

vol. 4

Bible Studies

The Interwoven Gospels

by

Robertson L. Whiteside

Bible Studies
Volume 4

By
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Arranged
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Published by
MISS INYS WHITESIDE
1103 Bernard Street
Denton, Texas 76201

Other Books by
this able educator and author
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It was my purpose in arranging selections from my papa's Sunday school lessons to tell a continuous story of the life, miracles, and teaching of the man Christ Jesus: establishing proof of his deity; confirming him as the "Only Begotten Son of God"; The Messiah promised to the Jews; The Lamb of God; the world's Redeemer.

Came from Glory and returned to Glory.



R. L. WHITESIDE

DEDICATION

This Series of Books is Prayerfully dedicated to my Papa, "Rob," who early dedicated his life to God's Service and to my Mama "Ruth" whose life so wonderfully complimented his.

—Inys

INTRODUCTION

In years past the schedule of the International Sunday School Association was followed in preparing the Bible Study lessons used extensively by the churches. These studies appeared in the form of quarterlies and annual books.

For the years 1928, 1929, and 1930 my papa, R. L. Whiteside, prepared the subject matter for the "Adult Quarterly" of the Firm Foundation Publishing House.

In the year 1931 he became a staff writer for the Gospel Advocate and wrote a weekly article under the heading "Doctrinal Discourses." In addition to the writing of this page he became the editor for the Gospel Advocate "Adult Quarterly." And for the years 1933, 1934, 1935, and 1936 he prepared the material for these lesson books. Beginning with the year 1937 he began as the editor of the "Teachers Annual Commentary." For the years 1937-1944 he prepared the subject matter for these books.

In response to the many requests I have received over the years, since I began the publication of my papa's writings I am now making available for the present reading public, the Bible Studies that appeared in these previous forms; with a new format.

It is my considered opinion that the arrangement of the scriptures used by the International Committee in consecutive order by books, together with the connecting Lesson Links, will make these Bible Study Books of invaluable help in coming to a greater knowledge of God and of his wisdom in dealing with man. See the unfolding of his "Eternal Purpose" — the redemption of man by "The Man Christ Jesus."

I had thought there would be four volumes, but it grew to six.

-INYS WHITESIDE

LESSON LINKS

One thing that people are slow to learn—a thing that they must learn to correctly understand the Bible—is that the whole Jewish economy ended at the cross of Christ, and a new order became effective. Long before the coming of Christ it was written: "Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith Jehovah. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith Jehovah: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah; for they shall know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more." (Jer. 31:31-34.) To see that this new covenant became of force after Christ died, read Heb. 8:9, 11-16; 10:9, 10. The ten commandments were a part of that old covenant which was taken away. (See also 2 Cor. 3:4-18; Eph. 2:14-18; Col. 2:8-15.) The authority of this new covenant is vested in Christ. Said he, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." (Matt. 28:18.) "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." (Col. 1:18.) When God raised him from the dead, he "made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. 1:20-23.) Hence we are to hear him, and none else. At the transfiguration, as Moses and Elijah significantly left the scene, God said, "This is my beloved Son, in

whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." (Matt. 17:1-5.)

John 1

LESSON LINKS

This lesson goes back to a point before time was, it sets forth the deity of Christ Jesus. John put much stress on the previous existence of Christ, and therefore on his divine nature. Jesus taught and performed miracles to convince the people of the truth which John sets forth. John declares that he wrote for that same purpose. (See John 20:30, 31.)

1, 2. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.

1, 2. John's first words are also the first words in Genesis—"In the beginning." John affirms the deity of Jesus and his presence with the Father before time was. He was not simply a mere spoken word—not a mere idea, but a person. In the beginning he was with God, "and the Word was God." This does not mean that he was the Father; it affirms as to his nature. His nature was neither angelic, nor human, but God. That Jesus existed as a divine being before the world was created is also proved by a petition in his prayer on the night of his betrayal: "And now, Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." (John 17:5.)

3-5. All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehendeth it not.

3-5. "All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made." Paul also says, "For in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon

the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto him; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist." (Col. 1:16,17.) From Heb. 1:1, 2, we learn that God created the worlds through his Son. The Father planned; the Son executed the plans. The Son, whom John calls the Word, was the builder. This helps us to understand to whom God was speaking in Genesis, first chapter, when he said, "Let there be light," "Let there be a firmament," and so on; and also the significance of the plural pronoun in the expression, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." With such plain teaching that God made all things through the agency of his Son, one wonders where anyone got the idea that God just spoke things into existence.

Life and Light.—"In him was life." His life was inherent, not derived; he is the source of life. He had and has the power to impart life to others. "I am the resurrection, and the life." (John 11:25.) He is the source of spiritual life here and in the world to come; but the expression, "In him was life," seems here to refer to the life which he imparted to created beings. It is certain that nothing originated its own life. From the life in him comes all light. "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12.) "And the light shineth in the darkness." Light dispells darkness; yet a person may shut himself off even from the light of the sun; and so may he shut himself off from the light that comes from Jesus. Ignorance is darkness, and there is such a thing as willful ignorance. Sin is darkness. The world was in darkness when Jesus came, "and the darkness apprehended it not," did not seize the light he brought. They were steeped in sin and ignorance and rejected the light for "men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil." Such people harden their hearts, stop their ears, and close their eyes, because they do not want to turn from their sins and be healed. (Matt. 13:15.) A man sins against himself and all people over whom he has an influence, when he closes his eyes against the light of the Lord.

6-9. There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light. There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world.

6-9. In announcing to the aged Zacharias that Elizabeth, his aged wife, would bear him a son, the angel Gabriel said. "And thou shalt call his name John." (Luke 1:8-20.) Later after John began to baptize people, he was called John the Baptist. The prophet Isaiah had said, "The voice of one that crieth, Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah; make level in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the uneven shall be made level, and the rough places a plain." (Isa. 40:3, 4.) Matthew, Mark, and Luke quote this prophecy as having its fulfillment in John the Baptist. He prepared the people for Christ by leading them to forsake sin and be baptized; and then he introduced Christ to the people by pointing him out to them. On the morrow after John was questioned by a delegation of Pharisees, "he seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man who is become before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not; but that he was made manifest to Israel, for this cause came I baptizing in water. And John bare witness, saying, I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven and abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize in water, he said unto me. Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon him, the same is he that baptizeth in the Holy Spirit. And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." (John 1:29-34.) Jesus the Christ is the light of the world. His disciples are the light of the world in the sense that they teach his word and live it before men. Jesus is the source of all spiritual light. "There is the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world." Johnson says, "Grammatically, both in the Greek and the English, coming may belong to the light, or every man. We

believe it should agree with light." As John was speaking about Jesus as the light coming into the world, and not man's coming, it seems Johnson's idea is correct. This agrees with the marginal reading: "The true light, which lighteth every man, was coming into the world." And Jesus himself, says, "I am come a light into the world, and whosoever believeth on me may not abide in darkness." (John 12:46.)

10-13. 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. But as many as received him. to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

10-13. Jesus was a stranger in the world which he made. The world knew him not, and even now does not know him. "He came unto his own (Greek, and his own things), and they that were his own (people) received him not." The whole world was his by creation. Perhaps no scripture has been more generally misapplied than verses 11-13. When John wrote these verses, the Old Covenant had been long ago abolished, Jesus had been crowned king, and the gospel of salvation had been preached in all the world. The people generally had rejected him. "But as many as received him (three thousand received him on Pentecost and many thousands thereafter) to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name." Notice the present tense—believe, not believed. John was speaking of a present truth, not of a past fact. The mission of Jesus embraced the whole world. "Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." (1 Tim. 1:15.) The Gentiles as well as the Jews. And as many as obeyed the gospel were born again. The Jews depended on their Jewish blood, but under the gospel that does not make one a child of God. In Christ Jesus we are sons of God. "For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ." (Gal. 3:26, 27.)

14-18. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth.

John beareth witness of him, and crieth, saying, This was he of whom I said, He that cometh after me is become before me: for he was before me. For of his fulness we all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

14-18. "And the word became flesh," that is, took upon himself the nature of man. Deity appeared in a human body. He was the seed of David according to the flesh. (Rom. 1:3.) "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same." (Heb. 2:14.) This Son of God and Son of man dwelt with us. "And we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father." Not only did they see his glory on the mount of transfiguration, but they also saw it in his teaching, character, and mighty works. "This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory." (John 2:11.) It was in his teaching and miracles of mercy that they saw the glory of his mission.

Joint the Baptist's Testimony.—"This was he of whom I said, He that cometh after me is become before me: for he was before me." Here John the Baptist affirms the existence of Jesus before he became flesh; for Jesus was not born before John was, yet he existed before John had an existence. In greatness also Jesus was before John, that is, he was greater than John. Later John said, "He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30.)

Verses 16-18 are the words of John the writer, and not of John the Baptist. "For his fulness we all received." He was not here writing of what "we all received" during the personal ministry of Jesus, but of what all Christians now receive; for no one received the full blessings of Christ till the gospel began to be preached in its fullness. "Grace for grace"—grace upon grace, or grace in abundance. "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." The law given through Moses was for the children of Israel, and by it they were kept as a distinct race, separate from all other people; but it ended at the cross of Christ. (Col. 2:14; Eph. 2:13. 15.) When the law ended, then grace and truth—the full bene-

fits of the gospel—began to be extended to all the world. Grace and truth go together; they cannot be separated. We cannot deny truth, and still claim God's grace. And the only way Christians can lead people into God's grace is to teach them the truth as revealed in the New Testament. It is a fatal error to think you are doing a person a favor by compromising the truth to please him. Truth makes us free; falsehood makes us slaves. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32.) "No man hath seen God," not with bodily eyes as they had seen him in the person of Jesus. He was God manifest in the flesh. "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel; which is being interpreted, God with us." (Matt. 1:23.) Jesus declared, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Hence, both in his teaching and in his person Jesus declared God to the world.

The contents of the book of Matthew show that he had the same purpose in writing that moved John. "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of his 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, 31.) We shall notice how Matthew went about proving this great truth.

To be the Christ, Jesus must have come of the seed of Abraham; for Jehovah had promised Abraham, "In thee and thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 22:18.) He must also be of the seed of David; for so had God promised David. (Ps. 89:3, 4.) To show that Jesus came as it was promised and prophesied that the Christ should come, Matthew gives his genealogy in his first chapter.

To prove that Jesus was the Son of God, Matthew shows that he was born of a virgin, and was begotten of God by the agency of the Holy Spirit.

Some Reflections

We can know that there are three persons in the Godhead,

though we cannot comprehend their nature and unity. The finite cannot understand the infinite.

We can know that Deity united with humanity in the person of Jesus, though we cannot understand just how the two natures were united. But we can believe what the Bible says, and adjust our lives to its teaching. Herein lies our salvation.

Luke 1

1-4. 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 to us, who from the beginning were eye witnesses 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.

1-4. For some years after the gospel began to be preached, inspired men did all their preaching and teaching orally. In the absence of written documents interested disciples would naturally want to make notes of the things they heard from eyewitnesses. What facts they learned from these eyewitnesses, they would try to arrange in narrative form. Luke informs us that many had taken in hand to write narratives of this sort. Luke says nothing against such attempts at writing narratives. That the writings about which Luke speaks were narratives, shows that the writers had undertaken to write histories of the life of Christ. They were writing about "matters which have been fulfilled among us." For "fulfilled," the marginal reading has "fully established," which seems better. The facts concerning the life of Christ had been fully established; there was left no room for a reasonable doubt,

"Having traced the course of all things accurately from the first." As Luke had traced out accurately the life and deeds of Jesus, it seemed good to him to write this account. Inspiration was never meant to encourage mental laziness. Luke had searched diligently to gain all the facts about the life and deeds of Jesus. The Holy Spirit would guide him in writing down

these facts, so as to guarantee his accuracy in reporting his facts. "To write to thee in order." There was likely not much order or system about the narratives to which Luke had referred. There was to be an orderly arrangement in Luke's record. Probably Luke meant that his material would be properly arranged, and not that he would place everything in chronological order.

Luke's Purpose in Writing.—"That thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed." The Greek word from which "know" is translated is intensive—know accurately or assuredly. Of course Luke was not writing for Theophilus alone, but for all who might read his record. He wrote that all who read his record might know assuredly the certainty of the life and deeds of the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet John said. "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of his 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, 31.) One wrote that they might believe; the other that they might know. Is there a difference? When evidence in support of a proposition is so overwhelming and convincing that the matter could not be any other way, we can say that we know. Job said, "I know that my redeemer liveth." There are many passages of the same import. One more: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified." (Acts 2:36.) But faith is different. There may be knowledge where there is no faith. Faith has in it an element of trust. We believe in some men, because we know them—we know them to be worthy of trust; we also know some people in whom we do not believe. Hence, knowledge may promote faith, or it may destroy faith. Knowledge concerning God and the Christ leads to faith in them.

5-7. There was in the days of Herod, king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abijah: and he had a wife of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And

they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.

5-7. "There was in the days of Herod, king of Judaea." This is the Herod that is sometimes called Herod the Great. He was not a Jew, but an Idumean. The Romans had made him king of Judea; hence he was ruler under the Emperor of Rome. He was a man of great ability, as well as of blood-thirsty cruelty. "A certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abijah." For convenience King David divided the priests up into twenty-four courses, with a chief man at the head of each course. (1 Chron. 24.) These courses, or groups, served at the temple by turn. By means of this arrangement, while one course served at the temple, the other courses could be at home. The high priest was, of course, over all these courses. That Zacharias belonged to one of the courses shows that he was not a high priest, though he might have been the head of his course, that is, chief of the course of Abijah. "And he had a wife of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth." Being herself also of a priestly family, Elizabeth would be in full sympathy with Zacharias in his duties as priest. It is a tragedy for a child of God to marry one who is a constant hindrance to him in his efforts to do his duty as a Christian.

"And they were both righteous before God." They met God's approval, that is, in his sight they were righteous. Measured by God's standard they both lived right. "Walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." God's law was their rule of life.

"And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years." In that day it was regarded as a great calamity for married people to have no children.

8-17. Now it came to pass, while he executed the priest's office, . . . his lot was to enter into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. . . . And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. . . . The angel said unto him. Fear not Zacharias: because thy supplication is heard, and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness: and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, . . . and he

shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before his face in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to walk in the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people for the Lord.

8-17. While Zacharias was burning incense in the temple, the angel Gabriel appeared to him. "And Zacharias was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him." Devout men feel their littleness in the presence of a heavenly visitor. In his glorified state Jesus appeared to the apostle John on the isle of Patmos; of this appearance John said, "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead." And who would not have a feeling of dread and awe in the presence of a heavenly visitor? But Gabriel said to Zacharias, "Fear not, Zacharias; because thy supplication is heard, and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John." This shows that Zacharias had prayed for a son. The reader will notice that Gabriel named this promised son John. The angel further told Zacharias that this promised son would be a great reformer, that he would go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah; "to make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him."

18-22. Zacharias said unto the angel. Whereby shall I know this? . . . And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God: and I was sent to speak unto thee—And behold, thou shalt be silent and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall come to pass, because thou believedst not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. And the people were waiting for Zacharias. . . . When he came out he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: and he continued making signs to them, and remained dumb.

18-22. "And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years." Zacharias knew that according to nature there was no hope for a son to be born to him and Elizabeth. God had promised a son, yet Zacharias asked, How do I know that what you say will come to pass? He wanted more evidence than the plain promise of God: and, in that respect, he was very like some people of our time who do not put much stress on the

plain promises of salvation, but want some additional evidence, some evidence that they can feel. Zacharias asked for additional evidence, and received additional evidence in the form of a severe punishment. "And behold, thou shalt be silent and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall come to pass, because thou believedst not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season." Zacharias was a good man, a righteous man; but his confidence in God wavered, and he called on God to give him some additional evidence that his promise would be fulfilled. Zacharias thought God might be deceiving him about the matter. God gave him the additional evidence he called for; evidence, too, that was a punishment to him for his unbelief and a reminder that God was able to control the forces of nature.

"And the people were waiting for Zacharias, and they marvelled while he tarried in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: and he continued making signs unto them, and remained dumb. And it came to pass, when the days of his ministration were fulfilled, he departed unto his house."

LESSON LINKS

Only Matthew and Luke tell anything of the birth and childhood of Jesus, and each of them mentions only a few incidents. It therefore requires some study to place the incidents mentioned in their historic order.

In the sixth month after the angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias, "the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary." (Luke 1:26, 27.) To her the startling announcement was made that she was to be the mother of a Son whose name was to be Jesus. This was before the marriage of Joseph and Mary was consummated. She was to become a mother in a miraculous way. Matt. 1:18-23 says, "Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord

through the prophet saying, Behold the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel; which is being interpreted, God with us." The prophecy is quoted from Isa. 7:14. Mary's attitude toward this revelation to her, "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."

When Mary's condition was discovered, Joseph naturally imagined the worst. For the sin that Joseph supposed she had committed the law required the death penalty. See Deut. 22:23, 24. But Joseph did not want to press matters against her. "And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and being not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily." (Matt. 1:19.) An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit." And Joseph did as commanded.

Mary, the chosen mother of the Son of God, was a good woman, else she never would have been chosen for the exalted position. But to argue that she remained a virgin is to argue against nature and the Bible. She is not called the "Virgin Mary" in the Bible. The thoughtful reader will find it definitely affirmed in Matthew 1:25 that she did not continue in her virginity after Jesus was born. Besides, the brethren of Jesus are referred to in connection with his mother. (Matt. 12:46, 47; Luke 8:19, 20.) The names of his brothers are given in Matthew 13:55, 56, together with the fact that he had sisters. See also John 2:12; 7:3, 5, 10; Acts 1:14. To worship her as the Catholics do is superstition and idolatry. She was a human being, and Deity alone should be the object of our worship. We gladly acknowledge her as a model mother, which she would not have been had she refused to bear other children.

,89, 40. And Mary arose in these days and went into the hill country with haste, into the house of Zacharias and saluted Elisabeth.

39, 40. At this visit Mary gave expression to a hymn of praise that has been universally regarded as a production of the highest merit. Mary remained with Elizabeth about three

months, and then returned to her home.

In the home of Zacharias and Elizabeth, in the presence of Elizabeth, Mary sang this song:

46-49. And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my savior. For he hath looked upon the low estate of his handmaid: For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.

46-49. "My soul doth magnify the Lord." She could not make the Lord any greater, but she could make him great in her own thoughts and in her praise. Every Jew knew that the Messiah was to come of the family of David; and it was natural for every woman of that family to ponder the possibilities of becoming the mother of the Messiah. Now that Mary, a poor young woman of Nazareth, was chosen for that signal honor, her spirit overflowed with joy and gladness. "All generations shall call me blessed." She was greatly blessed in being made the mother of the Messiah, and all generations would so regard her. Mary was a good, modest young woman, and would have felt horrified at the thought of being worshipped.

50-56. And his mercy is unto generations and generations On them that fear him. He hath showed strength with his arm; He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart. He hath put down princes from their thrones. And hath exalted them of low degree. The hungry he hath filled with good things; And the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath given help to Israel his servant. That he might remember mercy (As he spake unto our fathers) Toward Abraham and his seed for ever.

50-56. God's mercy in sending Jesus into the world to save sinners would be extended to generations and generations, but only to those who fear him. "He hath showed strength with his arm." The Lord's arm represents his almighty power. "He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart." The proud Jew expected the Messiah to come in great splendor, and to reign as a mighty prince in earthly glory. He disregarded all such imaginations, and scattered the proud as if they were straw or dust. In his overruling providence God puts down the proud prince, and exalts the lowly. He thus rules in the affairs of men. "The most High God ruleth in the

kingdom of men." (Dan. 5:21.) Perhaps verse 53 refers to spiritual blessings, for it is a fact that Jesus promised that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled. (Matt. 5:6.) The man who feels rich in his own knowledge will never learn the truth. In giving Jesus the Savior, God was giving help to Israel, as he had promised to Abraham and his seed. God had said to Abraham, "In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 22:18.)

Mary had remained with Elizabeth for a period of about three months. The record then says she returned to her house. Likely this means that she returned to her home in Nazareth.

57. Now Elisabeth's time was fulfilled that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.

57. The visit of the angel to Zacharias, his inability to talk, and the fact that Elizabeth was to bear a son in her old age would create a lot of interest and comment amongst the people. The birth of this son was an event of much interest to all who knew of these things.

58-79. And her neighbors and her kinsfolk heard that the Lord had magnified his mercy towards her; and rejoiced with her.

58-79. She had long desired a son, and it was a special act of mercy that her desires had been fulfilled. The desire for children in the home is natural; to deliberately make the home childless is ungodly. The friends and relatives of Elizabeth sympathized with her in her childlessness; and when they heard that a son had been born in that home, "they rejoiced with her."

"And it came to pass on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child." In Genesis 17:12 we have the law of circumcision; "And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every male throughout your generations, he that is born in thy house, or bought with money of any foreigner, that is not of thy seed." They were not circumcised to bring them into the covenant, but as a sort of token that they were members of the covenant. "And the uncircumcised male

who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant." (Gen. 17:14.) If one was not circumcised, he was put out of the covenant. It appears to have become a custom to name a son when he was circumcised. "And they would have called him Zacharias, after the name of his father." It is natural that, being the only son, he would bear the name of his father.

"And his mother answered and said. Not so; but he shall be called John." Though Zacharias could not speak, he could write; in his writing he would give Elizabeth all the details of the angel's visit to him in the temple. By this means she had learned what they should call their son.

"And they said unto her. There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name." It seemed strange to them that she should want to select a name not borne by any of their kindred.

"And they made signs to his father, what he would have him called." This shows that Zacharias was deaf as well as speechless; otherwise they could have asked him in words, instead of making signs to him.

