos (camel), but camilos (cable). This immediately raises the suspicion that instead of Lamsa’s being indebted to any mysterious mastery of Aramaic for this suggestion, he simply saw that in the Greek text of Matthew 19:24 and of Luke 18:25 there is a variant reading in some manuscripts which carry the Greek word camilos instead of camelos, and seeing the variation, emitted the wild guess that this may have come from an Aramaic background. A study of the passages will show that not one single early or important manuscript carries this reading (camilos) and that the few late

manuscripts which do carry this variation are so unimportant they are not even listed for this passage in any ordinary critical apparatus of a Greek New Testament. Furthermore, this confirms the suspicion that Lamsa does not know too much about the interpretation of the New Testament and that the people who are rushing off to follow him are proceeding down a blind alley. For when Lamsa arbitrarily announced that the original reading of the passage was a cable through the eye of a needle (which is quite possible for man) and not a camel through the eye of a needle, then he missed the very point of the passage for Jesus said he was talking of something which was impossible for man, but possible for God. The very extreme character of the illustration enforced the impact of the passage. The faux-pas to be anticipated was reached when Lamsa finally published a syndicated article in American newspapers announcing his marvelous discovery from the Aramaic background that the original text did not really affirm that Jonah was swallowed by a whale, but that “he had the whale of a time”! Not even the fact the book of Jonah was written in Hebrew seemed to deter him from his attempt to rewrite the narrative in this fantastic manner.

Professor Moore onMatthew 28:1 A much more sober character is seen in the declaration of Professor George Foote Moore of Harvard that the reason for the difficulty in rendering the first verse of Matthew 28:1-20 is that an Aramaic idiom lies back of it, an idiom which meant very early on the first day of the week after the passing of the Sabbath day. When, however, it is seen that the Greek word opse can be translated “after” as well as “late,” the difficulty of the translation disappears, and with it the necessity for referring to a hidden, possible Aramaic background.

Wellhaasen on “Son of Man” The extremely radical efforts of Wellhausen to argue from the content of the Aramaic phrase “Son of man” that it meant merely “man” and did not mean Messiah and was not so used by Jesus or so understood by the people, give further illustration to the intemperate efforts of critics to use the Aramaic background against the plain meaning of the Greek text. A study of the Old Testament shows that the title “Son of man” is used both in the Psalms and in Ezekiel to mean merely “man,” but a new content was put into the title even before the close of the Old Testament, when Daniel began to predict the Messianic glory of the day in which the Son of man would come on the clouds of heaven to judge the world. Jesus further strengthened and clarified this application of the title to the Messiah, quoting this passage from Daniel before the high priest at the time of His trial and using the title constantly in His teaching in such a way that no one could deny that He used the title as meaning the Messiah and as referring to Himself — at least no one except one whose prejudice led him to tear the Gospel narratives to shreds in order to maintain his skeptical theory. No appeal to a hazy Aramaic background can afford sufficient smoke screen for such an attack on the New Testament and upon Jesus.

Petros and Petra A most interesting point of interpretation has been raised in regard to the meaning of Matthew 16:18 in the light of its probable Aramaic background. There is general agreement that Jesus spoke Aramaic on such occasions as this when He was teaching His disciples in private. Not even the strongest advocates of the theory that He preached in Greek would extend the claim to such ordinary occasions as private instruction of His disciples. Since Jesus was speaking in Aramaic and the conversation is reported to us in Greek by Matthew, what are we to conclude about the assurance of any argument based on the difference in gender between petros and petra? The Roman Catholics have always insisted that Jesus named Peter as the foundation of the church; the Protestants have pointed out, among many other things, the fact that different words are used here in the Greek — “Thou art Petros (masculine gender), and upon

this petra (feminine gender).” Petros is a stone — a piece broken off of a great mass of rock. The use of the word in classical literature shows it can mean a pebble such as was thrown in a sling-shot or it can mean a stone set up as a boundary line. Petra means a vast mass of virgin rock.