"And he asked for a writing tablet." He would have to do this by means of signs. "And wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marveled all." They marveled because Zacharias, not being able to hear what Elizabeth said, had selected the name she had. But it should be carefully noted that the name of this son was John. Later when he began to baptize people, the people called him John the Baptist, or John the immerser. "The Baptist" was a descriptive title.

"And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, blessing God." The angel had told Zacharias in the temple that he would not be able to speak till the promise of a son was fulfilled. The power of speech was now restored, and he spoke, praising God.

"And fear came on all that dwelt round about them." The word here translated "fear" sometimes means "terror, affright"; sometimes it means "reverential fear or awe." It evidently has the latter meaning here. They recognized that the hand of God was present in the affairs of this family. "And

these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judea." Some letters may have been written about these wonderful things, but the news would travel mostly by word of mouth.

"And all that heard them laid them up in their heart, saying, What then shall this child be?" They could easily see that such events connected with the birth of a child meant that he would be no ordinary person. "For the hand of the Lord was with him."

"And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied." The part of this prophecy concerning his son John's mission is recorded in verses 76-79.

"Yea and thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Most High." John was to deliver the words of God to the people. We often think of a prophet as one who foretells future events; but the essential idea is that God's prophet is one who speaks for God, whether he speaks of present duties or future events. Much of John's prophesying consisted in rebuking the people for their sins and calling them to repentance. "For thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to make ready his ways." He was the forerunner to prepare the people for the coming of Christ. In the very nature of the case his mission would be temporary.

"To give knowledge of salvation unto his people in the remission of their sins." Salvation for the world was to come through Jesus. John was to make the people ready for the Lord, and then introduce him to the people. This he did when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world." (John 1:29.) In other words he also introduced him to the people. In this way he was to give knowledge of salvation in the remission of sins that should come through Christ. The following verses seem to show plainly that John was to give knowledge of the salvation that was to come through Christ, rather than through their submission to his baptism.

"Because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the dayspring from on high shall visit us." "Dayspring" is the dawning of day. Jesus is called the Dayspring or Day-dawn, because his coming was to be the dawning of the day of salva-

tion. But what sort of salvation—salvation from Roman rule or salvation in the remission of sins?

"To shine upon them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death." A striking figure of speech describing the awful condition of those who are in sin, and especially the condition of the world without Christ. "To guide our feet into the ways of peace," not political peace, but peace with one's own conscience, peace with God, and peace with all who are at peace with God.

The words of Zacharias in these verses throw much light on the mission of Christ. John was to announce his coming and give the people knowledge of the salvation that he would bring, a salvation that was to be had in the remission of sins and not in political independence.

80. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit.

80. He grew strong in body and in character. "And was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel." John was not brought up in polite society of that day nor under the influence of the formal religion of the Pharisees. When he began to preach, the independence of his character showed that he had not been warped in character by any wrong influence.

Luke 2

LESSON LINKS

God works according to his own plans and purposes—"When the fullness of time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Gal. 4, 5.) Through Abraham's seed God promised to bless the world, and Paul tells us that the promised seed was Christ Jesus. (Gen. 22:15-18; Gal. 3:8, 16.) To Moses Jehovah said, "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee; and I will put my words into his

mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken to my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." (Deut. 18:18,19.) Prophecies, too to numerous to mention in this limited space, foretold the coming of the Messiah. Here are some of the striking prophecies: Isa. 7:14; 9:6, 7; 53:1-12; Micah 5:2. These prophecies had created great expectations in the minds of the Jews, and in the minds of some people in other nations. John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ was also a subject of prophecy. (Luke 3:1-6.)

1-7. Now it came to pass in those days, there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be enrolled. . . . And all went to enroll themselves, every one to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, . . . to enroll himself with Mary, who was betrothed to him, being great with child. And it came to pass, while they were there, the days were fulfilled that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son; and she wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

1-7. A decree had gone out from the emperor of Rome that all the world should be enrolled; this was for the purpose of taxation. Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth, but it was the custom for the Jews to enroll by tribes and families, each in the city of his inheritance. This required that Joseph and Mary go from Nazareth to Bethlehem, a long journey at a critical time for Mary. All the rooms in the inn were occupied when they arrived. "And it came to pass, while they were there, the days were fulfilled that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son; and she wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." They were not denied a room in the inn because of any antagonism toward them, and certainly not against the unborn infant. Lodging in the place where the animals were fed and sheltered did not seem so bad as to us of the present time.

8. And there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock.

8. On the hills near Bethlehem some shepherds were watching their flocks by night. These shepherds were staying with their flocks; it seems that they had no available sheepfolds. They kept watch by night over their flocks; or, as in the margin, they kept "night-watches" over their flocks. They would take turns in guarding the sheep from animals and thieves. The hills of the Bethlehem section had furnished pasturage for ages. Here David cared for his father's sheep. Adam Clarke says, "It was a custom among the Jews to send out their sheep to the deserts, about the passover, and bring them home at the commencement of the first rain: during the time they were out, the shepherds watched them night and day." Jesus was therefore born sometime between the passover season and the fall rainy season. December 25 does not therefore come anywhere near being the date of his birth.

9-14. And an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this is the sign unto you: Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying. Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased.

9-14. Jesus came into the world to be the Savior of men, and to be King of kings, and Lord of lords. No one else has ever been so highly exalted; yet he was born in a stable, cradled in a manger, and his birth was first announced to lowly shepherds as they watched their flocks. No human wisdom would have thought of such a way of ushering into the world one whose name was to be above all other names. If a man had been going to write a story for the purpose of deceiving people into thinking it was real history, he would never have thought of such a lowly beginning for one who was to be exalted above all others. While the shepherds were peacefully watching their flocks, "an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid." It seems impossible for men to remain composed and calm in the pres-

ence of a heavenly being. The glory of the Lord lighted up the place where they were; but what the angel said to them gave them light of another kind, and of great importance. This angel had come to deliver to them a message which the people of all nations should have been glad to hear. "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people." The angel would first quiet their fears. He had not come to bring judgments on them; there was cause for rejoicing instead of fear—a savior had been born. But the salvation Jesus would bring was not what the Jews expected. They longed for national deliverance from the power of the Romans; and they had their minds made up, that the Messiah, when he came, would give them the desired deliverance. It is easy for people to fix up a theory to suit what they want. And they thought the Messiah would be a Jewish Messiah, and not a world Savior to all alike. An angel had announced that the child to be born would save the people from their sins; nothing was said about saving the Jews from the Romans. The city of David was Bethlehem; it was so called because David was from that city. This should not be confused with that part of Jerusalem which was named the City of David, because David had taken it from the Jebusites.

"And this is a sign unto you." They had to have some sign by which they would know that they had found the right babe and not some other. It would also be a sign to them that the angel had told them the truth. There was nothing miraculous about a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger; but it did take divine power to know how he would be clothed and where he would be found. The shepherds would certainly know when they had found the babe of whom the angel spoke. These lowly shepherds were to be honored yet more; for "suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying," as if singing a refrain to the first angel's announcement, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased." Man would have made important announcements to men in high places, but God made that wonderful announcement to ob-

scure shepherds. These lowly men heard such a message and such singing as none others had ever heard.

15-19. And it came to pass, when the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us. And they came with haste, and found both Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger. And when they saw it, they made known concerning the saying which was spoken to them about this child. And all that heard it wondered at the things which were spoken unto them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart.

15-19. The angels went away. The shepherds lost no time in going to see this newborn babe. They were certainly greatly excited at what they had seen and heard, and yet how little they knew of what it all meant. "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us." They recognized that the Lord had made these things known to them through the angels. They did not doubt the word of the angels, and they earnestly desired to see this wonderful child. "And found both Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger." The angel had given them specific directions about the child, so that they had no trouble in determining which child was meant. We can imagine something of the interest they displayed in telling of the visit of the angels. It does not seem that they for a moment doubted the things that they were told by the angels. They raised no questions as to how these things could be. They did not doubt what the shepherds said, but they could not help but wonder what the message of the angels meant. Through these shepherds Mary had learned what the angels had said. She could not know the full significance of the miraculous conception and the wonderful things said by the angels, but she knew that it meant great things were to be done by this new-born Son. "But Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart." She was a loving mother; the things that concerned her Son meant much to her. The shepherds returned to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen.

LESSON LINKS

Concerning the woman who gave birth to a son, the law of Moses said, "And she shall continue in the blood of her purifying three and thirty days; she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled.... And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son, . . . she shall bring a lamb a year old for a burnt-offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtle-dove, for a sin-offering, unto the door of the tent of meeting, unto the priest— And if her means suffice not for a lamb, then she shall take two turtle-doves, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin-offering." (Lev. 12:4-8.) At the end of Mary's thirty-three days of purification she and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple "to present him to the Lord." That they brought no lamb for an offering, but only the required birds, shows their extreme poverty. He who was the heir of all things was born and brought up in poverty.

25, 26. And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

25, 26. As Simeon was a common name among the Jews, it is probable that there were many Simeons living in Jerusalem, but only one who filled the description of this Simeon. This Simeon was a righteous man; that is, he was just in his dealings with others. He was a pious, God-fearing man. Hence, he rendered goodwill and helpfulness to man, and reverence and obedience to God. In view of the prevailing corruption among leaders in Jerusalem, as pictured by Jesus (Matt. 23:13-37; Luke 11:39-52), the character of Simeon is all the more remarkable.

Simeon was "looking for the consolation of Israel." He was looking for the long-expected Messiah who would bring consolation to Israel. The Messiah would be the source of this consolation, or salvation. "And the Holy Spirit was upon him." He therefore had some degree of inspiration. God had singled him

out for a special favor—"it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ," the Anointed One, the Messiah. He knew therefore that the first advent of the Lord would occur during his life, and that he would see him with his own eyes. It was not a notion he arrived at by speculation. Being acquainted with the promises and prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah, it was natural for any pious Jew to long for him to come in his day, that he might be permitted to see him with his own eyes, and many had such desire all along. To his disciples Jesus once said, "But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not." (Matt. 13:16, 17.) It must have been therefore a great joy to Simeon when the Lord revealed to him that he would live to see the Lord's Anointed. Was he the only man in Jerusalem that the Lord could trust with such a revelation? It seems so.

27, 28. And he came in the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, that they might do concerning him after the custom of the law, then he received him into his arms, and blessed God.

27, 28. The Spirit guided Simeon into the temple at the proper time, that he might see Jesus. It is impossible for us to imagine the emotions that surged in the bosom of this just and pious man when Joseph and Mary came into the temple with the child, and he was permitted with his own eyes to look upon him who was to be the long-promised Messiah. He was seeing what the prophets and righteous men had for centuries desired to see. He must hold that babe close to his own heart, and so "he received him into his arms, and blessed God"; that is, he praised and thanked God for giving him this glorious opportunity. Was he blessed above what we may be today? Most assuredly not; for though we can not receive his body into our arms, we can receive him into our hearts in a spiritual way, but none the less real. And we can also enjoy here and now the salvation which he came to bring to the sons and daughters

of men. We therefore have even more cause for blessing God than did Simeon. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." (Eph. 1:3.) "In whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses." And through the knowledge revealed concerning him we have all that pertains to life and godliness. (2 Pet. 1:3.) We are therefore more highly favored than was Simeon. But many of us are like so many of the Jews: we have eyes but see not; and we have ears but hear not. And this is because our hearts have waxed gross.

29-32. Now lettest thou thy servant depart, Lord, according to thy word, in peace: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples; A light for revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of thy people Israel.

29-32. God's promise to Simeon that he would see the Lord's Anointed before he died had now been fulfilled, and he was ready to go hence. The cup of joy was full; so he prayed, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart, Lord, according to thy word, in peace." The whole circumstance shows that Simeon was an aged man at this time; and it seems from the words just quoted, that the Lord had indicated to him that having seen the Messiah, he would not live much longer. So he prayed that now he be allowed to depart in peace. And who can doubt that the Lord granted his request? "For mine eyes have seen thy salvation." The Anointed is here called "salvation," because he is the source and author of salvation. Compare this with the following: "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." (1 Cor. 1:30, 31.) Verse 31 evidently means that this salvation through the Christ was to be for all nations; notice the plural, *peoples*. This salvation was not to be solely for the Jewish people, but for all peoples. The next verse shows more plainly: "A light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." Hence Christ Jesus would be a light, and would be revealed to the Gentiles.

Here is early evidence that Jesus would not be a tribal, or national Savior. The Gentiles would be as much the object of his mission as would the Jews. This statement of Simeon proves that he spoke as the Spirit moved him, for no Jew, of his own accord, would have made such a statement. The Jews thought, and so do some professed Christians today, that the Messiah was for the Jews—a tribal Messiah. "The glory of thy people Israel." The Jews were still God's people; not till the cross were all things Jewish abolished. It was a glorious thing for the people of Israel, that the Savior came of that nation. Jesus used the term salvation in the same sense Simeon used it, when he said to the woman of Samaria, "Salvation is from the Jews." (John 4:22.) That is, the Savior, the source of salvation is from the Jews. And what a glorious thing it would have been had the Jews believed on him! But the nation, through its legal authorities, murdered him, and national destruction was the penalty they paid for their crime.

33-35. And the father and his mother were marveling at the things which were spoken concerning him; and Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the falling and rising of many in Israel; and for a sign which is spoken against; yea and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul; that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed.

33-35. In the light of later developments and revelations we can see something of the significance of the things said about the child Jesus, but Joseph and Mary had not this advantage. They could not follow out matters and see the fulfillment of what was said of the child Jesus. It was all therefore bewildering to them. What Simeon said was not the first astonishing thing that had been said about the child. Notice what the angel said to Mary before the birth of Jesus (Luke 1:26-35) and what an angel said to Joseph (Matt. 1:20, 21), also the report of the shepherds (Luke 2:8-18) and the visit of the wise men. (Matt. 2:7-12.) It seems that all these things would have so prepared Joseph and Mary that they would not have been surprised at anything that might have been said about Jesus. Perhaps they wondered most on this occasion at this additional information: "A light for revelation to the Gentiles," for they would hold to

the usual Jewish ideas about the Gentiles.

"Simeon blessed them." To bless one was to pronounce such a one blessed, or to call for God's blessings on him. And Simeon made another statement concerning the child that must have sounded strange to Joseph and Mary: "This child is set for the falling and rising of many in Israel; and for a sign which is spoken against." Many would accept him, and become sons and daughters of God; others would reject him, and fall. To many he was a stumbling block, for he did not come as they had thought he would—he did not meet their expectations. His coming into the world was a sign of God's goodness, but the rebellious spoke against him.

There has been some difference of opinion as to the meaning of what Simeon said to Mary: "A sword shall pierce through thine own soul." It seems certain that it is a figurative expression, for it is hard to see how a material sword could pierce the soul of a person. It seems reasonable that it refers to the sorrows she would endure, which would reach their climax in the crucifixion of her son.

36. And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher (she was of a great age, having lived with a husband seven years from her virginity, . . .

36. "And there was one Anna, a prophetess." She was inspired; God spoke to the people through her, for that is the meaning of the word prophet—one who speaks for God. Simeon was inspired and so was Anna; if any others were inspired at this time we have no account of it. And this was thirty years before John the Baptist began his ministry. Whether any other prophets lived and prophesied between the time the Old Testament was completed and the beginning of the ministry of John we know not. Anna was "the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher." The tribe of Asher was one of the ten tribes that followed Jeroboam in the revolt against Rehoboam. These ten tribes were carried into captivity by the Assyrians before the kingdom of Judah was carried into captivity by the Babylonians. They were usually referred to as the

ten lost tribes; but the fact that Anna was of the tribe of Asher shows that some of them returned and kept their tribal identity. No Jew knows today to what tribe he belongs. "She was of a great age, having lived with a husband seven years from her virginity." After their marriage her husband had lived only seven years, and she had never married again.

37. And she had been a widow even unto fourscore and four years, who departed not from the temple, worshipping with fastings and supplications night and day.

37. "And she had been a widow even unto fourscore and four years." This may mean that she had continued as a widow to the age of eighty-four, or that her widowhood had continued eighty-four years. If the latter supposition is correct, and it seems the more reasonable one, she was at the time of this lesson more than a hundred years old, even though she had married at the early age of fourteen. "Who departed not from the temple, worshipping with fastings and supplications night and day." She was a remarkable woman, and had devoted herself entirely to the worship and service of God. Even though she was of great age, she attended constantly on her religious devotions.

38. And coming up at that very hour she gave thanks unto God, and spake of him to them all that were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

38. "And coming up at that very hour." At the time in which Simeon was holding Jesus in his arms and talking. "She gave thanks unto God." The greatest thing that she then had for which to give thanks was the presence of him who was to be the Savior. "And spake of him to all them that were looking for the Savior." "And spake of him to all them that were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem." Many were looking for a deliverer at this time. Simeon, as we have learned, was "looking for the consolation of Israel." When John began to preach "the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their minds concerning John, whether haply he were the Christ." Now Anna speaks of Jesus to all that were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. Not so many women as men were endowed

with the gift of prophecy. Anna seems to have been rather public in proclaiming the infant Jesus as the looked-for Redeemer.

Simeon and Anna were two remarkable servants of God, whom the Bible student usually passes by with little thought. This can be easily accounted for by the fact that they were overshadowed so completely by the Christ. But the study of such characters is always helpful.

Some Reflections

To deny the virgin birth of Jesus is to regard him as only a human being. The leaders in Jerusalem regarded him as a mere man. (Matt. 13:54-56.) And no man today who so regards him can account for his powers.

Joseph and Mary were law-abiding people. They obeyed both the Roman law and the law of God. They went to Bethlehem to enroll in obedience to the Roman law, when it certainly was not convenient for Mary to make the journey. With reference to the child Jesus they kept the law of God to the minutest detail—they "accomplished all things that were according to the law of the Lord." Had they not been faithful in all their relationships, they would not have been so honored of the Lord as they were.

Matthew 2

1, 2. Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold. Wise-men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we saw his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

1, 2. "Wise-men" of our text is a translation of the word Magi; the singular number of the word is Magus, and is found in Acts 13:6, 8, where it is translated sorcerer. The Magi are said to have been a class of learned men of the countries of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers; they claimed to possess certain powers not possessed by other men. Their country was a long

distance east of Jerusalem. The star was not in an easterly direction from them when they saw it, but they in the east saw the star. The appearance of an unusual star would excite their interest, but would not of itself reveal to them that a king of the Jews had been born. We are not told how God revealed to them the significance of the star; neither are we told why these men in that distant country would have any special interest in the fact that a king had been born in Judea. God must have revealed to them that this king would not be such a king as the Jews expected; a king merely for the Jews would be of no special interest to them. Of these matters we cannot be sure; but we do know that these men were called Magi, and that they had come from the east, being guided by a star, and they knew that a king had been born in Judea. The Herod of our lesson is the one whom Josephus called Herod the Great. He was a forceful character, but a bloody tyrant, putting to death any of whom he became suspicious, even his own wife and sons—a bloody tyrant was he. He was king of Judea by the appointment of the Roman emperor, but was allowed great freedom in the management of all local affairs. But as he was king of Judea, it was natural for the Magi to suppose that the new king would be born in the royal family. They therefore expected to find the newborn king in Jerusalem; but in this expectation they were following their own notions, instead of the star; for it is certain that the star did not lead them to the house of Herod. Too often people allow their own reasonings and notions to turn them aside from divine guidance. It seems that these men expected the men of Jerusalem to know about the newborn king, for they asked, "Where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we saw his star in the east, and are come to worship him." This statement gives support to the idea that some special revelation had been made to these men concerning the nature of the reign of this newborn king; for why should they be seeking to worship a babe that was to be no more than a king of the Jews?

3. And when Herod the king heard it, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

3. The Jews were expecting the Messiah; even Herod shared that expectation. The words of the Magi therefore stirred up great interest. It is not to be supposed that everything that was said and done on this occasion was recorded. All the inhabitants of Jerusalem would want to know about the star, and how came these men in a faraway country to know that a new king had been born in Judea. It was evident to all thoughtful people that God's hand was in the matter; and even though Herod knew this, the report and what it implied troubled him. This shows that Herod had given full credit to the report of the Magi. At this time Herod was an old man, and it does not seem at all likely that he feared his personal reign would be interrupted by this babe. More likely he feared that royalty would pass from his family to another. His friends and supporters, most likely much younger men than he, would fear that a new king would set them aside, or kill them to get them out of the way. Those who cared nothing for Herod would fear that war would result when an effort was made to put the new king on the throne. Hence, "when Herod the king heard it, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him."

4-8. And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written through the prophet, 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. Then Herod privily called the Wise-men, and learned of them exactly what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search out exactly concerning the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word, that I also may come and worship him.

4-8. Herod was fully convinced that the Messiah whom the Jews had long expected had now been born. He knew too that the prophets had foretold the coming of the Messiah. The language of our text leaves no room to doubt that he did know of the prophecies, but he wanted one specific point settled. "And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ should be born." Had he been making that inquiry for a righteous purpose, it would have been well; for the people could not afford to accept

the newborn babe as the promised Messiah, unless they knew that he came as the prophets foretold. Herod made the inquiry as if he had no evil designs; and yet he was laying his plans to put to death the Messiah whom God had promised to send—preparing to put God's Messiah to death! Could mortal man be more presumptuous? It was not as if some one through ignorance, or weakness, or negligence had failed to live up to the requirements of God's law; it was a determination to keep God from doing what he had promised to do; it was putting his ingenuity and power up against the wisdom and power of God. Pharaoh of old had done likewise. The chief priests and scribes were able to refer Herod to the prophecy which told where the Messiah was to be born. The prophecy they read to him is found in Mic. 5:2. They understood the ruler, which Micah plainly stated would come out of Bethlehem, would be the Messiah, the Christ. It does not seem that these chief priests and scribes took any further interest in the matter. That seeming indifference can be easily explained on the grounds that they were afraid to show a lively interest in the prospects of a new king; it might have been fatal for them to do so—they knew the cruelty of Herod's suspicious character. Having learned where the Christ was to be born, Herod turned to the Magi to find out the possible age of the newborn king. He was not seeking the information for any good, but with murderous intent. He was crafty enough to keep his designs from the Magi. It does not seem that the Magi suspected any evil designs on the part of Herod. Men who are not themselves tricky do not readily discover that trait in others. An innocent person is more easily imposed on than is a suspicious person. Herod had so long practiced deception and cold-hearted cruelty that there was no sincerity in him; his conscience was seared—there was no good in him. He had, like the people before the flood, reached that stage of depravity in which every imagination of the heart was evil, and that continually. The Magi had come to worship the newborn king, and yet Herod was using them in his murderous designs against God's Messiah; he was doing it, knowing whom he was determined to

murder. He pretended to want to know all about the young child, so that he might go and worship him. It is certain that there is no more good in a man when he can be so deceiving, so cruel, and so determined to fight against God. And that man was once an innocent babe, and could have developed into a great and useful man; but by the practice of sin he had become a monster of cruelty and wickedness. The world, and even the church, is occasionally cursed by such monsters.

9-11. And they, having heard the king, went their way; and lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. And when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And they came into the house and saw the young child with Mary his mother; and they fell down and worshipped him; and opening their treasures they offered unto him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

9-11. Evidently the Magi were not well acquainted with the prophets of Israel, for they learned from the chief priests and scribes that the prophet Micah had foretold his birth at Bethlehem. When they departed for Bethlehem the star again became their guide. McGarvey says, "The star which they had seen in the east had evidently disappeared before they reached Jerusalem, but now it reappeared when its guidance was needed." But it is more likely that it disappeared because they yielded to a natural impulse to go to the royal family in Jerusalem to seek for the newborn king, instead of following the star. Divine guidance ceased when they ceased to follow divine guidance. When they decided to follow the light God gave them through the prophet, the star added its guidance. That was not one of the regular stars of the heavens, for one of the constant stars of the heavens would have had no special significance to these men of the east. Besides, such a star would have seemed to stand over one house the same as any other house, or over Jerusalem the same as over Bethlehem. And on account of the earth's revolutions, can any one figure out how one of the regular stars would have seemed to travel in a westerly direction? And the star was low enough for the Magi to determine the exact house in Bethlehem; it went before them till it stood over a certain house, so that they knew, without making any

inquiry, exactly the house to enter. Hence, the public knew nothing of their visit. That a special star guided these men is no more a matter of wonder than that a cloud should guide the Hebrews through the wilderness. The Magi entered the house over which the star stood. It will be noted that they entered a house. It had been several weeks since Jesus was born; Joseph and Mary had taken up their abode in some house. These men had not worshiped Herod, though he was the reigning king, but they considered, from all that they had known and experienced, that this babe was a proper object of worship: "and they fell down and worshipped him; and opening their treasures they offered unto him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh."

12. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

12. Herod had said to the Magi, "Go and search out exactly concerning the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word, that I also may come and worship him." It is likely that they fully intended to do so; but after they had worshiped the child and had retired for the night, God warned them in a dream not to return to Herod. It appears that they departed immediately for their own country another way. No one therefore could have given Herod any information about them. The same night Joseph was warned to flee to Egypt with the young child and his mother. None therefore knew where they had gone.

13-15. Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appear-eth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I tell thee: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. And he arose and took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt; and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt did I call my son.

13-15. The Wise-men had evidently reached Bethlehem in the night, for they had followed the star. The star had guided them to the right house, so that they had no need to make any inquiry of anyone. Being warned in a dream that night, they

arose and departed in the night. The people of Bethlehem knew not of their visit. The same night Joseph was warned in a dream to arise and depart into Egypt with the mother and child. "He arose and took the young child and his mother by night and departed into Egypt." This would certainly be well along in the night, so that no one knew of their departure, nor would they afterwards know where they had gone. No one would be able to give Herod any information as to where they had gone. But what a night for Joseph and Mary! They had been greatly elated by the unexpected visit of the Magi and by their gifts and homage to the child Jesus. Then unexpectedly they were sent away in the night to go into Egypt for how long they knew not. Being extremely poor, as they were, as the sacrifice they offered showed, it is likely that they had to use some of the gold, presented by the Magi, to pay their expenses on the way. They must hastily depart. In Egypt the young child would be out of Herod's reach. Besides, Herod would not know that he had been taken out of Bethlehem. "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt did I call my son." This prophecy is found in Hosea 11:1, and refers primarily to Israel. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." In the use Matthew makes of this prophecy he makes Israel's going into Egypt and coming a type of the going into Egypt and the return of Jesus.

16-18. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the Wise-men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the male children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the borders thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had exactly learned of the Wise-men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet, saying, A voice was heard in Ramah, Weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children: And she would not be comforted, because they are not.

16-18. A man of Herod's disposition and habits would not be peaceable when he found that anyone had disregarded his orders. The Magi had done so, and he was enraged. Then he committed two great sins. First he knew what the prophets had said about the birth of the Messiah, but he determined to

see to it that God did not carry out his plans. He would out-do God! He would have God's Messenger killed in infancy! Hence, in fighting against God he committed the cruel crime of having all the babes in Bethlehem killed. But that was no strange act for Herod, who had killed so many of his own family—his uncle Joseph, his wife Mariamme, her brother, and three of his own sons. Many others were put to death at his orders. Though he was the father of fourteen children, it is said that not a relative of his was left at the end of a hundred years. Yet he made many improvements, and built the great temple. His public works, including the temple, were destroyed; only a memory of Herod remained. The prophecy Matthew quotes as having been fulfilled in the slaying of these babes is Jer. 31:15. It appears that when Nebuchadnezzar was fighting against the kingdom of Judah, his commander Nebuzaradan collected his captives at Ramah. (Jer. 40:1-6.) It is likely that all the children and other helpless people were killed so that they would not be a burden in the long march back to Babylon. Hence, the weeping in Ramah; that also would be true in Bethlehem.

19-21. But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead that sought the young child's life. And he arose and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

19-21. It is not known how long Joseph and Mary remained, in Egypt with the young child. It is thought that Herod died of his miserable disease soon after the slaughter of the babes of Bethlehem. When Joseph had decided to put Mary away because she was found with child, an angel of the Lord had told him not to fear to take her unto him for a wife. When Herod would destroy the children at Bethlehem, an angel of the Lord had instructed him to arise and go with the mother and child into Egypt, "and be there until I tell thee." He had patiently, perhaps also in fear, waited for the Lord to tell him when to return. Now an angel appears to him again. "Arise and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel."

From this it seems that he could return to any part of the land that suited him. "For they are dead that sought the young child's life." The language shows that more than one was interested in putting the child to death. Perhaps Antipater, Herod's son, who was as cruel as Herod, and who was to succeed him to the throne, was as anxious to have the young child destroyed as was Herod. But Antipater was put to death by the order of Herod just five days before the death of Herod. And so it was that those who sought the young child's life were dead. So Joseph meant to bring the young child and his mother into the land of Israel, perhaps intending to make Bethlehem his home, for the language of the next verse seems to prove that he had not planned to return to Nazareth. It is quite natural that they should desire to make their home in Bethlehem, but it was not to be so. The Lord was guiding the movements of these people, no matter what might have been their plans as to where they would live.

22, 23. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither; and being warned of God in a dream, he withdrew into the parts of Galilee, and came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophets, that he should be called a Nazarene.

22, 23. It seems that Joseph heard, before reaching Judea, that Archelaus, Herod's son, was on the throne; he was then afraid to go into Judea. When Herod the Great died, his kingdom was divided between his three sons: Archelaus, Herod Antipas, and Philip. Archelaus had rule over the Jews, and is said to have been the worst of Herod's sons; so tyrannical was he that the emperor of Rome banished him. It is well that Joseph was afraid to make his home in Judea, to be at the mercy of one who had no mercy. He was warned of God in a dream, and so made his way back to his old home town, Nazareth, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophets, that he should be called a Nazarene." "The words, 'He shall be called a Nazarene,' here said to have been spoken by the prophets, are not found in any of the extant prophetic writings. It should be said that Matthew's expression concern-

ing them is peculiar. He does not say, as usual with him, 'spoken by the prophet,' but 'spoken by the prophets.' This expression may mean either that the prophets generally had used this language, or that they had said the equivalent to this. The latter is doubtless the real meaning. Many of the prophets had predicted the lowly life of the Savior, and this is proverbially expressed when he is called a Nazarene. Such was the reputation of Nazareth that even the guileless Nathaniel, when told that the Christ had been found, and that he was of Nazareth of Galilee, exclaimed, 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' (John 1:45,46.) Matthew says not that he shall be a Nazarene, but that he shall be called a Nazarene. It was the circumstance of his residence in Nazareth that led to his being called a Nazarene when he was really a Bethlehemite. It afterward furnished his enemies with an approbrious epithet, and all this is summed up in the words into which Matthew condenses the prophetic utterances."—McGarvey. Jesus was a Nazarene in the sense that he was of Nazareth; hence, he is frequently spoken of as Jesus of Nazareth, and once so designates himself.

Some Reflections

Before Jesus was born the angel announced his mission in few words: "For it is he that shall save his people from their sins." Jesus did not come to save the Jews from Roman rule. The scope of his mission is seen in the word "whosoever": "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." (John 3:16.)

In reading the Bible accounts of persons and of great events it is worthwhile to notice how simple and brief the language is. No extravagant statements are made, and no high-sounding adjectives are used. It would be an improvement if speakers and writers followed the same plan.

Luke 2

40. And the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

40. We have no means of knowing how long Joseph and Mary remained in Bethlehem after Jesus was born, before they fled to Egypt. They did not flee to Egypt before the days of her purification were ended, and they had made the offerings according to the law. This covered a period of thirty-three days. (Lev. 12:1-8.) After they returned from Egypt they made their home in Nazareth, where they had formerly lived. Here Jesus grew into manhood. The language indicates that his body grew strong. We cannot think of Jesus as a physical weakling, either as a child or as a man. "And the grace of God was upon him." Many persist in saying that grace is unmerited favor. Grace is favor; why say it is unmerited favor? Surely no one would say that God's unmerited favor was upon Jesus! It seems that Jesus developed in a natural way, growing up as other children. It is not likely that the neighbors thought of him as anything else than a child like others.

41. And his parents went every year to Jerusalem at the feast of the passover.

41. There were three annual feasts of the Jews. (Deut. 16:1-17.) The Feast of the Passover originated in connection with the deliverance of the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage. (Ex. 12:1-51.) Only the men were required to attend the Passover, though women might attend if they so desired. Her devotion to the Lord would lead Mary to attend this feast every year, if she could do so; and Luke says she and Joseph attended every year. If all the women attended these feasts, there were none left at home to care for the children. They must have taken them along.

42-45. And when he was twelve years old, they went up after the custom of the feast; and when they had fulfilled the days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and his parents knew it not; but supposing him to be in the company, they went a day's journey; and they sought for him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance: and when they found him not, they

returned to Jerusalem, seeking for him.

42-45. "And when he was twelve years old, they went up after the custom of the feast." It is said that at this age a Jew was required to keep the ordinances of the law. It seems to be assumed that this was the first time Jesus attended the Passover; the record does not say so. Certainly Joseph and Mary had not left him at home alone during all the former years of his life. He is specially mentioned here, and also his age, because of the incidents of this journey. "And when they had fulfilled the days." The Feast of the Passover and the seven days of unleaven bread that followed made eight days. For company and protection against robbers, neighbors and kinsmen would make the journey in companies. When Joseph and Mary and their company started on the return journey, Jesus did not join them, but tarried in Jerusalem; and they did not discover that he was not in the company till the end of the first day's journey. It has been said that the men in these journeys formed one group and the women another. If so, we can easily see how Joseph and Mary might each think Jesus was with the other. A great company of people would be strung out quite a distance along the road, and would not see much of each other till they stopped to camp. Some have charged that Joseph and Mary were very negligent not to discover that Jesus was missing till the end of the day; but that seems rather unjust. Jesus was no baby; he was twelve years of age, and Joseph and Mary had learned to have confidence in him. And besides, was not the hand of God in the matter. Joseph and Mary were not to blame for not discovering his not being in the company; he was not to blame for tarrying behind. When they searched for him, and found that he was not in the company, they were greatly distressed. "And when they found him not, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking for him." Nothing save known disaster is so distressing to parents as the uncertainty as to what may have happened to a child. Under such circumstances rest of body and mind is impossible; the heart aches, and yearns to know. In such a state of mind Joseph

and Mary returned to Jerusalem.

46. 47. And it came to pass, after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both hearing them and asking them questions: and all that heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

46, 47. In the Jewish manner of counting time, "after three days" meant after three days had come, that is, the third day. We can feel sure that Joseph and Mary took little rest during these days of anxious search. Likely they looked for him first in their lodging place. The idle talk of the multitudes interested him not; he cared nothing for their gossip; so "they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both hearing them and asking them questions." These teachers were the rabbins, the doctors of the law. They were considered the authority as to what the law of Moses taught. And as the tradition of the elders had never been committed to writing, but was handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth, these teachers would have to have the whole system committed to memory. Hence they would likely be better informed in tradition than in the law of Moses. We would not understand that in asking them questions Jesus was seeking information, but propounding questions for their consideration. He readily answered their questions. "And all that heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers." They knew he had not been trained in their schools; they knew therefore that he had never been taught by any of the great teachers. For a young boy to have such understanding, especially as he had never had an expert teacher, was a cause for amazement. But they did not know who and what he was. A person's understanding and character are revealed in the questions he asks as well as in the answers he gives to the questions of others. Both his questions and his answers were so well chosen as to astonish these wise teachers of the Jewish religion.

48-50. And when they saw him, they were astonished; and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me?

knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

48-50. When Joseph and Mary saw Jesus in the midst of the great teachers of the law conversing with them, they were astonished, that he, a mere boy, had been so daring as to go into the presence of so august a body of men and hold converse with them. They themselves would likely have felt timid in the presence of such men, and to be questioned by them. "And his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?" It seems that there is a gentle rebuke in that question. They had sought him sorrowing, and it seemed to them that he had not been concerned about their evident distress at his disappearance. But the hand of God was in the matter, though they did not know it. Had they known they would not have been filled with distress. Jesus did not give a direct answer to their question; he asked them a question that should have started them thinking. "How is it that ye sought me? knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" You should have spent no time searching for me; you should have known that I would be in my Father's house. It seems that no one caught the significance of his saying, "My Father's house." "My Father"—there was a lot of meaning in that "my," had they noticed it. God was his Father in a special sense—a sense in which he is the Father of no one else. A man may become a son of God, but Jesus was, and is, the Son of God. The truth that he is the Son of God in a special sense is set forth abundantly throughout the New Testament; so must we believe. But none of those who heard Jesus understood the significance of what he said. They knew, of course, what he said; but they did not comprehend his meaning. They therefore could give him no answer. But it is no marvel that they did not understand him. "Understood not" comes in frequently during the personal ministry of Jesus. Frequently the disciples did not understand Jesus, because they had their hearts set on other things. There is such a thing as an understanding heart.

51, 52. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and he was

subject unto them: and his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

51, 52. "And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth." The Bible is exact as to geography, as in all other matters. Though Nazareth was much nearer the source of the Jordan than was Jerusalem, yet its altitude was lower than that of Jerusalem. It is to be noted that Jesus readily yielded obedience to Joseph and Mary, and left the interesting discussion in which he was engaged. "And he was subject to them." He was perfect in his obedience and faithfulness to them; yet an occasional boy or girl thinks it shows one's importance to disobey parents. "And his mother kept all these sayings in her heart." She did not understand what he said, but she could ponder over it, as any mother would do. "And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." This is practically a repetition of the facts stated in verse 40. Jesus was human, and we think of such statements as applying to his human nature. Unless his divine nature shined out in his conversation with the teachers in Jerusalem, we have no record that it manifested itself till after his baptism. But when we try to understand the union of deity with the nature of man, we find that our intelligence is too limited to comprehend it. We believe it, but cannot understand it.

Some Reflections

They found Jesus in the temple, his Father's house. If the average boy or girl of today were missing, where would he or she most likely be found? This is not an accusation against the youth of today, but merely a question. However both young and old might profit by giving it serious consideration. Nazareth is not mentioned in the Old Testament. A single question asked by Nathanael (John 1:46) gave rise to the idea that Nazareth was a disreputable city; but such a question would have risen about any other place in Galilee. The chief priests said to Nicodemus, "Art thou also of Galilee? Search and see that out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." (John 7:52.) And the

astonished people on Pentecost asked, "behold, are not all these that speak Galileans?" (Acts 2:7.) Galileans were not held in high esteem.

Luke 3

LESSON LINKS

All we know of John the Baptist from the day he was circumcised till he began preaching is summed up in this one verse: "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing to Israel." (Luke 1:80.) This does not mean that John lived in barren wastes. In New Testament usage a desert was an uninhabited, or sparsely settled, country. John was not trained in the niceties of polite society. He lived a sober life, free from the blighting influence of the corrupt and hypocritical Pharisees of Jerusalem. He was about six months older than Jesus.

From the time that Joseph and Mary took up again their abode in Nazareth to the time Jesus appeared at the Jordan to be baptized, only one incident is mentioned in the life of Jesus; and the record of that incident is followed by these words; "And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." (Luke 2:41-52.)

1, 2. Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar. Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis. and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, in the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the Word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.

1, 2. These verses compared with verse 23 help us determine with some degree of accuracy the date of the birth of Jesus, for it would seem that he was born about thirty years before the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius. "No such elaborate chronological precision is to be found elsewhere in the New Testament, and it comes fitly from him who claims it as the peculiar recommendation of his gospel, that he had accurately traced down all things from the first. (Luke 1:3.)

Here evidently, commences his proper narrative, *the fifteenth year of Tiberius*—reckoning from the period when he was admitted, three years before Augustus' death, to his share of the empire (Webster and Wilkenson), about the end of the year of Rome 779, or about four years before the usual reckoning. *Pilate ... governor of Judea*—his proper title was *procurator*, but with more than the usual powers of that office. After holding it about ten years he was ordered to Rome, to answer to charges brought against him, but ere he arrived Tiberius died (A.D. 35), and soon after Pilate committed suicide." *Herod*—"Herod Antipas, one of the three sons of Herod the Great, and own brother of Archelaus." These quotations are from Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown. The region over which Philip, another son of Herod, ruled lay to the northeast of Palestine. Nothing definite is known of Lysanias, save that which is here told of him.

At this period of Jewish history it seems that the Romans used rather a free hand in appointing and deposing high priests. Annas was made high priest in A.D. 6 and deposed in A.D. 15. He is said to have been "an astute and powerful ecclesiastical statesman." Caiaphas, son-in-law to Annas, was high priest from A.D. 18 to 36. But our lesson presents this difficulty: Both Annas and Caiaphas are spoken of as high priests. Various conjectures are presented as explanations. The natural explanation seems to suggest this idea: While the Jews had to accept Caiaphas as high priest, they chose rather to continue to regard Annas as their high priest rather than the hotheaded and self-willed Caiaphas. Even when Jesus was arrested, he was taken first before Annas. All these facts given help us to have a fairly clear idea as to when John began his ministry. It was in the period just described that "the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness." This means that at this time God revealed to him what he was to preach. John was an inspired man, a prophet of God.

3. And he came into all the region round about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins.

3. We, of course, have only a brief outline of John's preaching. No one statement can fully express what John preached. The outstanding theme—the central theme of his preaching—that which would create the greatest interest among the Jews—was, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." What he said about other matters was said in an effort to prepare the people for the king and his kingdom. He preached that men should repent and be baptized. So closely was repentance, baptism, and remission of sins connected, that it is said that he preached "the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins." John said, "I indeed baptize you in water unto [Greek, or into] repentance." (Matt. 3:11.) There was much formality and corruption amongst the Jews; they were utterly unfitted for citizenship in the kingdom; hence, his constant call for repentance. "Repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. 3:2.) A question arises: If John baptized those who had repented, how did he baptize them into repentance? A little reflection will help. He demanded of those he baptized that they would bring forth fruits answerable to amendment of life; that is, that they live so as to prove they had repented—had amended their way of living. He therefore baptized these penitents into a state or life of repentance. The baptism of such people was unto, or into, remission of sins. He must have made some demands concerning the confessing of sins, for Matthew says, "Then went out unto him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about the Jordan, confessing their sins." (Matt. 3:5,6.) To all he "preached the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins." (Mark 1:4.) Without repentance their baptism would be worthless. Baptism preceded by repentance was unto the remission of sins. John also demanded that they believe on him that was to come. And he gave the people evidence so that they might believe. (John 1:19-36.) Hence John baptized only those who had reached an age of accountability—those who could do the things demanded.

John was a prophet of God, a powerful preacher. His powers as a preacher would attract attention. And his preaching that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, would stir the expectant

Jews as no other announcement would. This accounts, in a great measure, for the great interest John's preaching stirred up among the Jews. Great multitudes flocked to his preaching and were baptized. The language in verse 3 shows that John did not confine his preaching and baptizing to one particular place. "He came into all the region round about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins." Nor did he do all his baptizing in the river Jordan; for he did some "baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized." (John 3:23.) Such interest was stirred up that people began to wonder if he were the long-expected Christ. (John 1:19-22.)