Certain radical scholars have arisen among the Protestants who say that the Roman Catholic interpretation is correct and attempt to explain away the difference in the Greek words on the basis of the Aramaic background. It should be remembered that the interpretation of the passage does not rest merely upon this discussion, for Peter on the day of Pentecost and in the following sermons did not announce himself as the foundation of the church, but referred his hearer to the Stone which the builders had rejected, even Jesus. A multitude of passages confirm the proposition that the Greek word petros points to the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. “Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11). There is undoubtedly a play on the Greek words Petros and petra, but there is also a difference in the words used. Peter cannot be taken out of the passage, but he cannot be made the foundation of the church.

Hellenized Names The Interpreter’s Bible says: “In Aramaic there would be no separate form to indicate the masculine gender: ‘You are Kepha, and on this Kepha I will build’” (Vol. VII, p. 451). Such a dogmatic declaration as this needs to be placed alongside the repeated admissions that practically no remains of Palestinian Aramaic of this period are extant. As in the attempts of radical scholar to charge the Gospel writers with mistakes in translating supposed Aramaic documents, so here there is the charge that Matthew made a mistake in reporting what Jesus said. The Interpreter’s Bible declares: “It is more than likely that the present form of the sentence, and much of the whole passage, has been changed and colored by the author of the Gospel in his understandable and not unworthy purpose to exalt the leadership of Peter” (The Interpreter’s Bible Vol. VII., p. 450). In other words, it is a deliberate falsification of what Jesus said.

Inasmuch as Palestine was bilingual in the first century, the language must have been in a state of flux. The earliest and readiest infiltration of one language into another is in the formation of proper names. The varied spelling of proper names from the Hebrew into the Greek illustrates not merely necessary changes because of difference in alphabets, but also deliberate changes in coined words with varied meaning. John 1:42 shows that Jesus gave Peter the name Kephas (not Kepha). Thus the same difference seen in Matthew’s report (Petros and Petra) was in the Aramaic (Kephas and Kepha). It is probable that Kephas is a Hellenized form of the Aramaic Kepha. Jesus could readily have coined such a name with the shade of meaning which He stated it should carry. Simon Peter’s brother, Andrew, already had a Greek name, as did Philip. The Interpreter’s Bible, itself, says of the name Thomas: “the name may be a Hellenized form of the Aramaic word for twin” (The Interpreter’s Bible, Vol VII, p. 364). It also suggests that “Cananaean” and “Kerioth” may be the Greek for particular Aramaic equivalents.

Positions of Ryder and Allen A brief but clear statement of the radical position on the Aramaic background of this passage comes from Professor Ryder of Andover Seminary: “No stress can be laid on the change in gender. Christ spoke Aramaic as ‘Bar Jonah’ helps to show. In Greek you could not have petra in both cases for Peter was a man. Nor could you have petros because the meaning rock rather than stone was required. The Aramaic would have used Kepha in both places

and it means either rock or stone “All efforts to explain the rock in any other way than as referring to Peter have ignominiously failed.” The English scholar, W. H. Allen of Oxford University, in the International Critical Commentary on Matthew does not discuss the problem of the Aramaic background of the passage except to remark: “There is no difficulty in supposing that Christ used some Aramaic phrase or word which would signify the community or society of His disciples, knit together by their belief in His divine Sonship, and pledged to the work of propagating His teaching” (p. 176). On the interpretation of the passage he affirms vigorously: “The petra is equivalent to the object of apekalupse (did reveal) in John 1:17 ‘Flesh and blood did not reveal it,’ i.e., the Messiahship and divine Sonship of Christ. ‘Upon this rock of revealed truth I will build my church.’ The play upon Petros and petra means, ‘You have given expression to a revealed truth, and your name Petros suggests a metaphorical name for it. It shall be the petra or rock upon which the church shall stand. In other words, it shall be the center of the Church’s teaching.”

Kephas and Kepha

Ryder claims that the Aramaic would have used Kepha in both places, but we find that Bernard in his International Critical Commentary on John, Vol 2, p. 20, discusses the fact that the equivalent of Petros in the Aramaic is Kephas as may be seen in the clear declaration of John 1:42, “Thou art Simon the son of John, thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation Peter)” and 1 Corinthians 1:12; 1 Corinthians 3:22. Moffatt in his Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament gives the Aramaic word for petra as Kepha (p 252). The Sayings of the Jewish Fathers, by Taylor, and a work by Bruston are also cited. Although Moffatt’s discussion is full of his wild attempt to cast doubt upon the historical value of Matthew 16:17-20 and to argue that it is a development of a rabbinical saying, the fact is incidentally brought Out that the Aramaic word for petra was kepha.