4-6. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make ye ready the way of the Lord, Make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, And every mountain and hill shall be brought low; And the crooked shall become straight, And the rough ways smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

4-6. Luke quotes a prophecy from Isaiah as applicable to John's work. The imagery of that prophecy is taken from building highways. The language is figurative, for John was not building literal roads; he was preparing people for the coming king; or, rather, he was getting people ready for the king. Think of what is done in building a highway, or railroad, and see how John's work with the people had some resemblance to such construction. Many curves and angles in the old are now being eliminated. Roads across valleys are elevated. Some people are low in spirit, discouraged, and have a down-and-out feeling. Such are inclined to give up, and say, "What is the use?" People like that need to be lifted up; they need new motives and new hopes. That is as true today as it was then. Our king and his kingdom give new motives for living and inspire new hopes. Nothing else exalts life as the religion of Christ. And yet there are mountains and hills that must be brought low—the haughty and proud must be brought to humbleness and meekness. "Let the brother of low degree glory in his high estate: and the rich, in that he is made low." (James 1:9, 10.) The preparation for good citizenship in the

kingdom of heaven is a leveling process; it exalts the man of low degree, and brings low the proud and haughty spirit. "The crooked shall become straight." Some men and their ways are called crooked in both the Old Testament and the New. For examples, see Deut. 32:5; Ps. 125:5; Prov. 2:15; Acts 2:40; Phil. 2:15. The man who is crooked in his dealings must be made straight—must become honest. His crooked ways must be eliminated. A man cannot detour over crooked ways and reach the kingdom. "And the rough ways smooth." Some otherwise good people are rough and crude. Some are worse; it gives them some feeling of superiority to disregard the feelings and rights of other people. They are noisy, blustering, and overbearing pests. They must become meek, considerate, and forbearing. These things are just as necessary now for citizenship in the kingdom of heaven as they were for the preparatory state of the kingdom. And those who under the influence of the gospel of Christ, make such preparation as here set forth, shall see the salvation of God.

7, 8. He said therefore to the multitudes that went out to be baptized of him, Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves. We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

7, 8. From Matthew⁷ 3:1 it appears that John began his preaching in the wilderness bordering on the river Jordan. Later he baptized in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there. (John 3:23.) He baptized great multitudes of people. Because he baptized people he was called the Baptist. John did not flatter these people who came to him to be baptized. He was no time server, courting the favor of the people. Had he been such, he would have said something like this: "This is a great audience; I see people here from our capital city, the great Jerusalem, and from every point in this great land of Judea. You are interested in the right or you would not be here." To call a congregation a brood of snakes lacks a lot of being flattery. But the people were corrupt, and yet satisfied in their formal religion, and needed to be aroused

to a sense of their guilt. "Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" "Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance." Or, practice deeds showing that you have repented. If a person professes to have repented, he should live in harmony with his claims. A repentance that does not lead to reformation is not repentance. "And begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father." That must have sounded strange to Jewish ears, for they had always prided themselves on being children of Abraham; that was their unfailing boast. No such preaching had they heard before. Under Christ, their being sons of Abraham would count for nothing. "For I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." This refers to spiritual children of Abraham, for no power could make a stone into a blood descendant of Abraham. God was not so limited that he had to depend on the natural descendants of Abraham for his servants; such as are servants are the true seed of Abraham.

9. And even now the axe also lieth at the root of the trees: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

9. No one wants a tree in his orchard that bears no fruit, or fruit that is worthless. A professed servant of God, like a tree, is expected to bear good fruit. If not, the same fate awaits him that awaits the worthless tree. John's statement is a strong affirmation that even the children of Abraham would be cut down, unless they bore good fruit.

Parallel passage in Matthew:—"And even now the axe lieth at the root of the trees: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you in water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing-floor; and he will gather his wheat into the garner, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire." (Matt. 3:10-12.)

Citizenship and blessings in this new kingdom that was near

would depend on individual conduct. The fate of the wicked would be the fate of the worthless tree. While John could baptize only in water, the coming Messiah would baptize in the Holy Spirit and in fire. Then John speaks of the wicked as chaff, which is to be burned up; the righteous as wheat, which is gathered into the garner. Fire is mentioned in these three verses. In verses 10 and 12 it certainly refers to the fire of punishment as all agree. The laws of language require that we so understand it in verse 11. John spoke to a mixed audience, some of them would be baptized in the Holy Spirit, some would be baptized in the fire of torment. When Jesus referred to this baptism speaking to his trusted disciples, he referred to this statement of John, but left off the baptism of fire. (Acts 1:4, 5.) Only the wicked were baptized in fire.

10, 11. And the multitudes asked him, saying, What then must we do? And he answered and said unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath food, let him do likewise.

10, 11. "And the multitudes asked him, saying, What then must we do?" That was an appropriate question. If they must live so as to show that their professed repentance was genuine—if they must bear good fruit or be cut down and cast into the fire,—what must they do? There are always some things necessary to be done to obtain any end, whether the end be material or spiritual. The doctrine that a person cannot do anything to gain any spiritual blessings is hurtful in the extreme. "And he said unto them, He that hath two coats let him impart to him that hath none, and he that hath food, let him do likewise." What ever the needs of others may be, we must do what we can to relieve their distress. This requires sacrifice, but the kingdom of God had its beginning in sacrifice. One who has not caught the spirit of sacrifice has not drawn very near to God.

12, 13. And there came also publicans to be baptized, and they said unto him, Teacher, what must we do? And he said unto them, Extort no more than that which is appointed to you.

12, 13. "And there came also publicans to be baptized."

These were the tax-collectors for the Roman government. A Jew who became a tax-collector was despised by the other Jews. Some of them resorted to all sorts of means to collect more taxes than a man should justly pay. But these who came to John to be baptized were evidently interested in doing right. "And they said unto him, Teacher, what must we do?" This question shows their interest and that they knew that something must be done by them. They had not adopted the idea that men can do nothing to avoid God's wrath. "And he said unto them, Extort no more than that which is appointed you." Any amount the collector obtained above the appointed amount was his. The Jew, with no citizenship, was more or less at the mercy of any unscrupulous Roman officer. If the publican demanded an exorbitant tax, what could the Jew do but pay it? Dishonest men would want a position like that, and could afford to pay more for the place than could an honest man. We have no evidence that all publicans were dishonest, but the office was filled with temptations to dishonesty. The office itself was not wrong. A government must have taxes, and some one must do the collecting. John exhorted these publicans to be honest in the affairs of their office.

14. And soldiers also asked him, saying, And we, what must we do? And he said unto them, Extort from no man by violence, neither accuse any one wrongfully; and be content with your wages.

14. "And soldiers also asked him, saying, And we, what must we do?" Whether these were Jews that had been enlisted as soldiers we know not, but it is more likely that they were. "And he said unto them, Extort from no man by violence, neither accuse any one wrongfully." The Jews were not citizens, but subjects, of the Roman government. Soldiers, policing a country like that, would be domineering and arrogant. The rendering of the King James Version, "Do violence to no man," is not borne out by the original, and the American Standard Version renders it, "Extort from no man by violence." "And be content with your wages." What ever can be said about the right or the wrong of Christians going to war,

we cannot believe that John meant for these men to go on drawing pay as soldiers and then refuse to fight when the time came. That would be as dishonest as any other fraud.

15. And as the people were in expectation, and all men reasoned in their hearts concerning John, whether haply he were the Christ.

15. When John began his ministry the Jews were in a state of both vexation and expectation. They were vexed that they were under subjection to the Roman government. They were expecting a Deliverer. Prophecies, too numerous to mention here, had foretold the coming of a Redeemer. Thinking that when the Deliverer came he would free them from Roman rule and restore their kingdom as of old, John's mission was two-fold. He came to get the people ready for the Lord, and to introduce the Lord to the people. The first point is presented in his teaching; the second point is set forth by John himself: "And I knew him not; but that he should be made manifest to Israel, for this cause came I baptizing in water — And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize in water, he said to me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding upon him, the same is he that baptizeth in the Holy Spirit. And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." Later John pointed him out, saying, "Behold, the lamb of God." When John's preaching that the kingdom of heaven was at hand became known throughout Jewry, it was natural for the people to question among themselves, "Is John, the Messiah?" Even the authorities in Jerusalem became interested, and sent men to inquire of John if he were the Christ. Their parting questions: "Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? Why then baptizest thou, if thou art not the Christ, neither Elijah, neither the prophet?" (See John 1:19-25.)

Some Reflections

"John came, who baptized in the wilderness and preached the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins." (Mark 1:4.)
 "And he came into all the region round about the Jordan,

preaching the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins." (Luke 3:3.) John did not baptize those whose sins were already forgiven, for they came to his baptism confessing their sins (Matt 3:5, 6) and were baptized unto remission of sins.

That John baptized no infants is clearly seen from the facts that he demanded repentance, that those whom he baptized confessed their sins, and that he called on those he baptized to live so as to show that they had really repented. From Paul we learn also that he called upon those he baptized to believe on the coming Christ. (Acts 19:4.) And that settles that.

Matthew 3

13. Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

13. "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan unto John." Most likely this long journey was made on foot. He would not have gone so far, about a hundred miles, to perform a mere nonessential ceremony. Yet he had come to John "to be baptized of him." He did not come confessing his sins as did the others whom John baptized, for he had no sins; and of course he was not baptized for the remission of sins. But it was his Father's will, his Father's command and he came to do the will of his Father.

14. 15. But John would have hindered him. saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? But Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

14, 15. John would have hindered him saying, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" This shows that John knew the purity of the life of Jesus, but he did not then know him to be the Son of God and the Savior of the world. "And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize in water, he said unto me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding upon him, the same is he that baptizeth in the Holy Spirit. And I have seen, and have borne

witness that this is the Son of God." (John 1:33, 34.) A person does not really know another till he knows what he is. Being cousins, John and Jesus must have often met at the various feasts at Jerusalem which all law abiding Jews attended, but nothing had transpired to cause John to really know him to be the Son of God till God so revealed him at his baptism. But knowing the superior life of Jesus, John thought it more appropriate that Jesus should baptize him than that he should baptize Jesus. This shows that John was not baptizing people because they were righteous, but because they were sinners. If it be said that John did not baptize Jesus for the remission of sins, my reply is that neither did he baptize him because his sins had been forgiven. Jesus himself gave his reason for being baptized. "But Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." This does not mean that in being baptized one fulfills all righteousness, but that one must be baptized to fulfill all righteousness. If he fails to be baptized, he fails in that particular thing to do right. A person assumes an awful responsibility when he fails to do anything that God commands. Jesus was urging upon John the necessity of doing everything God commands. "Then he suffered him." Then John baptized him.

16. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway from the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him.

16. "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway from the water." Mark says Jesus "was baptized of John in [marginal reading Greek, into] the Jordan." Hence, Jesus was baptized, or dipped, into the river Jordan. Then Mark says, "And straightway coming up out of the water." These circumstances would not attend sprinkling or pouring. If I even thought that God in his mercy might accept sprinkling or pouring for baptism, I would still want to do just what the Lord did. I would want to be buried with him in baptism. "And lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him." As the

descent of the Spirit upon him was one of the means of pointing him out as the Son of God, we must not conclude that only Jesus saw the Spirit. As the Spirit assumed the form of a dove, the appearance must have been visible to all who were present. We know that John saw, for he tells us so. "I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." (John 1:34.) The others also must have seen the form and heard the voice.

17. And lo, a voice out of the heavens, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

17. Jesus is now entering upon his public ministry, entering upon his great mediatorial work; and he begins it with the full assurance that his Father is well pleased with him, and the people present are assured of the same fact.

It was the will of God that the people should be baptized by John, and in that baptism they obtained the remission of sins. While Jesus was not baptized for the remission of sins, he was baptized to do the will of God. He could not be of the number who, in refusing to be baptized, rejected the will of God. (See Luke 7:29, 30.) The baptism of Jesus was recognized and exalted as few other deeds have ever been exalted. John, the greatest among men, was the administrator; Jesus, the Son of God and the Savior of man, our Lord and Master, was the subject; the Holy Spirit gave his sanction and endorsement by descending visibly upon the Son of God; and the Father in heaven gave his approval by a voice from heaven. The greatest man and the three persons of the Godhead took part in the act; has there ever been another scene like it? How foolish and puny is he who now seeks to belittle that which has been so signally honored!

Matthew 4

LESSON LINKS

Temptation is the act of tempting or being tempted. It is well therefore, in studying this lesson, to consider some of the meanings and uses of the word tempt. To tempt does not

always mean to stir up in a person an inclination or desire to do a thing, nor even that an effort is made to do so. Some of the older meanings of tempt were, to prove, test, try. Webster also gives these definitions: To endeavor to persuade, incite; to lead, or endeavor to lead, into evil; to provoke, as anger, or a person to anger; to act presumptuously toward; as, to tempt God. In various ways God tested or proved his people to see whether they were really obedient to him; but the devil always tempts people in the sense that he seeks to induce them to do evil. In that sense God tempts no one. When the devil presents inducements to get a person to do wrong, the person is said to be tempted even though the devil's offer may not have affected the person at all. No one ever tempts Jehovah in the sense that he seeks to induce him to do wrong; but the Israelites often tempted him in the sense that they were presumptuous toward him, and also in that they demanded unreasonable signs of his presence with them. They thus tempted him to anger. We frequently speak of being tempted to do a thing, whether good or bad when we are inclined to do it; and so we get the idea that a person is tempted only when he feels an inclination to do a thing. In the temptations of Jesus, was he inclined to do evil? His temptation is sometimes compared with the temptation of Eve in the garden of Eden. In her temptation there was an appeal to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. In this respect the temptation of Jesus was much like hers; but here the likeness stops. She lent a willing ear to what the devil said to her; Jesus met every temptation of the devil with an indignant rebuff. The devil tempted Jesus in the sense that he endeavored to induce him to do wrong, but there is no proof that Jesus at any time had the least inclination to do the thing the devil suggested. Can anyone believe that the devil stirred up any evil desires in the Savior's heart? Is not a desire to do an evil thing wrong in itself? (See Matt. 5:27.) Can anyone believe that Jesus was contaminated by any evil thoughts or base desires? It is true that he was tempted in all points like as we are, but that does not necessarily mean that he felt as we do when tempted, that he had the same impulse to do wrong that

we sometimes feel. Offer a bottle of whiskey to a toper and to one who never drinks; the same temptation is presented to both, but it certainly does not affect both in the same way. Here is a comforting promise: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it." (1 Cor. 10:13.) Finding this way of escape is our responsibility.

1, 2. Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he afterward hungered.

1, 2. It is not necessary, not even reasonable, to suppose that Jesus was never tempted before his baptism. He had lived a normal life and of course had much the same trials as others had. No normal person is free from temptation. Neither should we conclude that Jesus was not tempted after the experiences of this lesson. None of the disciples were with him during the temptations of this lesson; yet Jesus said to them on the night of his betrayal, "But ye are they that have continued with me in my temptations." (Luke 22:28.) The temptations of our lesson are frequently referred to as the temptation of Jesus, but there were really three distinct temptations. It appears that they came immediately after his baptism. With characteristic force of expression Mark says, "And straightway the spirit driveth him forth into the wilderness." Jesus did not voluntarily go into these temptations—he was led, or driven into the wilderness to be tempted. Before entering on his ministry he must be put to the severest test. He had come into Satan's territory to bind him and to spoil his goods—to wrest from him his control of men. At the very beginning of his ministry there must be a test of strength, the enemy of man against the friend of man, with our destiny in the balance. The devil's aim was to lead Jesus into sin, and so make it impossible for him to be the Savior. On the part of God these temptations were to prove by the severest test that Jesus was a worthy Savior, a worthy antagonist against the devil. Jesus fasted

forty days and forty nights. Moses and Elijah had done the same thing. (Ex. 34:28; 1 Kings 19:8.) Others have fasted even longer. "He afterward hungered." It has been said that the fact that he did not hunger during the forty days shows that his appetite was miraculously suspended; but that conclusion is hardly necessary. One fact seems generally to have been overlooked: Luke says he was tempted during the forty days; but he gives no idea as the nature of the temptations of the forty days. It is a well known fact that people can be under such emotional strain that no sense of hunger is felt. It seems that the devil then departed for a time, that he might try him from other angles. When the strain of the temptations of the forty days were over, the pangs of hunger would be all but overwhelming, and yet Jesus had with him nothing to eat. It is said that hunger and thirst are the strongest passions that take possession of human beings. How intense must have been his hunger!

3, 4. And the tempter came and said unto him. If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

3, 4. While Jesus was so intensely hungry, the devil strikes. "And the tempter came and said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." This language shows that after the forty days in which Jesus was being tempted, the devil had, for a short space, been away from Jesus. There is an insinuating "if" in his suggestion, an "if" that implies doubt. It was a challenge for Jesus to prove that he was the Son of God. Jesus did not propose to do one thing the devil suggested, even though he was greatly in need of food. Neither did he propose to prove anything to the devil. What would he have gained by proving anything to the devil? There was no one else there to witness the proof, and the proof would not have benefited the devil. Besides, the devil knew without proof that he was the Son of God. Even the evil spirits in men knew who Jesus was. "It is written" meant more to Jesus than supplying himself with needed food at the suggestion of the devil. A wicked man may, on occasion, give good advice so as to

get us in the habit of doing what he suggests. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked." (Ps. 1:1.) "The counsel of the wicked is far from me." (Job 21:16.) Instead of following the counsel of the devil, Jesus relied on the counsel inspired men had written. There is more to life than eating food; food for the body, though essential, is not enough; we must live by every word of God. The spiritual man needs food no less than does the physical man. Too many professed Christians live very much as the animals do; their whole efforts are directed toward supplying their physical needs and desires. As a result, we have many weak and sickly church members. The devil did not fool Jesus, but he has fooled many Christians at this point.

5-7. Then the devil taketh him into the holy city; and he set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and, On their hands they shall bear thee up, Lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, Again it is written, Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God.

5-7. The devil took Jesus to Jerusalem. Jesus allowed him to arrange the temptations in his own way and where he pleased. This would make the victory of Jesus all the more striking. Again the devil uses the insinuating "if," that implies doubt and a challenge for Jesus to prove himself to be the Son of God; but if a person is not going to make proper use of the truth or a fact, no good can come of proving it to him. Jesus intended to prove only one thing to the devil, and that was, that the devil could not lead him astray. The devil also quotes scripture; but he had no good design in doing so—he was perverting it from its intended use to his own purposes. God never promised to protect anyone in a vain effort to show off. If God had commanded Jesus to jump off the pinnacle of the temple, promising that angels would bear him up, he could have well done so, confidently relying on the promise of God; but no one can follow the suggestions of the devil, and have any right to claim any of God's promises. If you would rely on God's promises, obey him instead of the devil. To follow the devil, and claim

God's promises is to tempt God. "Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God." We must not put God to the test in any matters where he has not spoken. To seek to put God to the test under conditions concerning which he has given no commandment, nor made any promise, is decidedly wrong. This should be plain to anyone; and yet even today many religious people leave undone things that God has commanded and do things that he has not commanded, and then expect him to fulfill to them the promises he has made to those who do his will. If Jesus had done what the devil suggested, he would have done what these people are constantly doing.

8-11. Again, the devil taketh him unto an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and he said unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then said Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him; and behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

8-11. We are not informed as to the location of this mountain. On this exceeding high mountain the devil presented to the Savior's view all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. That was a glittering scene to behold. For what the devil here offered Jesus men of all ages past—the Nebuchadnezzars, the Cyruses, the Alexanders, the Caesars, the Napoleons—have waded, so to speak, through his own blood. Was then? an easier way, a shorter route, to gain these kingdoms and their glory? Yes said the devil; just fall down and worship me, and all shall be thine. Luke's report is a little fuller: "To thee will I give all this authority, and the glory of them: for it hath been delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will give it. If therefore thou wilt worship before me, it shall all be thine." There must have been some truth in what the devil said, for Jesus did not dispute his claim. These things were not the devil's by right, but by deception and conquest. It seems that the devil overstated his power when he said, "To whomsoever I will give it." God's power is greater than the devil's; and his providence still controls the destiny of nations when it suits his purpose to do so. (See such passages as Dan. 4:17, 25,

32; Jer. 27:4-8.)

Jesus met all the temptations with an appeal to the word of God—"It is written." If Christians would follow his example, temptations would not work such ruin; but, alas! so many Christians are not sufficiently acquainted with the scriptures to be able to say on all occasions, "It is written." Now the devil realized the superiority of Jesus, acknowledges his defeat by leaving him. "Then the devil leaveth him; and behold angels came and ministered unto him." Heaven was interested in that conflict. God is interested in every conflict we have with the devil and his emissaries. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to them that love him. 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 1:12-14.)

Some Reflections

To give proof to a person who will make bad use of it is like casting pearls before swine—it is likely only to enrage him.

It has been said that it is useless to quote the Bible to one who does not believe it, but those who make such statements fail to take into account the example of Jesus; he quoted scripture to the devil. There is power in an appropriate passage of scripture that even a disbeliever cannot evade. He may fight back at it, but he cannot get away from it. Besides, in quoting scripture when tempted you show your confidence in the wisdom and care of the author of it.

John 1

LESSON LINKS

It seems that immediately after his baptism Jesus entered

on his forty days of temptation. John does not mention the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness. In the meantime John's preaching attracted so much attention that the authorities in Jerusalem thought it necessary to inquire into John's work. They therefore sent a committee down to make inquiry of John. To this committee he confessed that he was not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet, but was a voice crying in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord." He also said, "In the midst of you standeth one whom ye know not." (John 1:19-27.) It would seem from this that Jesus had already returned from his days of temptation.

29, 30. On the morrow he seeth Jesus coming unto him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man who is become before me: for he was before me.