Bernard offers an interesting observation that the Aramaic for Cephas and Caiaphas may have been the same: “The Aramaic name Kephas (perhaps the same as Kaiaphas) is familiar in Paul who uses it to designate Simon” (Commentary on John, p. 60). The fact that we have such very scant remains of Aramaic of the period shows itself in various opinions of scholars like this and limits the force of any conclusions based upon such slight evidence. The gap is quite significant between Ryder’s assurance of the exact form of the Aramaic and Bernard’s suggestion that Kephas may have been the same as Kaiaphas in Aramaic The same difference of opinion shows itself in Diessmann’s positive assertion of the Aramaic word back of Boanerges (Bible Studies, p. 162, 163) and the declaration of Bernard (Commentary on John) that we cannot be sure what the Aramaic was back of Boanerges. Of further interest is the statement in Hasting’s Dictionary of the Bible (p 256) following a summary of the uses of the Hebrew word for “rock” or “stone” in the Targums, Talmud, and Midrashim: “There seems to be no evidence that the word (Cephas) was in any other case used as a name; it has no connection with the name Caiaphas (Nestle in Expository Times X. p. 185).” Again the scholars are in disagreement and the obscure character of the evidence is emphasized. The question naturally rises out of such disagreement among the scholars who have spent the most time studying the remains of Aramaic Does the slight evidence in our possession as to the form and meaning of Aramaic words which Jesus actually used justify such dogmatic assertions as Ryder makes, especially in the light of the fact that one of the words was a proper name which Jesus might have coined for the occasion? Since we have no clear evidence that the word Kephas was used in any other case as the name of an individual, this

question becomes all the more pertinent.

Matthew's Discrimination in Words In contrast with this obscurity and confusion of opinions as to the probable nature of the Aramaic background of the statement Jesus made to Peter at Caesarea Philippi, there is the plain, clear statement of the Gospel of Matthew with its discrimination between the Greek words Petros and petra Why did he make such a distinction? Ryder says he had to use Petros (masculine gender), for Peter was a man Granted. But just analyze Ryder's next statement that Matthew could not have used Petros in both cases "because the meaning rock rather than stone was required." To probe this statement is to cause his whole argument in regard to the Greek to crash, for he admits that a different meaning was required to express the idea of Christ. Why not use Petro (dative case) instead of petra ("on this rock") when He talked about the foundation of the church? Because a mere "stone" would not be a suitable word to describe the foundation of a building; it needed the word "rock" suggesting a larger mass? This is partly true, but in a much deeper and larger sense, a word which was the name of a mere man, would not be suitable for the foundation of the church of the Living God which was to be founded upon Christ Jesus, the Lord. The fact remains that Petros might have been used in both cases if Jesus had wanted to say that Peter was to be the foundation of the church. Whether the figure would have been entirely appropriate becomes a matter of little moment, for under such a usage from Jesus, the word Petros would have taken on a new and larger significance, even as the whole New Testament would have to be rewritten to give Peter a vastly different place as the foundation of the church. The Solid Foundation of the Gospel The solid ground on which we stand is that Matthew heard what Jesus said and was divinely inspired to report to us what Jesus said. Even if he had not been present or if Mark or Luke, who were not present, had been the one to report this conversation, we should still have the same solid foundation of inspiration promised by Christ and proved by the miracles of the apostles. The question as to the exact form of the Aramaic words used remains entirely secondary and of relative unimportance. Matthew heard, knew, and reported that there was a shading of meaning in this play on words which used a similar word and yet a different word. Even if the Aramaic words had not yet shown this different shade of meaning, the very pronunciation of the words, the emphasis with which they were uttered, or a significant gesture could have made it perfectly clear to the apostles that He was introducing a figure suggested by Peter's name and his wonderful, ringing confession of his faith, but that in this figure He made clear the foundation was not to be any mere man, it was to be the sublime truth which had been uttered — a truth, which when examined, finds us looking at Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God as the true and only Foundation of the church. As in so many investigations which the zeal or animus of scholars has initiated, we find that we return from a brief survey of the field of the Aramaic background with a deeper respect for the unique character of the New Testament. We have a stronger realization that the entire gospel of Christ rests upon His divine character and that the reliability and inspiration of the New Testament become more assured with every new investigation.