29, 30. "On the morrow." That was the next day after John was questioned by the committee of priests and Levites, which had been sent by the Pharisees in Jerusalem. As Jesus was coming to John, John said to the people, "Behold, the lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" John's statement is worthy of note. He did not say "sins of the world," but "sin of the world." The sin of the world is unbelief, a lack of confidence and trust in the wisdom, power, and goodness of God. The Romans trusted in their government, the Greeks trusted in their philosophy, and the Pharisees trusted in their own righteousness; none of these trusted in God. Jesus would take away that sin by leading people back to God. That was the purpose of his coming; but even now so few people realize their need of God. And because people have turned away from God and ceased to trust him, the world is sunk in sin and suffering. The world is now conscious of its suffering, but does not know how to recover itself. That Jesus is here called the Lamb of God suggests the fact that he was to be the sacrifice for sin. Only he can take away the sin of the world; there is no substitute. Only on the grounds that John recognized Jesus as deity can his statement be consistent: "After me cometh a man who is become before me: for he was before me." He existed before

John, for he was in the beginning with God: but his active personal ministry followed John's. Not in the least degree did John try to exalt himself, but acknowledged the superiority of the one that was coming after him.

31-34. And I knew him not; but that he should be made manifest to Israel, for this cause came I baptizing in water. And John bare witness saying, I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven; and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize in water, he said unto me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon him, the same is he that baptizeth in the Holy Spirit. And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.

31-34. "I knew him not." Yet when Jesus came to John for baptism, John said to him, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" (Matt 3:14.) John must have known that Jesus was a good man. Elizabeth, the mother of John, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, were kinspeople, and knew each other. (Luke 1:36.) If they were not in the habit of visiting each other, they must have met in Jerusalem when they attended the feasts. It is therefore almost certain that Jesus and John had often met, and were acquainted. John did not know Jesus to be the Son of God. One may be acquainted with another and yet not know him. One of the purposes of John's baptism was to make Christ manifest to the world. He came to make ready a people for the Lord, and to introduce the Lord to the people. When Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit came upon him in visible form—"He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him." (Matt. 3:16.) John also saw "the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and it abode upon him." To John this was infallible proof that this Jesus whom he had just baptized was the Son of God, though he had not before known this; for previous to this event God had said to John, "Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon him, the same is he that baptizeth in the Holy Spirit. And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." John knew not therefore till he had baptized him that this Jesus, his kinsman, was the Son of God. One wonders how John felt as he baptized each man, wondering if this man is the one

upon whom the Holy Spirit will descend. But when he did baptize the coming one, the proof that he was the Son of God left no room for doubt; John then knew him to be the Son of God. John then knew that his fame would decrease as the fame of the Son of God increased, yet he did not feel resentful, but rather rejoiced, saying "But the friend of the bridegroom, that standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is made full. He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:29, 30.) John was not ambitious for fame; he is worthy of imitation.

35-37. Again on the morrow John was standing, and two of his disciples: And he looked upon Jesus as he walked, and said, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

35-37. "Again on the morrow"—the next day after John gave his testimony recorded in verses 29-34. Two of John's disciples were with him, and heard him again bear witness to Jesus, saying, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" Jesus was walking nearby when this was said. "And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." There were then two ways in which people might follow Jesus: they might follow him in his travels, and they might follow his teaching. These two disciples then followed Jesus in a literal sense, and later became followers of him in his teaching. It is in the latter sense that we can now follow Jesus; and in this sense we must follow him, if we ever go where he is.

38, 39. And Jesus turned, and beheld them following, and saith unto them. What seek ye? And they said unto him, Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Teacher), where abidest thou? He saith unto them. Come and see. They came therefore and saw where he abode: and they abode with him that day: it was about the tenth hour.

38, 39. When Jesus said to the two disciples that were following him, "What seek ye?" they did not give him a direct answer. Perhaps they had nothing very definite in their minds; so they parried the question by asking Jesus where he was abiding. It is evident that they wanted to form a close acquaintance with him; what they expected to get out of that

acquaintance could not at that time have been clear in their minds. What John had said about Jesus made them want to know him, and they were following him that they might come to know him. Jesus invited them to come and see where he was abiding. And we can well imagine that those two disciples were made glad by such a gracious invitation. A record of the conversation on that day between the three would be interesting, though to know what was said is not essential to our salvation. But these disciples went away from that interview firmly convinced that Jesus was the Messiah.

40-42. One of the two that heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He findeth first his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah (which is, being interpreted, Christ). He brought him unto Jesus. Jesus looked upon him, and said, Thou art Simon the son of John: thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation, Peter).

40-42. Being fully convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, Andrew hastened to find his brother Simon to make to him the glad announcement, "We have found the Messiah." Many prophecies, too numerous to discuss here, had foretold the coming of a Savior, a redeemer, a king—the Messiah, or Christ. That is the reason John's announcement that the kingdom of heaven was at hand created such great interest. "The people were in expectation, and all men reasoned in their hearts concerning John, whether haply he were the Christ." (Luke 3:15.) That is the reason the Pharisees sent the committee to make inquiry of John himself. (John 1:19-27.) Now the two disciples, humble fishermen, had found the Messiah. As John habitually mentions the names of others, but not of himself, the other disciple, not named by the writer, is thought to have been John the writer. What he did is not mentioned, but it is very probable that he hunted up his brother James. It was natural for Andrew to seek first his brother Simon; it was natural for him to be more interested in his brother than in anyone else. "He brought him unto Jesus." This, of course, was in a literal, physical sense—brought Simon into the presence of Jesus. To bring people to Jesus in faith, penitence, and obedience is a

duty laid upon Christians, a duty which they should be glad to discharge to the best of their ability. Every Christian should in a reasonable length of time be able to teach others the way of life; God expects it of us. (Heb. 5:12.) You may not be able to lead another to Christ, but you must try to do so; and if you back up your effort by the right kind of life, you will succeed in causing some one to become a Christian. "Take heed to thyself, and to thy teaching. Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee." (1 Tim. 4:16.) Jesus said to Simon, "Thou shalt be called Cephas." John adds by way of explanation to Greek readers, "Which is by interpretation, Peter"—Greek "Petros," which means rock or stone, Simon the stone. Peter, or Petros, is therefore a descriptive title; later he was called Peter more often than Simon. His life shows that he lived up to his name—sometimes moved like a stone, and yet firm in his faith in Christ, even unto death.

John 2

1. And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there.

1. "And the third day." That is, after the calling of Nathanael, mentioned in the latter part of chapter one. "There was a marriage in Cana." Not far from Nazareth. "And the mother of Jesus was there." This is one of the few glimpses we have of Mary the mother of Jesus. The writers of the New Testament did not exalt her as do the Roman Catholics. She comes into view only in connection with some important event in the life of her Son.

2. And Jesus also was bidden, and his disciples, to the marriage.

2. We are not informed as to how many were in the group of his immediate followers at this time. Jesus and his mother

were either kinsfolk or close friends of those giving this marriage feast.

3. And when the wine failed, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.

3. "And when the wine failed." Wine was a part of such feasts; and for it to fail would be very humiliating to any host. "The mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine." Just what she expected him to do about it we have not the slightest idea. But her interest in the affair showed that she was in some way closely related to that home, and felt some responsibility for the success of the feast; neither did she want the host to be embarrassed about the shortage of wine.

4. And Jesus saith unto her, Woman what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.

4. She was thinking of the success of the feast and the feelings of their host; Jesus was thinking of the success of his mission. What he did would be so arranged as to promote that end. When the wine was so exhausted that there would be no mistake as to what was done he would act. More was said than is reported; otherwise that was not a talkative gathering for such an occasion. Jesus must have given Mary some hint that he would act when the proper time came. The manner of her speech to the servants indicates this.

5. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.

5. Jesus had performed no miracle before this; yet she believed in some way he would meet the emergency.

6-11. Now there were six waterpots of stone set there after the Jew's manner of purifying, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus said unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the ruler of the feast. And they bare it. And when the ruler of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and knew not whence it was (but the servants that had drawn the water knew), the ruler of the feast calleth the bridegroom, and saith unto him, 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. This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

6-11. Jesus commanded the servants to fill up the six waterpots with water. When the waterpots were filled, he said to them, "Draw out now, and bear unto the ruler of the feast." "And when the ruler of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and knew not whence it was (but the servants that had drawn the water knew), the ruler of the feast calleth the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man setteth on first the good wine; and when men have drunk freely, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now." John adds, "This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed on him." They had believed before this, but this sign strengthened their faith.

John 3

LESSON LINKS

From Cana Jesus, his mother, and disciples went down to Capernaum. (John 2:1-12.) When the time drew near for the Passover, he went up to Jerusalem. While there, probably before the Passover, he cleansed the temple of unholy traffic, and did many other signs.

1, 2. Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to him by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him.

1, 2. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, and also a member of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was really more than a high court, for it ruled the Jews. Only three times is Nicodemus mentioned, and each time by John. Each time he appears as a

friend of Jesus. Once, in seeking to prevent the court's hasty condemnation of Jesus, he said, "Doth our law judge a man, except it first hear from himself and know what he doeth?" (John 7:51.) He also assisted Joseph in burying Jesus. (John 19:38-40.) Early in the ministry of Jesus Nicodemus was favorably impressed by the teaching and the miracles of Jesus, and therefore sought this interview with him. Some have said he came to Jesus by night, because he was too cowardly to come by day; but that does not seem to be true, for he had enough courage to demand that the council give Jesus a fair trial. It is more in keeping with what we know of him to conclude that he came by night so as to have a quiet talk with Jesus, which he could not have by day when the crowds were pressing upon him. Nicodemus knew of the miracles of Jesus, perhaps had seen some of them; he spoke very positively to Jesus, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God." Rabbi, a title of honor among the Jews, was conferred upon distinguished teachers of the law. It literally signified my master. Whether Nicodemus included other members of the court when he said, "We know," is a matter of conjecture. Perhaps it was an indefinite expression like our "We all know," "Everybody knows," etc. By the expression, "a teacher come from God," he meant a teacher whom God had sent, an inspired teacher, and not one appointed by man, as were the teachers among the Jews. Nicodemus was thoughtful enough to recognize the genuineness of the signs which Jesus did, and to know that no man of his own ability could perform such signs. He knew, therefore, that Jesus was a teacher sent from God. He knew what all religious people of today should know, namely, that miracles could be performed only by men whom God had sent on a special mission; to Nicodemus these miracles were signs that God was with the teacher, that the teacher represented God. It does not seem that he had grasped the idea that Jesus was the long-expected Messiah. But he did have the correct idea of miracles wrought in connection with a teacher of religion; to him they were a sign of God's endorsement of the teacher—signs that God had sent the teacher as his representative.

3-7. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I say unto thee, Ye must be born anew.

3-7. When we consider the importance of this interview and the importance of the subject discussed, it is reasonable to conclude that John gives us a very condensed report of this conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. It seems that something, not reported, must have led up to the Lord's statement: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Verily, verily," introduces a solemn affirmation. The state of Nicodemus' mind required a solemn affirmation to impress him; for, like all other Jews, he would think that his being a Jew would give him a place in the kingdom which they expected. Something, therefore must have been said about the expected kingdom. Jesus would give him to understand at once that his being a Jew would count for nothing in his favor. "Except one"—any one—the greatest as well as the lowest, the Jew as well as the Gentile. To Nicodemus it must have been a startling statement—a son of Abraham, a high official in God's chosen nation, must be born again, or he cannot see the kingdom of God! To see the kingdom is to enjoy its blessings. As the child is born into the kingdom of nature, so are people born into the kingdom of God. There is no other way to enter this kingdom. Because Nicodemus had his mind on the natural birth, the language of Jesus greatly puzzled him. He could not see how it was possible for an old man, such as he, to experience another physical birth. Jesus answered him by saying, "Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." Whatever the new birth is, it must be experienced by any one in order to enter the kingdom of God.

The New Birth.—Theologians have made such a mystery of the new birth that many people have been so confused that they have made no effort to become children of God. It is plain

that Jesus put the responsibility of the new birth on Nicodemus. It is plain that the new birth puts one into the kingdom; he passes out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of Christ. Because one enters this new life, the change is called a birth. In becoming a Christian, one is born again. In other places the process of becoming a Christian is called conversion, turning again, creation, making alive, and other designations. No meaning must be attached to these terms, or any certain combination of them that will contradict, or make useless, the others. Literally, to be born and to be created are very different processes, yet both terms are applied to the process of becoming a Christian. When a thing is literally created, it is not born; yet the change in becoming a Christian is so great that it may be called a birth or creation. It is also a turning again. One thing is worthy of note, and that is, when the apostles told sinners what to do to be saved, they never told them to be born again nor be created anew. They told them in plain language what to do. Hence, the best way to find out—in fact, the only way to find out—what the new birth is or what the new creation is, is to find out what sinners did under the preaching of the apostles. In cases of conversions, we learn what it is to be born again. To be born again is figurative language, and one is born again when he believes, repents, and is baptized. Hence to be born of water and the Spirit is to believe what the Spirit teaches and to be baptized as the Spirit directs. No apostle ever said to alien sinners, "Ye must be born anew," but told them plainly what to do to be saved. The flesh is born of flesh; the spirit of man is born of the Spirit. It is the spirit of man, not his flesh that is born anew. Hence Nicodemus need not have marveled at the truth that entering the spiritual kingdom is a new birth.

8-12. The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a teacher in Israel, and understandest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen; and ye received not our witness. If I told you earthly things and ye believed not, how shall ye

believe if I tell you heavenly things?

8-12. Many people think that verse eight shows the new birth to be a great mystery, which no one can understand; but it seems that Jesus expected Nicodemus to understand it. "Art thou a teacher of Israel, and understandest not these things?" said Jesus. He should have known that Jesus was speaking figuratively, and not urging a man to undergo another physical birth. But Jesus was not explaining in the eighth verse what the new birth is, but that a man when he is old can be born again. Notice the last clause: "So is every one that is born of the Spirit." He does not say, "So is every one born of the Spirit." He is talking about the one that is born, and not how he is born. You cannot see the wind, but you know it blows by observing or experiencing its effects. You cannot see a man's spirit, but you know the man has a spirit by observing or experiencing its effects. It is the spirit in man that is born anew. Nicodemus still did not understand. "How can these things be?" His wrong ideas about the kingdom were in the way of understanding. He with all other Jews, expected a material kingdom, and all Jews would be citizens of it by virtue of their fleshly birth. They thought the kingdom would be a Jewish kingdom, and that the Jews would rule the earth. Now to be told that he and all others must be born again to enter the kingdom which he thought would be his by blood right was beyond his understanding. To put Nicodemus in a more teachable mood, Jesus said to him, "Art thou a teacher of Israel, and understandest not these things?" When a man continues to raise objections to a proposition of which he is ignorant, no one can teach him till he is made to realize his ignorance. If Nicodemus had not believed what Jesus said about things that take place here on earth, he would not believe if he told him of heavenly things. Hence there was nothing to be gained by telling him about his future reign on a throne in heaven.

In studying this lesson, we must not overlook the truth that the kingdom had not yet been established, and that no one

could be born into it before it was established. Nicodemus could not at that time have been born into the kingdom of Christ. Jesus was seeking to set before him the spiritual nature of his kingdom when established.

13-17. And no one hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man, who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life. 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. For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him.

13-17. It seems that commentators have had a lot of unnecessary trouble with verse thirteen. Why not take a common sense view, namely, that the words of Jesus to Nicodemus ended with verse twelve, and that verses 13-21 are the words of John the writer? Jesus had not ascended to heaven and was not in the bosom of the Father while he was talking to Nicodemus; but he had ascended when John wrote. Verses fourteen and fifteen refer to an incident recorded in Num. 21:4-9. The Israelites were not pleased with their lot. "And the people spake against God, and Moses." To punish them, "Jehovah sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died." Instead of taking away the serpents as the people had requested, Jehovah had Moses to make a serpent of brass and erect it on a standard, with the following provisional promise: "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he seeth it, shall live." In like manner Jesus was lifted up on the cross, "that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life." If any refused to look at the serpent of brass, he died; if any refuses to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, he perishes. The expression, "lifted up." refers to his being lifted up on the cross. God's love prompted the giving of his Son to be "lifted up." "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." "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13.) "But God commendeth his own love toward us, in

that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8.) God's love was without limit—he so loved that he gave his only begotten Son, making it possible for all men to be saved. The "whosoever" includes all men who will by faith accept salvation through Christ Jesus. It shows the world-wide plan of salvation through Christ. Even after the gospel began to be preached, some time elapsed before the early Christians, including the apostles, realized that the gospel was for all men. At the house of Cornelius Peter said, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable of him." Peter had not seen this before. God so loved the world that he gave, and we must so love that we give ourselves in his service. "For God sent not his Son into the world to judge the world." Jesus came to save the world, not to judge it. When he comes again, he will come to judge the world. (Matt. 25:31-46.) The sinner will be condemned to eternal punishment; the righteous will be received into eternal life. The people were lost when Jesus came. "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." If Jesus had not come, no one would have been saved.

Some Reflections

In saying, "Ye must be born an-^d w," Jesus put the responsibility on man. If man was wholly passive in the new birth, it would be useless to tell him that he must be born again.

Jesus came to save sinners, not to make sinners. People were sinners before Jesus came; and they would have continued to be sinners had not Jesus come. If people do not believe in him, they continue sinning just as they would have done had he not come.

People like mysteries. They like to wonder how people are born again, how they are created anew, and how sinners are made alive. But it is more important that they study the cases of conversion under the preaching of inspired men, and find out how people were saved from sin. To be saved is what the

Savior meant by being born anew.

John 4

LESSON LINKS

After the conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus went out into the country of Judea, and spent some time in teaching and baptizing. (John 3:22.) Jesus baptized in the sense that he authorized his disciples to do it. It appears that John's friends became jealous when they learned that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John. To allay such feelings, Jesus left Judea to go into Galilee. "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 Judea, and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs pass through Samaria." (John 4:1-4.) When he arrived at Jacob's well, being weary with his journey, he sat down for rest, most likely on the well's curbing. His disciples went into the city to buy food; and in the meantime a woman came out from the city to draw water.

7-9. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. For his disciples were gone away into the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman therefore saith unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a Samaritan woman? (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

7-9. While Jesus was waiting for the disciples to return from the city with food, a Samaritan woman came to the well for water. Such tasks fell to the lot of the women in those days. Jesus, being weary and thirsty, said to the woman, "Give me to drink." By asking a favor of her he could establish such friendly relations with her as would give him an opening to teach her. She knew how the Jews hated the Samaritans, and was astonished that one would ask a favor of her. The Jews

might, as the disciples were then doing, purchase a necessity from a Samaritan, but would ask of them no favors. No proud Jew wanted to be under obligations to a Samaritan. The marginal note in the American Standard Version, says. "Some ancient authorities omit For the Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." It was, perhaps, an explanatory note added by some copyist. If not that, then it was an explanatory note added by John to give the attitude of the Jews toward Samaritans. The expression, to fit the occasion, means that Jews had no social dealings with Samaritans—no exchange of courtesies between the two peoples. Jesus knew that his request would surprise the woman—his speech and clothing would reveal to her that he was a Jew. Too surprised to answer his request immediately, she asks how is it that a Jew asks drink of a Samaritan.

10-15. Jesus answered and said unto her. 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 woman saith unto him, 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? Jesus answered and said unto her. 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 woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come all the way hither to draw.

10-15. To the woman Jesus was just a thirsty Jew—one who did not mind asking a Samaritan woman for a favor. Having broken the ice, so to speak, he now sought to teach her about spiritual things. "If thou knewest." She knew not who was talking to her, nor the gift he had to offer. So often people are "alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them." (Eph. 4:18.) This ignorance may be due to a lack of opportunity to know, as was the case with this woman; or it may be due to the fact that people refuse to consider the evidence, as was the case with those who crucified Jesus. Ignorance, willful ignorance, crucified Jesus. "And now brethren, I know that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your

rulers." (Acts 3:17.) Contrasting his disciples with those who are willfully ignorant, Jesus said, "But blessed are your eyes for they see; and your ears for they hear." (Matt. 13:16.) Had the woman known him and asked of him understandingly, he would have given her living water. There is an inner thirst that only this living water can satisfy. "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." (John 7:37.) "He that believeth on me shall never thirst." Just as Jesus is the bread of life, so also is he the water of life. There is a longing in man, which the man himself may not be able to interpret, but which Jesus alone can satisfy. He gives living water to the thirsty, the bread of life to the hungry, and rest to the weary. The woman was slow to learn. She did not see how Jesus could give her living water when he had nothing with which to draw. "Art thou greater than our father Jacob?" She did not think he could be greater than Jacob, though she had very little, if any, right to call him father. The Greek language uses certain particles, which, when used in questions, indicate whether an affirmative or negative answer is expected. The one the woman used in her question shows that she expected a negative answer. The sign cannot be translated into English, but we can give its significance by recasting the question like this: You are not greater than our father Jacob, are you? But Jesus was not willing to be turned aside to discuss Jacob. The woman needed to know about the living water. The water which the woman had in mind was necessary to physical life, but it quenched the thirst for only a limited time. But Jesus would give living water, water that would satisfy the soul and spring up into eternal life. The woman was so materialistic in her thinking that she still thought Jesus was talking about material water. She wanted this water, which, if a man drank, he would thirst no more, so that she would not have to come to the well and draw water. But no earthly thing can satisfy the longings of the soul.

16-19. Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come, hither. The

woman answered and said unto him, I have no husband. Jesus saith unto her. 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. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

16-19. Since the woman's mind seemed to be wholly on material things, and would not grasp the idea of spiritual drink, Jesus would try her further by talking about her home affairs. Jesus knew her life, but he wanted her to know that he knew it. As yet the woman did not know that Jesus knew her life; later she would know. "Go, call thy husband." It was better for her to confess than for him to accuse. When she confessed that she had no husband, Jesus astonished her by telling her of her many marriages. Whether these five husbands had all died, or she had been divorced from some or all of them, we know not. "He whom thou now hast is not thy husband." This does not necessarily mean that she was living with this man; she might have been engaged to him. If she were an impure woman, it is strange that the people of the city listened so readily to her report of the man she had met at Jacob's well and believed what she said. But be that as it may when Jesus told her about her family affairs, she knew he was a prophet.

20-24. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, 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.