137. Appendix 2 Chronological Outline of the Life of Christ

Appendix 2 Chronological Outline of the Life of Christ A Study of the Four Gospel Records to Ascertain the Sequence of Events in the Life of Our Lord

It is not an easy matter, to arrange the events of Jesus' ministry in the order in which they occurred. This is because each of the four Gospel narratives was written independently: each records a great many incidents not reported by the others; none declares or makes clear that he is reporting all the incidents in the exact order of time. Luke declares that he has written "in orderly fashion" (Luke 1:3), but this does not absolutely bind him to a chronological order. To arrange biographical material in a topical fashion, grouping sermons and then miracles together, is as legitimate a biographical method as to present every detail in the order of time. Matthew uses this topical method, as is quite evident from a careful comparison of the four accounts. John gives us more chronological notes than any of the writers, although none of them attempts a strict biography. The four evangelists were not writing an exhaustive life of Christ: they were telling the gospel — "the good news" from heaven — portraying the most stirring, tragic, momentous account ever given to man. The narration is not hobbled by tiresome and methodical citation of dates. When we come to the closing week of Jesus' ministry, we can he pretty sure about the order of events, although even here we face difficulties as to when the anointing by Mary occurred or as to whether Judas was present at the Lord's Supper or whether he left the fellowship of our Lord and the apostles before the Lord's Supper was instituted.

Attempting to outline each event of the entire ministry forces us at times to make a purely conjectural, not to say arbitrary, choice. It is, however, a task worth the effort, for it helps to give us a view of all the details recorded by all four writers. A chart and outline are presented in this essay, and constant reference to these will assist in clarifying the problems discussed.

Although nearly every Bible student would readily declare that the ministry of Jesus lasted three and one-half years, not many would be able to offer data to prove this assertion. In fact, it can not be absolutely proved. It is not a matter of vital importance to Christian faith, else dates and figures would have swarmed through the narratives. A glance at the chart will show that the vital proof is to be found in the brief, incidental notations of various feasts in the Gospel of John. Counting four Passovers makes plain the passing of three years of Jesus' ministry, and only the time which followed the last Passover and preceded the first in His ministry needs to be added. The Passover came in the spring — about April — and the mention of these Passover feasts not only enables us to estimate the length of Jesus' ministry, but it makes clear the season of the year when many of the important events occurred. The only questionable feature of this evidence is the second Passover (John 5:1), which is called simply "a feast" (many manuscripts have the reading "the feast," which would immediately mean the Passover). A study of the narrative, however, shows that it was December when Jesus talked with the Samaritan woman, and the extent of the account of events recorded before and after the feast mentioned in John 5:1 leads us to conclude it was the Passover. The only other feast it could have been is Purim, which came in February, was not

commanded in the Old Testament, was a hilarious affair like our Halloween, and would not have afforded a suitable atmosphere for a campaign in Jerusalem. The fact that the length of time between the resurrection and the ascension is not stated in the Gospel accounts is another indication of how the writers concentrated on the dramatic relation of the divine story of the cross rather than a meticulous recitation of dates and figures. In the Book of Acts, Luke declares incidentally that Jesus appeared to His disciples after the resurrection “by the space of forty days.” Thus we have forty-three days included after the final Passover. Those who would make much of “sacred numbers” might emphasize the fact that forty days of the temptation and the three days noted in the winning of the first disciples by the Jordan (John 2:1) present a striking parallel of forty-three days at the start of Jesus’ ministry, but the period of time preceding the first Passover is much longer than that, as is indicated by the wedding feast at Cana, the change of residence from Nazareth to Capernaum and the statement that Jesus abode at Capernaum “not many days,” with the account of the first Passover immediately following. Thus it is impossible to tell exactly how much more than three years is included in Jesus’ ministry. It is usually estimated at about three years and six months. Where only one evangelist records a long series of events, as is notably true in nine chapters of Luke and in much of John, there is no problem as to how these events are to be arranged in order of time, since we have no further information concerning them. Nevertheless there is, even here, the problem as to how these events are to be fitted into the framework of a chronological narrative. This “new material” in Luke is found in chapters 9-18. Notice in the outline how events recorded only by John have to be arranged into a chronological record of this period of Jesus’ ministry.