20-24. Knowing Jesus to be a prophet, the woman felt that she had an opportunity to have settled an age-old controversy between the Jews and Samaritans as to the place where men ought to worship. "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain," referring to near-by Mount Gerizim. Their temple stood in this mountain, and there she thought men ought to worship. Her interest in the matter is to her credit. In using the plural "ye" she was including all the Jews with Jesus. A Jew might engage in his private devotions anywhere; but his offerings

and sacrifices were made at the temple in Jerusalem, and their annual feasts were observed in Jerusalem. In reply to the woman's question, Jesus made an earnest appeal. "Woman, believe me." He would have her to rise above her local prejudices; but he would not affront her by defending Jerusalem as the place of worship. His religion would not be national. Under his reign there would be no central place of worship. The hour was coming when neither this mountain of Gerizim nor the city of Jerusalem would be more sacred than any other place. It is implied in the statement of Jesus that Jerusalem would never again be the designated place of worship. Jerusalem is not now the Holy City. The Samaritans worshiped God after a fashion; but rejecting all the Old Testament except the five books of Moses, they were ignorant of much that they should have known. In giving laws during the encampment at Sinai Jehovah said, "In every place where I record my name I will come unto thee and I will bless thee." (Ex. 20:24.) But as nothing was said in the books of Moses about Jerusalem as the place to worship, and as Jerusalem did not become the permanent place to worship till David's reign, the Samaritans did not consider that a divine arrangement. Rejecting the testimony of the prophet David, as well as the other prophets, they were really not worshiping Jehovah, though they thought they were. The Jews had clearer ideas of God and the worship. In addition to that, salvation was of the Jews. They gave the world a Savior, and then rejected him. Hence Jesus said, "Ye worship that which ye know not." When Jesus said that the hour was coming when they would worship neither in Jerusalem nor in Mount Gerizim, he did not mean that worship could not be rendered in those places, but that it would not be necessary to go to either place to worship. As the time for that change was drawing near, Jesus did not spend any time arguing with the woman as to which was the God-appointed place for worship.

There is such a thing as ignorant worship. The Samaritans worshiped in ignorance. Paul said to the Athenians, "What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this I set forth unto you."

(Acts 17:23.) And there is vain worship. "But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men." (Matt. 15:9.) And there is will worship—self-appointed worship. In reality, these are all vain worship, empty of any benefits, and displeasing to God. But there is a true worship, and true worshippers. "The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers." Only true worship is acceptable to God. "God is a Spirit." The marginal reading is better: "God is Spirit." It is an affirmation as to God's nature; he is spirit, not flesh and blood. "And they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth." Must—no word can be more binding. To worship in spirit is to put heart and soul into the worship. It has always been a weakness among God's people to drift into lifeless formalities, to go through the form of worship while the heart is on other things. Of the Jews, who were God's people, the Psalmist said, "But they flattered him with their mouth, and lied unto him with their tongue. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they faithful in his covenant." (Psalm 78:36, 37.) "Flattered him." Flattery is insincere praise. Their heart was not right with him—they were not sincere in what they said. With hearts full of hypocrisy, they would not be faithful in his covenant. Jesus quotes from Isaiah as follows: "This people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." (Matt. 15:8.) Not only must the worship be sincere, but it must be in truth. To worship in truth is to worship as the truth directs. Paul said, "For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of his Son." (Rom. 1:9.) Ezekiel was a prophet, and the people pretended to go to him to hear the word of God. Concerning them Jehovah said to Ezekiel, "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but do them not; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their gain." (Ezek. 33:31.) Jesus calls such people hypocrites. Sincere devotion to God must be manifested in obedience to the truth of God. In fact, the sincere person wants to do what God says. To Ezekiel Jehovah said, "Her priests have

done violence to my law, and have profaned my holy things." Jehovah then immediately explains how they had done this: "They have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they caused men to discern between the clean and the unclean." (Ezek. 22:26.) The holy and the clean were the things that God had set apart for his service and worship; the common and the unclean were things they introduced. Bringing their own inventions into God's worship and service, thus mixing human inventions with divine requirements, was doing violence to God's law and making no distinction between their own inventions and the laws of God. They were profaning God, bringing him down on a level with themselves, in making their own inventions equal to his commands. This is by no means an uncommon failing among religious people of today. All creed makers and all creed followers are guilty of this sin. No man can improve on God's way; and for a person to think so is to show a lack of faith in God. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

25, 26. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh (he that is called Christ): when he is come, he will declare unto us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

25, 26. "I know that Messiah cometh." On this point the woman spoke very positively, and as one very much interested in the Messiah's coming. Where did she get her knowledge? The Samaritans rejected the Old Testament prophets with the exception of Moses. Moses had said, "Jehovah thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken." (Deut. 18:15.) Viewed in the light of other and fuller prophecies, we can see that this refers to the Messiah; but standing alone it does not seem plain enough to enable the woman to say, "I know that Messiah cometh." Likely the Samaritans, without really being conscious of the source, had imbibed many of their Messianic ideas from the Jews. The woman felt that, though the man before her was a prophet, he could not tell her what she wanted to know, but that the Messiah, when he came,

would "declare unto us all things." The statement of Jesus must have astonished her yet more, though her report in the city shows that she was still somewhat in doubt. "I that speak unto thee am he." Among the Jews Jesus had not avowed his Messiahship. To have done so would have raised such a storm of protest from the Pharisees, as to interfere greatly with his teaching. But if the Samaritans did not accept him, they would not do much about it.

27-29. And upon this came his disciples; and they marvelled that he was speaking with a woman; yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why speakest thou with her? So the woman left her waterpot, and went away into the city, and saith to the people, Come, see a man, who told me all things that ever I did: can this be the Christ?

27-29. Before the woman left the well, the disciples returned from the city. With their Jewish prejudices it is not strange that they marveled that Jesus was talking with the woman; but they considerably refrained from asking any questions. In her haste to make her report in the city, the woman left her waterpot at the well. It is likely that Jesus told her more than is reported, but she evidently exaggerated when she said to the people of the city, "Come, see a man, who told me all things that ever I did." But Jesus had told her enough about herself to convince her that he knew all about her. But she was still not quite convinced that he was what he had told her he was.

30-34. They went out of the city, and were coming to him. In the mean while the disciples prayed him, saying, Rabbi, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not. The disciples therefore said one to another, Hath any man brought him aught to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work.

30-34. The words of the woman made a great impression on the people in the city. Her desire to quickly tell the people about Jesus, and her boldness in doing so, together with the readiness of the people to accept her word, rather indicates that she was not the type of woman she is so generally pictured to have been. All her marital relations may have been legitimate, and she may have been merely espoused to the man she then had, and the marriage had not then been consummated.

At least the people readily accepted her word, and rushed out of the city to see him. "In the mean while the disciples prayed him, saying, Rabbi, eat." They knew that he was exhausted from the journey; they had brought food from the city; why then did he delay eating? "I have meat to eat that ye know not." The disciples had their minds on material food—food for the body. They therefore wondered how he came into possession of food. Their question was perfectly natural. It is likely also that Jesus had become so absorbed in his effort to lead the woman into the light that all sense of hunger had vanished. If some intense emotion was aroused in you at a time when you were hungry, you know how such emotion can quickly banish the sense of hunger. Jesus explained the food he had: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work." "For I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." (John 6:38.) With him the will of the father was supreme. Even in the agony in the garden of Gethsemane, he said, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will but thine, be done." Here is submission, obedience, faithfulness, even unto death. And that must be the determined aim of every follower of Christ. The phrase, "And to accomplish his work," is a significant expression. He came to accomplish a certain work, the work of the Father. Some tell us that he came to set up a world kingdom and to sit upon the throne of David in the city of Jerusalem; but it is argued that, because the Jews rejected him, he did not set up his kingdom. If that be so, he failed to do what he came to do. Yet he himself, on the night of his betrayal, said, "I glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work which thou hast sent me to do." (John 17:4.)

35. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest.

35. In the parable of the good seed and the tares, "the harvest" refers to the disposing of the good and the bad at the end of the world, but here it evidently refers to the gathering of

people into the service of Christ. His statement that there "are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest," refers to the harvest of their grain, and shows us approximately the time of year of this incident. It is likely that the people coming out to him from the city were already visible when he said to his disciples, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest." The people of that city were ready to be gathered into his fellowship. But this by no means proves that all fields are "white unto harvest." A community is not ripe for harvest if it is set against the gospel; it is not "white unto harvest" simply because it needs the gospel. We have not the insight into the hearts that Jesus had; we can not know that a community is ready for harvest till we preach the gospel to that community. Jesus informs us that some communities would not be ready for his teaching. "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, as ye go forth out of that house or that city, shake off the dust of your feet." (Matt. 10:14.)

36-38. He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. For herein is the saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye have not labored: others have labored, and ye are entered into their labor.

36-38. Wages are paid to the man who does your reaping. That is the principle that Jesus applies to spiritual things. The one that reaps a harvest of souls for the master "gathereth fruit unto life eternal." Notice that "fruit" is here singular; it must refer to the building up of character that fits one for life eternal. Peter's language in the first part of the first chapter of his second letter supports this idea. After mentioning the things that must be added to our character so that we "may become partakers of the divine nature," he adds, "for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

"One soweth, and another reapeth." In gospel successes the sower, as well as the reaper, performs an essential work; for there could be no reaping without the sowing; however, in the eyes of men, the reaper seems to be doing the greatest work.

Even so, the sower should rejoice with the reaper at a successful harvest of souls. Sometimes a few days of successful reaping is the result of a long period of patient sowing. For this reason the sower generally requires more patience than the reaper. The sower may be doing effective work; but he cannot know he is doing so till he sees the results in the reaping. He should not be discouraged; he is doing his duty, even if the seed falls on unresponsive soil. "Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until it receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; establish your hearts." (James 5:7, 8.) "In your patience ye shall win your souls." (Luke 21:19.) The past tenses of verbs in verse 38 make the language somewhat puzzling; for, so far as the record shows, he had not sent them on any mission at that time. Sometimes future events that were certain to occur were spoken of as if they had already occurred; this is especially true in prophetic language. All good men of the past, especially the prophets, including John the Baptist, had been preparing the way for the work the apostles were to do.

39-42. And from that city many of the Samaritans believed on him because of the word of the woman, who testified. He told me all things that ever I did. So when the Samaritans came unto him, they besought him to abide with them: and he abode there two days. And many more believed because of his word: and they said to the woman. Now we believe, not because of thy speaking: for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.

39-42. It seems that the people of Sychar had full confidence in the word of the woman; for, because of her word, many believed on him. And because of this, they besought him to abide with them. During his two-days' stay with them, "many more believed because of his word." His teaching further confirmed them in their belief in him; "and they said to the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy speaking: for we have heard ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Savior of the world." It seems that no miracles were wrought in that city. None were needed, for when people accept a man for what

he claims to be, no miracles are needed to substantiate his claims. Healing miracles were never wrought merely for the relief of human sufferings. If that had been the purpose of the miraculous healings, God could cause that there be no sickness, or human suffering of any sort. If this truth could be stamped on the minds of the people, there would not be so many pretended healings. The student should notice that the people of this city were made believers by words. Some believed on the word of the woman; others believed when they heard Jesus. No other force was brought to bear on them to make them believers in the Lord. They heard him, and therefore knew that he was indeed the Savior of the world. "And after the two days he went forth from thence into Galilee____So when he came into Galilee, the Galileans received him, having seen all things that he did in Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went up to the feast." (John 4:43-45.)

Luke 4

LESSON LINKS

Soon after Jesus' return to Galilee he visited Cana, where he had performed his first miracle. Here a certain nobleman came down from Capernaum, and besought him to come heal his son who was near death; Jesus said unto him, "Go thy way, thy son liveth." The son was healed in that hour. (See John 4:46-54.) Jesus had performed other miracles, but this was the second miracle he had performed at Cana of Galilee.

From Matthew we have: "Now when he heard that John was delivered up, he withdrew into Galilee." Galilee included the country originally allotted to the tribes of Zebulun and Naphthali. (Matt. 4:12.) At the time of our Savior, many Jews lived in Galilee, but it was called Galilee of the Gentiles, because so many other nationalities lived there. This was the fulfillment

of the prophecy by Isaiah. (Isa. 9:1, 2.) "But there shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish. In the former time he brought in contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali; but in the latter time hath he made it glorious, by way of the sea, beyond Jordan, 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 the light shined."

In Mark's account we have (ch. 1:14, 15)—"Now after John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye and believe the gospel."

It seems that Jesus, on returning to Galilee, did not visit Nazareth first, but spent some time visiting and teaching in other cities. "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and a fame went out concerning him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all." (Luke 4:14, 15.)

16. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read.

16. Originally the word synagogue was applied to a congregation, or organized group, of Jewish worshipers. The word synagogue and the word ecclesia, the word translated church, differ little in meaning. Synagogue meant a leading or bringing together, conveying an assembly of people. Ecclesia meant an assembly, a body of people called out of their homes and gathered together. In Jewish usage the word synagogue was applied first to a body of Jewish worshipers, and then it came to be applied also to the house in which they met. It seems that James applied it one time to a body of Christians assembled for worship. (James 2:2.) Of course, in every Jewish town or city there was at least one synagogue. Each synagogue was well organized. Besides other activities, they met on the sabbath for worship and reading the law. It was the custom of Jesus, as well as of all other devout Jews, to attend these synagogues

services. In these services someone was selected to read some portion of their scriptures. On this occasion Jesus was appointed to read. It seems that the custom was to stand while reading.

17-19. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the book, and found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Because he anointed 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.

17-19. When Jesus stood up to read, the attendant handed him the book of the prophet Isaiah. "He opened the book, and found the place where it was written." He could have quoted the passage without opening the book, but he set an example for all leaders by opening the book and reading. Follow our Lord's example. The ordinary reader in those days would not so easily find a given passage of scripture, for there were then no chapters and verses. The passage Jesus read is now easily located, for he read Isa. 61:1, 2. Jesus had the Spirit without measure. Having the Spirit without measure and being God manifest in the flesh, Jesus could give the right application and interpretation of prophecies. Isaiah foretold that he would preach the gospel—the good tidings—to the poor. When John in prison sent two of his disciples to Jesus, with the question, "Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?" Jesus told them to tell John about the miracles they had seen, and that the poor had the good tidings preached to them. This last was to remind John that this prophecy of Isaiah was being fulfilled in Jesus. From this information he expected John to draw a correct conclusion. (See Matt. 11:2-6; Luke 7:19-23.) "He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives." The prophet was not foretelling that Jesus would secure the release of criminals or prisoners of war, whom the government had captured; for he did not meddle in the affairs of the government. His efforts were devoted to the releasing of those whom Satan held captive. Paul speaks of sinners in the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him. (2 Tim. 2:26.) Jesus came to release

people from this captivity—from this bondage of sin. That is to be done by the proclamation of the gospel. Through the Holy Spirit Jesus proclaimed the good news to these prisoners of Satan; and through the power of that gospel many have been, and are yet, being released. "And recovering of sight to the blind." Through the ministry of Jesus many physically blind received their sight. But many more were to have the eyes of their understanding—their spiritual eyes—opened by the power of these glad tidings. That has been going on ever since these glad tidings first began to be announced. Isaiah foretold these days and these results. "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped." (Isa. 35:5.) Again Jehovah said through Isaiah, "I, Jehovah, have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thy hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house." (Isa. 42:6, 7.) This also speaks of the release of prisoners—the captives of Satan. In the darkness of sin they are as in a dungeon. Paul was sent with this gospel to the Gentiles "to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God." (Acts 26:16-18.) People have been terribly bruised morally and spiritually by the buffetings of Satan and the crushing weight of sin. But in Christ we find refuge and healing. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." (Isa. 53:4, 5.) He alone can heal hearts that are bruised by sin or by grief and sorrow.

20, 21. And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down: and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, Today hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears.

20, 21. Uninspired men are unreliable interpreters of prophecy. The prophecies were so written that no uninspired

man, nor group of uninspired men, could so weave them together as to make it possible to stage a bogus fulfillment of them. Even the learned doctors of the law, who likely were more familiar with the prophecies than any other men have ever been, could not make the prophecies concerning the Messiah fit one person. They thought that the Christ and the prophet of whom Moses spoke were two different beings. (John 1:19-22.) They could not see how the suffering and despised servant of Isa. 53 could be the triumphant Messiah of the other prophecies. They could not, therefore, stage a bogus fulfillment of these prophecies. A single prophecy relating to one place or one event may sometimes be plain enough; but to gather all the prophecies and try to fit them into a scheme of things, is a thing the learned Jews could not do. Any really pious and humble heart today will be admonished by the failure of these learned Jews. But Jesus knew the prophecies and their fulfillment. "Today hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears." But the sequel shows that these synagogue leaders and teachers did not believe what Jesus said. It did not fit into the scheme of things which they had formulated; their scheme blinded them, as it also blinded the teachers and lawyers in Jerusalem. We should be careful not to imitate them by formulating a future scheme of things, lest we be blinded as they were.

22. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of his mouth: and they said, Is not this Joseph's son?

22. Jesus was speaking to a group of his neighbors. They were all acquainted with him and his people; and yet none of them really knew him. Had they known him, they would not have "wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of his mouth." But to them he was only a neighbor boy who grew up in their midst, only a carpenter, the son of a carpenter. "Is not this Joseph's son?" On what appears to have been another occasion they said, "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 with us?"

Whence then hath this man all these things?" (Matt. 13:55, 56.) We know him; he grew up here in a carpenter's shop. We know his people; they are just good, ordinary folks. Where did he get such wisdom? They tried to account for him as a man and could not find the answer. If he were just a mere uneducated man, a village carpenter, his powers were an unfathomable mystery. No man can account for him on that basis. If we recognize him for what he was, the Son of the living God, all questions about his powers and wisdom are answered; for, being the Son of God, neither his power nor his wisdom is limited.

24. 24. And he said unto them. Doubtless ye will say unto me this parable, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done at Capernaum, do also here in thine own country. And he said. Verily I say unto you, No prophet is acceptable in his own country.

23, 24. "Doubtless ye will say unto me this parable. Physician, heal thyself." We doubt you. We have heard that you did great works at Capernaum, now clear yourself by doing them here. Jesus saw their insincerity. It is singular that people will belittle themselves and their community by thinking that no one of importance can develop in their community among the people they know; but so it usually is. Hence, "No prophet is acceptable in his own country." That is true, but it does not speak well for the discriminating powers of people. They should recognize true worth when they see it, even in those who grow up with them. But, after all, distance frequently gives a better view; a person may be so close to a great mountain that he cannot see it.

25-27. But of a truth I say unto you. There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a great famine over all the land; and unto none of them was Elijah sent, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.

25-27. Elijah was one of the most heroic of Old Testament prophets; yet Ahab, his king, sought his life. In that critical time no one of his own country furnished refuge; at least, so it seems. Jehovah therefore sent him into Gentile country, "to

Zarephath, which belongeth to Sidon." (See 1 Kings 17.) From all that is said about this woman, it seems that she was a Gentile; yet none of the widows of Israel fared so well as she did during Elijah's abode with her. For a full account of the healing of Naaman read the fifth chapter of Second Kings. It is certain that Naaman was not a Hebrew. Naaman was a great general, but he was a leper. Leprosy was common in those days. There were many in Israel. Elisha was a prophet in Israel, and possessed miraculous powers; and yet sin and rebellion reigned so in Israel that none of the many lepers of Israel honored Elisha sufficiently to ask Elisha to cure him. And apparently they were all so unworthy that Jehovah sent none to Elisha to be cured. Again, a more worthy person upon whom to bestow a great favor was found in the army of a foreigner. Thus these great prophets had not received much honor in their own country.

28-30. And they were all filled with wrath in the synagogue, as they heard these things: and they rose up, and cast him forth out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might throw him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way.

28-30. "And they were all filled with wrath in the synagogue, as they heard these things." Evidently their wrath increased as he proceeded, till they could stand it no longer. They did not wait for an orderly dismissal. The group of orderly worshipers was turned into a howling mob. It seems that they should have been contented with telling him that they wanted to hear no more, and with asking him to leave their city. But they were too enraged for that—they wanted to kill him. "They rose up and cast him forth out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might throw him down headlong." In some way he escaped them, and went his way. But why should they have become so enraged at Jesus? They were all familiar with the facts he related. Evidently they were enraged at him because of what his reference to these incidents implied. They could easily see that he was really implying that they were unworthy

of any special miracles. In their self-righteousness they regarded his implication as slander. To hint to them that they were more unworthy than the widow of Zarephath or Naaman the Syrian, was more than they could stand.

Some Reflections

Jesus honored labor by working with his own hands. The people of Nazareth asked, "Is not this the carpenter?" (Mark 6:3.) Only a shallow mind looks upon labor with disdain.

Social prejudice is mean and contemptible. It does not propose to listen to one who belongs to what it considers a lower strata of society; and thus sometimes cheats itself. If there is any difference, religious prejudice and self-righteousness is even worse. This is perhaps because people's religion means more to them than anything else. They therefore become stirred up more over anything that militates against their religion, or implies that they are not good men.

Mark 1

LESSON LINKS

After Jesus was rejected at Nazareth (Luke 4:16-31), he went down to Capernaum and made his home in that city. In Capernaum and the cities of that region Jesus did most of his teaching and performed most of his miracles. Capernaum is one of the cities whose downfall Jesus foretold. (Matt. 11:20-24.) "And thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? thou shalt go down to Hades: for if the mighty works had been done in Sodom which were done in thee, it would have remained unto this day." So thoroughly was this prediction fulfilled that it has been hard to determine with any certainty the location of this once populous city. So with Bethsaida. In various places there are heaps of ruins of ancient

towns and cities, but which is Capernaum, and which is Bethsaida? J. W. McGarvey, who carefully inspected these various ruins, decided that the ruins on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee are the only ones that can possibly be the remnants of the once proud city of Capernaum. The nearby ruins of an ancient town near Capernaum answer to the location of Bethsaida of Philip, Peter, and Andrew. (John 1:44.)

14, 15. Now after John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

14, 15. The main theme of John's preaching had been, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "Now after John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye and believe the gospel." God had set his own time for the kingdom to come. To be ready for the kingdom the people had to repent and believe in the gospel. The gospel of God which Jesus preached was the good news that the kingdom of God was at hand—its establishment was near. That was not man's opinion, but God's statement of truth. Jesus made two emphatic statements: "The time is fulfilled," "the kingdom of God is at hand." This kingdom is the kingdom of heaven, not only because it is heavenly in origin, but also because the seat of its authority is in heaven. "For our citizenship is in heaven." (Phil. 3:20.) That is, heaven is the seat of the government in which we have our citizenship. The ministries of John and Jesus prepared the way for the coming of that kingdom. To say that the kingdom is yet future is to say that both statements of Jesus were, and are, false. The command, "Repent ye, and believe in the gospel," has been hard for some to understand. Jesus was speaking to Jews. They believed in God and in his law as given to them through Moses, but they had sinned against God in whom they believed—they had violated the law which they recognized. They were called on to repent of these sins, and to believe in this gospel of the kingdom. They could not believe in it nor sin against it, before it

had been preached to them. It is therefore a perversion of the scriptures to try to make this passage teach that a sinner must repent of his sins before he can believe in God. No man can repent of sins unless he recognizes himself as a sinner, and he cannot recognize himself as a sinner against God unless he believes in God.

21, 22. And they go into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at his teaching: for he taught them as having authority, and not as the scribes.

21, 22. "And they go into Capernaum." The exact location of Capernaum is not now definitely known, but it was near the north shores of the Sea of Galilee. After Jesus was rejected at Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum—"And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali." (Matt. 4:13.) When Jesus came to Capernaum, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath and taught. It seems that synagogues originated while the Jews were in Babylonian captivity. They could not go to Jerusalem to worship, and they were badly scattered through the province of Babylon. Their only means of encouraging one another and of keeping a religious sentiment alive was for the Jews in a community to meet for the purpose of teaching and exhorting one another. The word "synagogue" means "an assembly," and was originally applied to these local assemblies. These meetings were kept up after the Jews returned to their own land. They built houses for these meetings, and then the word synagogue came to be applied also to these houses. It is used both ways in the New Testament, though most often applied to the house. In the following passages and others the word applies to the assembly, and not to the house: Luke 12:11; 21:12; Acts 9:2; 13:43. The rulers of the synagogues exercised disciplinary powers over the members. (John 9:22, 34, 35.) Jesus often taught in these synagogues. They had regular meetings on the Sabbath. It seems from what is said in Luke 7:1-5, that the Roman centurion at Capernaum built the Capernaum synagogue. Some of the Roman

officials stationed among the Jews came greatly under the influence of the Jew's religion, as did this centurion and Cornelius. The teaching of Jesus was not such as the people had been accustomed to hear. No teacher was supposed to teach anything on his own authority. He might teach the law of Moses and the traditions of the elders, but no more. Jesus astonished them; "for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." When Jesus preached the sermon on the mount, "the multitudes were astonished at his teaching for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes." Boldly and on his own authority, he presented his teaching. He gave heed to the law, but paid no attention to the tradition of the elders. The people did not know what to think of such teaching.

23-26. And straightway there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, 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. And Jesus rebuked him saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And the unclean spirit, tearing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him.

23-26. "And straightway there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit." The demons were sometimes called "evil spirits," and were also called "unclean spirits," as in this verse. It is said that the Greeks thought the spirits of their dead heroes acted as messengers between their gods and men. These they called demons and worshiped them. The Jews had a different theory. With them, demons were the evil spirits of people—the spirits of wicked people, which took up their abode in people. Of one fact we can be certain, namely, that people were then sometimes possessed of demons—beyond that we know little. We accept the fact that many people were then possessed of demons, but it would be useless to speculate as to why or how.

"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." To have the worship so rudely disturbed must have been an unusual thing in that synagogue. It is evident that these unclean spirits, or demons, possessed superhuman

knowledge, else they would not have been able to recognize Jesus as "the Holy One of God." They also knew that there was nothing in common between them and Jesus. Jesus rebuked the spirit, and commanded him, as he did others to hold his peace. It seems from this incident and others that these evil spirits found great satisfaction in dwelling in human beings and were much averse to being driven out of their chosen habitation. Though the demon readily recognized him and freely confessed him to be the Son of God, Jesus did not want evidence from such a source. It was not yet time for Jesus to be openly announced to the people in his true nature; neither did he want the impression to be made on the people that there was anything in common between him and these evil spirits. Perhaps Satan, under whose influence these evil spirits acted, caused them to confess Jesus as the Son of God as a means of discrediting him before the people. Jesus guarded against that; but, in spite of this precaution of Jesus, the Pharisees charged that he cast out demons by Beelzebub, or Satan, the prince of demons. Jesus showed the absurdity of their charge by saying, "If Satan casteth out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand?" (See Matt. 12:24-29.) Jesus cast this spirit out, as he did others. However, this evil spirit showed great displeasure in being driven out of the man—"tearing him," or perhaps more correctly, convulsing him.

27, 28. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What is this? a new teaching! with authority he commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they obey him. And the report of him went out straightway everywhere into all the region of Galilee round about.

27, 28. If the people had known who Jesus really was, they would not have been astonished at any powers he possessed. His mighty powers would have filled them with awe, but not amazement. They would have known that he had power over all unclean spirits, as well as all the forces of nature. With the miracles he was performing, it is not astonishing that "the report of him went out straightway everywhere into all the

region of Gallilee round about." His miracles served two ends besides the relief of suffering. They gained attention, so the people would readily listen to him, and they proved God was with him. Miracles wrought in connection with any one's preaching were signs that God approved his preaching and his claim.

Some Reflections

When the disciples left their business to follow Jesus in his journeys, they could not have had very clear ideas as to his mission or what lay before them; but they were sincere and devoted to him. Willingness to follow Jesus and to learn of him made them acceptable to him, and that condition of heart is needed now.

Jesus honored labor when he toiled at the carpenter's trade. He also honored labor when he chose hardy fishermen. Men who can work, but will not work, are parasites—just so much vermin on the rest of the human family. If a man like that undertakes to preach, he does so without an invitation from Jesus.

No one who is acquainted with the fishing business need be surprised that Jesus selected so many apostles who were fishermen. To be successful in the fishing business, as were these men, requires physical strength, energy, and perseverance. They knew hardships, and how to meet disappointments—how to toil all night, and catch nothing, and not give up. In fishing for men they would need these qualities. Men who made a success of fishing were not quitters. They were not of the class who say, "If I fish a few minutes and catch nothing, I am ready to quit." Jesus could not make fishers of men out of that sort of material. An apostle would need to know how to meet discouragements, how to endure hardships. If a man would be a faithful gospel preacher today, he must have these qualities.

LESSON LINKS

With Jesus, human sufferings were real. He did not treat them as "delusions of the mortal mind." Such sufferings stirred his heart with compassion, and he healed many who were afflicted; lepers were cleansed, and sick people were made well, the blind were made to see, the maimed were made whole, and the crippled were made to walk. But the mission of Jesus was mainly to save people from sin, and to make them whole spiritually. The cures he performed were a means to an end. They showed the benevolence of his purposes and aims toward the human family, and thereby to create in men a desire to do good to others. They also served to gain him a hearing; but above all else, they proved that he was what he claimed to be. They were signs that God was with him, and approved him.

29-31. And straightway, when they were come out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever; and straightway they tell him of her: and he came and took her by the hand, and raised her up; and the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.

29-31. Jesus had been teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum. During the services in the synagogue he also cast an evil spirit out of a man. "And straightway," immediately, after leaving the synagogue, "they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John." From this and other references it seems that not all the men who afterwards became apostles had yet joined the group of personal followers of Jesus. Peter and Andrew had formerly lived at Bethsaida. (John 1:44.) Now it appears that they lived in Capernaum, and that Peter's wife's mother lived with them. When it is remembered that no pope is allowed to be married, it is singular that they claim Peter was the first pope. "Now Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever." Luke calls it a great fever. Jesus was immediately told of this sickness, and he lost no time in relieving the suffering woman of her fever. Her recovery from fever was not gradual, but instantaneous. When Jesus took her by the hand and raised her up, the fever left her. Neither did

her sickness leave her in a weakened condition. In curing her Jesus also restored her strength, so that she was able to minister to them. Most likely she prepared something to eat, and otherwise ministered to the comfort of the visitors and the men of the family. This miracle was an instant and complete restoring of health and strength.

32-34. And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were sick, and them that were possessed with demons. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick with divers diseases, and cast out many demons; and he suffered not the demons to speak, because they knew him.

32-34. "And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were sick, and them that were possessed with demons." It was the Sabbath, but with the Jews, the day ended at even and a new day began. These Jews would not bring their sick to be cured while it was still the Sabbath. With them no effort was made to heal the sick on the Sabbath. There was nothing in the Sabbath law that prevented deeds of kindness or mercy on the Sabbath, but by their traditions the Jews had added a number of refinements to the law. They would attend to the needs of their stock on the Sabbath, but must not carry any burden nor practice the healing art. Jesus observed the Sabbath law, but he showed no respect for their traditions which were added to the law. The fact that these people would not bring their sick to be healed till the Sabbath ended shows what a hold traditions of the elders had even on the Galileans. But when the Sabbath ended, they came in crowds, bringing their sick and afflicted, so that Jesus had no time that evening for rest and enjoyment of the hospitality of that home. But he healed the sick and cast out demons. Again he suffered not the demons to speak.

Some Reflections

Demons were evil spirits that took possession of people; that appears to have been the accepted fact among the Jews. With them demons were the departed spirits of wicked men. The

Greeks had a different idea. It appears that they had two classes of demons—one, the offspring of the gods; the other, the spirits of dead men. With them the demons were the middle beings between the gods and men. Hence, they attached no evil significance to the term. In fact, demons were really objects of worship. When Paul told the Athenians that he perceived that they were much given to demon worship (so it is in the Greek Testament), they would take it as a compliment. But there is no evidence that Jesus and his apostles deviated from the Jewish idea of demons. How the spirits of wicked dead men took possession of people, we know not. There is no proof that the person thus afflicted was in any way to blame for this affliction. The evidence is plain that these evil spirits had both superhuman knowledge and strength. There is one significant expression in Matt. 16 that seems to have been strangely overlooked—"and he cast out the spirits with a word." Surely the sinner now is not in as desperate condition as were these demon-possessed people, and yet some people contend that the Word will not correct the evil habits of people, and that therefore the sinner must have a direct operation of the Spirit to cure him of his sins! There is matter here for thought. Jesus cast out the demons and healed the sick in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah. The prophecy is found in Isa. 53:4. Jesus came to save people from their sins, but to do so he must first convince them that he is the Messiah. Hence, the miracles were performed, not so much for the sake of the afflicted, but as signs that God was with him.

oo. And in the morning, a great while before day. he rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed.

35. It was likely very late in the night before Jesus had any rest from the crowds that thronged him the evening before; yet "in the morning, a great while before day, he rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed." "A desert place," a deserted, or uninhabited place. The Son of God prayed! The record shows that he spent much time in prayer. Prayer grows out of a feeling of need and confidence in God's

ability and willingness to hear. Jesus knew that his Father was both willing and able to answer prayer. Such conditions of heart make praying as natural as breathing. It is a fine thing for people to cultivate in their hearts a feeling of dependence on God and confidence in him as a Father who is able and willing to help his children. Too many people have hedged God in with a lot of their theories about the impossibility of God's answering prayer without working miracles till he means little more to them than a heathen god. The record shows that Jesus spent much time in prayer. Not many of us are so much given to prayer. Why is this? It is likely that our negligence is due to the fact that we do not feel our need, or else we do not have confidence in God's ability or willingness to answer our prayers. We are always in need of God's favors and blessings. The right condition and attitude of heart make prayer as natural as breathing. Any earthly father will do for his children the best he can. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matt. 7:11.)

36-39. And Simon and they that were with him followed after him; and they found him, and say unto him, All are seeking thee. And he saith unto them, Let us go else where into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for to this end came I forth. And he went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out demons.

36-39. It appears that Peter and the other disciples had some idea as to where Jesus had gone, for they followed him and found him. Interest had run high in Capernaum, but the people were mainly interested in having their physical ailments healed. Crowds had begun to gather about the house before Peter and the others left, so much so that they reported to Jesus, "All are seeking thee." They evidently thought Jesus would immediately return to his waiting multitude; but Jesus had demonstrated his power in Capernaum, and had preached to the people of that city. Other places must be visited. "And he saith unto them, Let us go elsewhere into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for to this end came I forth." He had not

come to spend all of his time in one place. He would let the people of Capernaum meditate for a season on his teaching and miracles. At the time, it seems that they were too much excited over having their sick healed to give much thought to his teaching. Besides, he must teach and demonstrate his powers in other towns and cities. "And he went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out demons." It seems that this was his first circuit through the towns of Galilee.

40-42. And there cometh to him a leper, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And being moved with compassion, he stretched forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou made clean. And straightway the leprosy departed from him, and he was made clean.

40-42. Demoniacs and lepers seem to have been numerous in Galilee. Jesus had been casting out demons; now a leper comes to him. His coming shows that he had some hope of being healed. It seems that he had full confidence in the power of Jesus to heal him of his leprosy. He knew Jesus was both able and willing to heal all ordinary ailments; but he had been so long an outcast, shunned by all, that he was not certain Jesus would have anything to do with him. Hence his peculiar way of making his plea; "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Here was faith in the power of Jesus, mixed with doubt as to the willingness of Jesus—"If thou wilt." This plea was pathetic in its humility, and also in its tinge of doubt. He stood before one who had the power to heal him, and he knew it; but he could not be sure that Jesus would deign to notice one who had been so long an outcast. Jesus was moved with compassion at his pitiful condition. It must have astonished this poor man beyond measure when Jesus touched him. And he had never before heard words that brought so much comfort and happiness as the simple statement of Jesus: "I will; be thou made clean." It was not necessary for Jesus to touch the man in order to heal him; but a friendly touch would mean so much to a man whom all people shunned. It would help him to get over the feeling of being unfit to be touched; it would help to restore

confidence in his fitness to again mingle with others.

If a person, after undergoing the prescribed tests, was pronounced a leper, the law said concerning him, "And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and the hair of his head shall go loose, and he shall cover his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, Unclean . . . he shall dwell alone." (Lev. 13:45, 46.) They were not to come into the company of other people. If they saw anyone approaching, they were to cry, "Unclean, unclean." How thrilled therefore this poor wretch must have been when, instead of shunning him, Jesus actually bestowed upon him a friendly touch. He was healed of his leprosy.

43, 44. And he strictly charged him, and straightway sent him out, and saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing the things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

43, 44. "See thou say nothing to any man." Perhaps this prohibition was given so as to keep the excitement from running too high. People do not weigh evidence nor think seriously when they are much excited. People must be interested in a matter to do any worthwhile thinking; but too much excitement, too much emotion, leads to fanaticism. The miracles Jesus wrought in Capernaum had created much excitement, and so Jesus moved on to other towns. But now Jesus had done the impossible—he had restored a leper to health. If this were blazed abroad, excitement would run high in that section. Jesus would have people to think soberly on what he was doing and teaching. But Jesus would have the man to observe the requirements of the law. "Go show thyself to the priest." In the days of Moses there were different kinds of skin diseases called leprosy. (See Lev. 13.) Two kinds rendered a person unclean; from one of these kinds a person might recover. How he might be legally cleansed is described in Lev. 14:1-32. When a man thought he had recovered from leprosy, he had then to show himself to the priest. If the priest, on careful examination, found no evidence of leprosy, there were certain ceremonies

for the man to go through for his legal cleansing. The various things required to be done were for the legal cleansing of the one who had recovered from his leprosy. The cure, the real cleansing and the legal cleansing were two different matters; and the process of the legal cleansing was a great benefit to the victim—he was sure of his regained health when the priest pronounced him clean, and the people would not be afraid to associate with him. This man whom Jesus healed must be obedient to the law of Moses; and that obedience would enable him to mingle freely with the people again. Hence Jesus said to him. "Go show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing the things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them."

45. But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to spread abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into a city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

45. The man was so full of joy at the good fortune that had come to him that it would have required more self-control than he had to keep from telling what a great thing Jesus had done for him, even though his benefactor had charged him to say nothing about it. Such a miracle of healing was something new in that section; it created such excitement that the crowds of people gathered about him to such an extent that he could not openly enter into any city; there would be no gathering place in any of the towns for the people to assemble. He therefore for a time remained in the desert places; that is, he remained out in the open country. Here the crowds could gather about him; the people went out to him. "And they came to him from every quarter." His fame had spread abroad, and this was done by those whom he had healed, and by those who had seen his miracles of healing.

Some Reflections

Sickness and death come to men as a result of sin. Human ailments are real; death is more than a dream—it is an awful reality. In view of what we experience and see, it is folly to

think otherwise. Jesus recognized the fact of sickness and death. "And he came forth, and saw a great multitude, and he had compassion on them, and healed their sick." (Matt. 14:14.) He wept at the grave of Lazarus. (John 11:35.) On many occasions Jesus had compassion on people because of their sorrowing and suffering. Compassion for the suffering and the sorrowing is one of the noblest traits of human character; and it is a sad thing to see any one adopt a religion that robs him of all compassion and sympathy, and replaces these admirable traits with a feeling of disgust at the sufferer for imagining himself to be suffering from sickness and pain! The sickness and suffering of people filled Jesus with compassion, and his religion fills his followers with sympathy and compassion for people who are in distress from any cause.

If there is no sin, then Jesus died for naught. If there is no real sickness, no real bodily ailments nor injuries, then Jesus performed no real miracles; yet the Bible asserts in the most positive terms that Jesus healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, gave sight to the blind, made the maimed whole, and raised the dead. The man who does not believe that Jesus did these things does not believe the Bible; he does not believe what Jesus himself said. Such a man cannot therefore be a Christian. To deny the reality of sickness and bodily ailments is to deny the discoveries of science relative to diseases and their causes. That which contradicts science is not science. Our own senses, our own consciousness, our experience and observation, all teach us the reality of bodily ailments.

Luke 5

LESSON LINKS

We should not conclude that our lesson text gives an account of the first acquaintance these fishermen had with Jesus.

After Jesus' temptations he returned to the place where John was baptizing. In the presence of two of his disciples John said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world." Two of his disciples heard him speak and followed Jesus. (Read John 1:29-51; 2:1-11.)

1-3. Now it came to pass, while the multitude pressed upon him and heard the word of God, that he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret; and he saw two boats standing by the lake: but the fisherman had gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the multitudes out of the boat.

1-3. Jesus had made a tour through the cities of Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and performing miracles. He had created such interest that great multitudes followed him down to the shores of the Sea of Galilee (Luke calls the sea "the lake of Gennesaret"); so great was the multitude that it is said they pressed upon him. All wanted to be as near him as possible. It seems that at first the crowd was not so large but that he could preach to them the word of God from some point on the shore of the sea; but the crowd grew till the pressure became too great for him to do effective teaching. It is singular that these fishermen, who were already his disciples, and who had been with him in some of his journeys, were busy about their own affairs. Their boats were unoccupied—the fishermen were washing their nets. One of these busy fishermen was Simon Peter. Jesus entered into Simon's boat, "and asked him to put out a little from the land." As the fishermen had chosen this place to wash their nets, it was likely a narrow-inlet, where the waters, would be more quiet than where not so protected. This would enable the people to line up on both sides of the inlet making it an ideal place for Jesus to speak to them from the boat. If the people were thus lined up along a sloping shore, each one could see and hear without difficulty. On a later occasion Jesus adopted the same means of escape from the pressure of the crowd, and to give the people a better opportunity to hear. (Matt. 13:2; Mark 4:1.)

4-7. And when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Put out into the

deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answered and said. Master, we toiled all night, and took nothing: but at thy word I will let down the nets. And when they had done this, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes; and their nets were breaking; and they beckoned unto their partners in the other boat, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both boats, so that they began to sink.

4-7. When Jesus had finished speaking, he ordered Peter to row out into the deep water, and let down his nets. That seemed to Peter to be a waste of time and effort. He and his partners had toiled all night and had caught nothing. Said Simon Peter, "Master, we have toiled all night, and took nothing: but at thy word I will let down the nets." He would not let his judgment interfere with obedience to the Master. He had the spirit of the true disciple. Faith takes Jesus at his word, and does what he says. The Master commands—that is sufficient. Someone else, most likely Andrew, was with Peter in the boat. Their prompt obedience was rewarded by the enclosing in their nets of a great multitude of fishes. So heavy was the draft that their nets were about to pull apart; so they beckoned to their partners to come to their assistance. They filled both boats to their full capacity. This incident would strengthen the faith of these disciples, and also show them the wisdom of doing what the Master said.

8. 9. But Simon Peter, when he saw it, fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was amazed, and ailed that were with him, at the draught of fishes which they had taken.

8, 9. The incident showed Peter that he was in the presence of one that was more than man. Either Jesus caused the fishes to gather in one place, or his penetrating eye saw where they were; to be in the presence of such a being made Peter feel his own littleness and unworthiness. He felt that he was not a fit man to be in the presence of such an exalted person. To express his feeling of unworthiness he made a plea that he would not have had fulfilled for all the world; "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." It is well for people to feel their own littleness and sinfulness—that they are not really worthy of the companionship of the Holy One of God. There will be no

effort to obtain forgiveness unless we realize our guilt. And yet we must not center our minds on our sinfulness to the extent that we give up in despair, and say, "What is the use of trying to do better?" Rather, let us rely on God and say with Paul, "I can do all things in him that strengthened me." (Phil. 4:13.)