Sometimes two of the writers record what appears to he the same event in an entirely different period of Jesus’ ministry, Since none of the writers declare that they are offering an account arranged in order of time, there is not the slightest basis for any charge of inaccuracy against the evangelists. When we attempt to make such an arrangement, however, such differences prove perplexing obstacles and compel one in the end to confess that his arrangement is, in certain particulars, purely tentative.

Various attempts have been made through the centuries to furnish a harmony of the Gospel narratives, and they will all he found to differ in some respects. These efforts reach clear back to the second century, when Tatian published in Syriac his Diatessaron (“by four” — the attempt to give a unified record of the life of Christ by combining the four accounts). It will not be possible within the brief compass of this essay to defend the particular arrangement made of the events which are hard to place. One or two illustrations will suggest the nature of the difficulties.

Luke alone offers an introductory statement, and this must he placed first. John is the only one who discusses the pre-existence of Jesus in a lengthy discussion, and this naturally follows. Matthew opens with his genealogy of Christ. Luke places his genealogy hater at the opening of Jesus’ ministry. Either arrangement is appropriate and it is purely a matter of taste as to whether a harmony should move the genealogy of Luke forward to parallel the account of Matthew concerning the birth of Jesus, or vice versa. The historical material which Luke offers then proceeds readily until we face the problem of fitting the visit of the Wise-men into the narrative. Since the flight into Egypt succeeded immediately the arrival of the Wise-men, such events as the presentation in the temple, recorded by Luke, must have preceded it. A careful study of the details thoroughly confirms his choice. As one moves over into the opening of Jesus’ ministry, we find

John our sole source of information, with a steady sequence of events; while in comparing the accounts of the Galilean ministry, it becomes apparent that Mark and Luke are proceeding in what amounts to a chronological arrangement, which is in a quite different order from the topical arrangement of material in Matthew. When this is seen, then the choice of placing the eleventh chapter of Matthew before the tenth chapter in order of time is not so difficult as one studies the sequence of events at this point offered by Luke and also discerns that Matthew 11:1 belongs with Matthew 10:1-42 and that Matthew 11:2 begins a separate account not asserted to have occurred at this particular time. This does not necessarily mean, however, that Luke's recording of events is necessarily chronological or to be followed at all times rather than that of Matthew.

One of the most difficult choices is that of placing in time the conversation of Jesus with the men who offered to follow Him, but were warned that "the Son of man hath no place to lay his head"; "let the dead bury their own dead"; "No man having put his hand to the plow Both Matthew and Luke record this incident; each offers the record in a very appropriate setting: Matthew, early in the Galilean ministry, just before the stilling of the tempest; Luke, very much later as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem through Samaria. Most of the harmonies follow the order of Luke here, but in the outline offered in this essay. the event is placed as in Matthew. It is a hard choice to make, but it is a significant fact that Luke begins at this point the narration of nine chapters of new material in his Gospel and he may have introduced this event here out of order of time so as to include it at the opening of these chapters. A similarly difficult and very famous problem is offered when we attempt to decide whether Judas was driven from the upper room before the Lord's Supper was instituted. Matthew and Mark record the events in this order; Luke does not tell how Jesus drove Judas out, but he introduces a general statement of the warning which Jesus issued in the upper room concerning the traitor, and he introduces it at the close of the record of the Lord's Supper. Only in case a person has determined that the order of Luke is chronological at every point does he feel that Luke means to say that Judas was present at the supper. The account of the quarrel among the disciples, which Luke next introduces incidentally as another exciting feature of the experience in the upper room, is shown by John's account to have occurred early in the evening and before the revelation of Judas' treachery. For these reasons it seems best to follow the order of Matthew and Mark at this point.

Such questions, however, are hard to decide and our decisions should plainly be held as tentative conclusions. in spite of such occasional difficulties, the main current of the events in Jesus' ministry is clear, and a study of such an arrangement of the narratives throws much light upon the life of Christ.

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