10, 11. And so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men, and when they had brought their boats to land, they left all, and followed him.

10, 11. Peter, Andrew, James, and John were partners in the fishing business. It seems that Zebedee, the father of James and John, was also a partner in that company. (Matt. 4:21, 22.) They owned their own boats and fishing nets. This required a considerable outlay of money; they were therefore not paupers by any means. They were not fishing for a sport; fishing was their business—their means of livelihood. With them it was not a pastime; it was toil. They were exposed to all sorts of weather, and the sudden storms that so frequently swept down on that lake made the business hazardous. Hence, their business required determination, patience, and endurance—qualities that would be needed in their work as apostles. It may have been that they toiled all night on many occasions without success; they were acquainted with disappointments. There is perseverance and determination in men that can toil all night, and catch nothing, and then go on trying. They would meet with similar conditions and have similar experiences in their efforts to lead men to Christ. A man who was easily discouraged would not hold out in preaching the gospel to a hostile world. This may give us some idea as to why Jesus selected so many fishermen to be apostles; they had the staying qualities.

Jesus reassured Peter by saying to him, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." Jesus would make him a fisher of men. What was true with respect to Peter would also be true with respect to the other apostles. Mark reports Jesus as saying to these fishermen, "Come ye after me, and I will

make you to become fishers of men." (Mark 1:17.) The Greek word here translated "catch," means "take alive," as we learn from the marginal reading. But before they could become fishers of men, they must follow Jesus, see his miracles, hear his teaching, and come to love him with an undying love. Even then they would need additional help, so that their teaching would bear the stamp of infallibility. Hence Jesus later promised them the Holy Spirit, and charged them not to begin this fishing for men till they were endued with power from on high. (See John 14:16, 17, 26; 16:7-13; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:4, 5, 8.) "And when they had brought their boats to land, they left all, and followed him." It is not to be supposed that they abandoned their property with no thought as to what would become of it; they were too thrifty for anything like that. When they were called away from their fishing on what appears to have been a former occasion, certainly James and John, and perhaps Peter and Andrew, left their property with Zebedee. (Mark 1:20.) Their later and frequent use of boats shows that they continued to own their equipment. And their use of fishing equipment after the resurrection of Jesus while they were waiting for the time of the appointed meeting in Galilee shows that their equipment was still intact. (John 21:1-14.) It would seem therefore that the business continued to be operated by Zebedee with the assistance of the hired help.

It does not seem that the disciples were with Jesus constantly during the early part of his ministry, but followed him on certain journeys when he called them away from their work. It seems that the call recorded in Matt. 4:18-22 is the same as that mentioned in Mark 1:16-20, but not the same as that recorded in Luke 5:1-11. And certainly neither of these was the one recorded in John 1:35-51. Even a casual reading will show this. In their comments on Matt. 4:18-21 Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown show that the call in John 1:35-51 cannot be the one mentioned in Matthew, and then add: "Thus far nearly all are agreed. But on the *next* question opinion is divided: Was this the same calling as recorded in Luke 5:1-11? Many able critics think so. But the following considerations

are to us decisive against it. First, here, the four are called separately, in pairs, in Luke all together. Next in Luke, after a glorious miracle; here, the one pair are casting their net, the others are mending theirs. Further, here, our Lord had made no public appearance in Galilee, and so had gathered none around him; he was walking solitary by the shores of the lake when he accosts the two pairs of fishermen; in Luke, 'the multitude are lying upon him, and hearing the word of God, as he stands by the lake of Gennesaret'—a state of things implying a somewhat advanced stage of his early ministry, and some popular enthusiasm."

If the student will work this out, it will help him to meet some critic who thinks Matthew, Mark, and Luke record the same incident, and on that basis thinks he finds a lack of harmony in the records. For that reason some space has been given to a discussion of the matter.

Some Reflections

So far as we know, these fishermen may have put in some time fishing on occasions when Jesus returned with them to Capernaum after his journeys through the cities. Why should that be thought incredible, or even improbable? They were practical men; Jesus was practical. These men had responsibilities. Peter had a wife; perhaps some, or all of them had families. Their expenses had to be taken care of. It seems that some help was received in their travels, but their people at home had to have something on which to live. And these men did not think hard work beneath their dignity.

These men had not been spoiled by the formalities, vanities, and deceits of polite society—they had not been trained up in the vain notion that one must sacrifice his convictions in order to be agreeable nor had they been trained to sacrifice principles for political advantages. They were unspoiled. It is hard to make a worth-while character out of one who has been trained from childhood to let the prevailing notions and practices be his guide. Such training robs a person of all initiative and any

feeling of responsibility in matters of justice and honesty.

People are brought to Christ through human agency. John the Baptist directed Andrew and John to Christ. Andrew then brought his brother Simon to Christ. Philip brought Nathanael to Christ. (John 1:33-51.) In giving the Great Commission Jesus laid upon man the burden of carrying the gospel of salvation to a lost world. The Acts show how this was done—how the servants of Christ converted many thousands. Prayer has its place, but the gospel is the power of God for saving men. In preaching the gospel and backing up our preaching by godly living we can be instruments of God in saving men. "Take heed to thyself, and to thy teaching. Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee." (1 Tim. 4:16.)

Matthew 4

LESSON LINKS

Neither Matthew, Mark, Luke, nor John gives a full account of all that Jesus did. From John 21:25 we learn that he used only a small portion of the available material in his book. "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, 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.) Matthew, Mark, and Luke all give an account of Jesus' Galilean ministry.

Matthews Account.—Matt. 4:12-16—"Now when he heard that John was delivered up, he withdrew into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying, The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, Toward the sea, beyond the Jordan, 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."

17. From that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

17. "At hand" means nearby. John the Baptist had preached the same thing. Such preaching was calculated to stir the hearts of the Jews who had long been under the despised Roman government and who had long been looking for the promised Messiah. This kingdom is the kingdom of heaven, not only because it is heavenly in origin, but also because the seat of its authority is in heaven. "For our citizenship is in heaven." (Phil. 3:20.) That is, heaven is the seat of the government in which we have citizenship. The ministries of John and Jesus prepared the way for the coming of that kingdom.

18. And walking by the sea of Galilee, he saw two brethren, Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers.

18. "And walking by the sea of Galilee." This sea is also called "Sea of Tiberias" (John 21:1), "lake of Gennesaret" (Luke 5:1), "the sea of Chinneroth." (Josh. 12:3.) "The Sea of Galilee is only an expansion of the river Jordan, which enters it from the northeast, and makes its exit from the southwest. It is 680 feet below the level of the Mediterranean Sea; it is eight miles wide and thirteen miles long, with an average depth of 150 feet. It is rather bell-shaped, with its widest part to the north. The water is fresh."—C. R. Nichol, in *Bible Notes on the Holy Land*. Many fish are yet found in its waters. "He saw two brethren, Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers." We must not get the idea that this was a sudden call, and that Peter and Andrew had not previously known Jesus. Soon after Jesus was baptized, John the Baptist standing with two of his disciples and seeing Jesus walking, said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" One of these disciples was Andrew. Andrew sought his brother Simon, and brought him to Jesus. (See John 1:35-42.)

But these disciples did not then leave all to be in the immediate company of Jesus. At that time Peter and Andrew lived in Bethsaida, but later in Capernaum. They followed fishing as a business, and seemed to be well equipped for the business.

19. And he saith unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men.

19. Luke reports, "From henceforth thou shalt catch men." And it takes the same degree of perseverance, with the ability to meet discouragements and yet go on, to catch men that it does to catch fish. It takes great patience to succeed in either work.

20. And they straightway left the nets, and followed him.

20. Straightway, immediately. What disposition they made of their nets and boats we know not; but we are sure that he who would not let fragments of a meal go to waste would not be in favor of leaving the nets and boats to perish. Besides, they would need the proceeds of their sale in their journeys. If not, their families at home would need them. But when Jesus called, they promptly obeyed. It is a lesson to us.

21. And *going* on from thence he saw two other brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.

21. "And going on from thence he saw two other brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets." There are some indications that James and John had also been disciples of Jesus for some time previous to their leaving all to be constantly with him. They must have been of an impetuous and fiery temper, for Jesus surnamed them "Boanerges, which is Sons of Thunder." (Mark 3:17.) True to their name, when a Samaritan village would not receive Jesus, they said, "Lord, wilt thou that we bid fire to come down from heaven to consume them?" (Luke 9:53, 54.) This does not picture John as people usually now try to picture him. They were also ambi-

tious, for they asked the privilege of sitting one on his right hand and one on his left hand in his kingdom. (Matt. 20:20, 21; Mark 10:35, 36.) But both became great servants of the Lord. James was the first of the apostles to suffer martyrdom (Acts 12:1, 2), but John died at an advanced age.

22. And they straightway left the boat and their father, and followed him.

22. We cannot believe that they would have so readily left all to follow Jesus had they not known him before.

23. And Jesus went about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness among the people.

23. "And Jesus went about in all Galilee." Unlike John the Baptist Jesus traveled much in his preaching. "Teaching in their synagogues." These synagogues furnished a convenient place for Jesus and the apostles to meet with the people and preach to them the gospel, the glad tidings of the kingdom. Here it seems that Matthew makes a distinction between teaching and preaching, though the two terms are not always kept distinct. "And healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness among the people." He relieved suffering; he went about doing good. These wonderful miracles stirred the people, and gained for him a ready hearing among the common people. When we see how excited people now become over false teachers and their pretended miracles of healing, we can easily imagine something of how the Great Teacher with his real cures stirred the people. Everyone who knew of his wonderful cures would spread the news.

24. And the report of him went forth into all Syria; and they brought unto him all that were sick, holden with divers diseases and torments, possessed with demons, and epileptic, and palsied; and he healed them.

24. "And the report of him went forth into all Syria." Syria was the Roman province immediately north of Palestine, its chief city being Damascus. Thus the fame of Jesus soon went *beyond the territory of the Jews*. "And they brought unto him all that were sick, holden with divers diseases and torments,

possessed with demons, and epileptic, and palsied, and he healed them." This gives us an idea of the variety of his miracles, and the vastness of the numbers of his cures. Of the miracles that Jesus performed John says, "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name." (John 20:30, 31.)

25. And there followed him great multitudes from Galilee and Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judaea and from beyond the Jordan.

25. "And there followed him great multitudes from Galilee." Galilee is a district of country whose eastern boundary is the Sea of Galilee and whose western boundary is the Mediterranean Sea. It included many towns and cities. It seems that in this district Jesus had his greatest following, and in that district he did most of his work. "And Decapolis." Decapolis literally means ten cities. It lay east of Galilee. So far as we know Jesus did not travel very extensively in that district, though he visited it. "And Jerusalem and Judaea." While he had not done much teaching in Jerusalem and the country of Judaea, the fame of him had penetrated both east and west of the southern reaches of the Jordan. This shows the wide reach of his fame and popularity at this time.

"Imagine, if you can, the condition of a country in which there are no doctors, where the healing art is practiced by a few quacks, who rely more on charms than on physic for their cures. Such is now, and such was Palestine in our Lord's day. Until the medical missionaries were sent by several English societies, there was not a physician in the land, and even now there are very few. In such a country as this, with sick and crippled in every village, picture the eager excitement when the news spreads that there is a good physician arrived in town; that he has healed a fierce demoniac by a word, and a great fever by a touch."—H. D. Tristram, as quoted in *Peloubet's Select Notes*.

Matthew 5

LESSON LINKS

It seems certain that no other speech ever delivered has so influenced man as has this sermon on the mount. Its contents, so superior to any production of man, proved the Deity of its author. Its teaching is out of harmony with any school of religion or philosophy of that day; hence, their brightest lights could not have produced it. It is not eclectic, that is, its contents are not a collection of the best thoughts of that and previous ages. Its teaching is distinct, revolutionary, challenging every school of religious thought of the times, both Jewish and heathen. It is not a product of the times, but of Deity.

Before beginning this sermon Jesus sat down, evidently in such a position that he could see and be seen. He did not resort to any tricks of the orator, but sat while he spoke. He taught, depending on the force of what he said, rather than any dramatic poses, to carry conviction to his hearers. While his teaching was directed to his disciples, the multitudes were present and heard, as we learn from Matthew 7:28, 29. The arrangements of these beatitudes is not haphazard—they come in what might be termed their natural order, and begin with the first principles of acceptable obedience to God.

The word translated "blessed" signifies a state of felicity; it is happiness in the highest sense, a happiness distinct from the possession of material things or lack of them. It is a happiness that grows out of a consciousness of having been lifted up above the strife for earthly things to a communion and union with God. It is not meant that either of the conditions separate from the others brings one into this state of blessedness, but the sum total of all of them. The careful reader will notice that each characteristic is mentioned in its regular order. He will notice, too, that they are not characteristics that the world has been in the habit of prizing highly. It is a pity that some are now contending that the Sermon on the Mount was intended to be the law, or constitution, of the material government which they contend Jesus meant to establish; but since Jesus did not

then establish that government the sermon now applies to us only in its principles. That is an easy way, but not a safe way, to avoid its requirements.

1, 2. And seeing the multitudes, he went up into the mountain: and when he had sat down, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, . . .

1, 2. The last verse of the fourth chapter shows something of the vastness of the throng that had gathered about Jesus. No house would hold the crowds. The narrow streets of that day furnished no suitable place to preach to such a throng of people. A suitable place on a near-by hill or mountain was in his mind; to that place the people followed him. The first verse says that his disciples came unto him. From this statement some have concluded that only the disciples heard the sermon, but that is a mistake, as will be seen by reading the verse following the close of the speech. "And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these words, the multitude were astonished at his teaching." In making this speech, Jesus employed none of the tricks of the ordinary speaker—he sat while he spoke.

3. Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

3. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." To be poor in spirit is to recognize our destitution of those qualities and blessings that the spirit needs, and that in and of ourselves we cannot supply those needs. Such realize their sinfulness, their consequent condemnation, and their dependence upon God for escape. Such characters, and only such, will come to God, where the blessings and happiness they seek may be found. If this poverty of spirit existed with no way to escape it, there would certainly be no blessedness connected with it. Its blessedness consists in the fact that it leads one to seek God and the release he can give. The poor in spirit realizes his poverty of resources, and that it is not in man to direct his steps, and that he must depend upon God for guidance. Such characters make up the citizenship of the kingdom of heaven. The proud, the haughty, the self-sufficient, are not in that kingdom; they do not enjoy

the blessedness of those who compose that kingdom.

4. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

4. "Blessed are they that mourn." And the poor in spirit will mourn; it could not be otherwise. They realize that they are sinners, and condemned with no ability within themselves to remedy matters. Is there blessedness in such a condition? Certainly not, but it is a necessary condition before one will come where the blessedness may be enjoyed. "For they shall be comforted." There is no comfort in mourning—no comfort in such a condition of mind and heart; but there is comfort promised to those who so mourn their condition that they will come to God to escape it.

5. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

5. "Blessed are the meek." Meekness is gentleness, submissiveness; not submissiveness to evil, or to false teaching, or to unwholesome conditions, but to God. When God speaks, the meek run not away as a wild thing, but as a gentle thing submit to God's leading. Mourning over his poverty of spirit—his lost condition, and the fact that he cannot make a way of escape for himself, he gladly accepts God's way of escape, and lets God lead him out of sin. He feels himself utterly crushed, broken, dependent. "Jehovah is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as are of a contrite spirit." (Ps. 34:18.) "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my word." (Isa. 66:2.) "For they shall inherit the earth." The arrogant and aggressive have sought to possess the earth by unrighteous schemes and the conquest of war and bloodshed, but have always failed. History furnishes striking examples of such, but where are they now? Were they happy because they had the title to what they had gained? Having title to a thing is not really to possess it; in fact, it may really possess us. In a higher sense we really possess only that which we use and enjoy. The meek now really possess the earth in a sense that the selfish and arrogant cannot comprehend. Perhaps there is also an allusion to the

new earth of which Peter speaks. (2 Pet. 3:13.)

6. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

6. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness." Hunger and thirst—extreme hunger and thirst—are the most compelling and urgent passions that take possession of a human being; in their intensity food and drink are the sole objects of desire. For the time being nothing else counts. The characters mentioned in the preceding verses will long for righteousness more than for anything else. Jesus does not mean that there is any happiness in the pangs of hunger and thirst, but that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will attain to that for which they hunger and thirst. "For they shall be filled." This promise is as positive as any found in the Bible, and as certain of fulfillment as any found in the Bible.

7. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

7. "Blessed are the merciful." Those who have a high sense of right may not be as merciful toward the weak and erring as they should. Perhaps this characteristic is thrown in here as a sort of balance against the preceding verse. If we would obtain mercy we must be merciful. "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged." And he shall be judged without mercy that hath showed no mercy.

8. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

8. "Blessed are the pure in heart." Perhaps no one is absolutely pure in heart, but we must strive to that end. "They shall see God." Shall see him in his true nature. When Jesus was here the wicked did not see him as did his disciples. The pure in heart can now see God in a sense in which the corrupt person cannot see him. Later they shall see him face to face.

9. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God.

9. Peacemakers are so few; but there are many war makers, strife makers, and quarrel makers. God hates the one who

sows discord among brethren, but blesses the one who makes peace. It is so easy to bring strife; so hard then to bring peace.

10-12. Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 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.

10-12. "Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. 3:12.) The promise is to those who suffer for the sake of righteousness, for the sake of Jesus—suffer for being a Christian and for standing for the right. If he suffers for error, or for his own sins and shortcomings, he is promised no blessing. If sinners try to destroy one's influence because he is a Christian, if they try to destroy him by slander—by falsehood—his are the blessings. He can even rejoice that he is counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ. "If a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this name." (1 Pet. 4:16.) "Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven."

13. Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.

13. Salt has both flavoring and saving quality. Salt is one of the indispensable things. "Salt is good: but if the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another." (Mark 9:50.) Christians, putting forth the power of Christ through their lives and teaching, contribute much toward the saving of the world. Once the world and then cities and nations were destroyed for lack of righteous people in them. Would the Lord have any further use for the world if all the people in it were bad? "If the salt have lost its savor," its "flavor," it is worthless. The crude salt used in those days contained minerals which would not dissolve when placed on meat. Such residue was good for nothing—it was cast away. In this expression Jesus emphasizes the fact that a disciple may so lose his influence as to be

good for nothing—lose his saltiness. Hence once saved but now lost. This illustration shows the possibility of apostasy.

Nothing can take the place of salt; its uses are many, some of which are:

1. It serves as a seasoning; many foods taste better, when salted. "Have salt in your selves." Without the flavor of genuine Christian character, your profession of Christianity is repulsive to any one of spiritual discernment. If your claims to being a Christian are repulsive to others, you need this gospel salt.
2. Salt is a purifier, a disinfectant. A genuine Christian character has a purifying influence on others.
3. Salt has a preserving—saving—power. Real Christians are God's means of saving others. "Take heed to thyself, and to thy teaching. Continue in these things; for in so doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee." (1 Tim. 4:16.)

14-16. Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under a bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house. Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

14-16. Men have a very different idea as to who are the real lights in the world. They would have pointed to the great generals and statesmen of Rome, the philosophers of Greece, or the rabbis of the Jews, as the real lights of the world; but Jesus passed by all these, and said to a group of obscure Galileans, "Ye are the light of the world." But in and of themselves they were incapable of generating any spiritual light for themselves or others. Jesus is the source of spiritual light. "I am the light of the world." "When I am in the world, I am the light of the world." "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me may not abide in the darkness." (John 8:12; 9:5; 12:46.)

A Christian may give light by preaching and teaching the word of God. The apostles received the light by revelation. "Seeing it is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness,

who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 4:6.) Without the light from above a human being is in darkness. The apostles were in darkness till God shined in their hearts by inspiration to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, and through them this knowledge was revealed to us; in this way that light shines in us. We can be the light of the world by holding forth this light—"among whom ye are seen as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." (Phil. 2:15, 16.) A church is a candlestick, and a candlestick supports that which gives the light.

Also by living as the Lord directs, the Christian reflects the light. If a reflector gives off any light, it must be clean, it must be in its proper place, and there must be nothing between it and the source of light it is meant to reflect. Some professed Christians are not clean enough to reflect light, some are rarely where they should be, and often too many things come between them and the Lord, the source of light. What a Christian should do is plain; if he lives as he should live, his light will shine. The Lord did not say, shine your light, but, "Let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." If a Christian lives as he should live, his light can no more be hidden from view than can a city set on a hill.

17, 18. Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you. Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished.

17, 18. Jesus lived under the law, and obeyed all its requirements. The Jews held tenaciously to the traditions of the elders, but Jesus utterly disregarded these human additions to the law. Jesus was born under the law, grew up under the law of Moses, and so faithfully obeyed its requirements that he could challenge the Jews to convince or convict him of sin. (John 8:46.) Instead of verses 17 and 18 showing that the law was to be of permanent force, they show that it had a limit.

The contrast is between destroying and fulfilling. Jesus would not destroy the law, but would fulfill it; and not one thing would pass away, till all this was accomplished—even the part the Jews considered the least important. It would then cease by its own limitations. It was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. (Gal. 3:23-25.) When a schoolmaster accomplishes his work, the student passes out from under him. So with the law—in that respect it accomplishes its purpose. The law had its types and shadows—Jesus fulfilled them all. McGarvey says, "Jesus also fulfilled the law in the sense of maintaining sinless obedience to it; but this is not the fulfillment to which the text refers." But is that not necessarily included in the fulfillment? The animal for atonement had to be without blemish; Jesus had to be without blemish—had to be sinless—to fulfill the type. Jesus fulfilled its demands to the fullest extent. Having fulfilled the law, he took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross. (Col. 2:14.)

19, 20. Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.

19, 20. The commands of the law were to be obeyed. When God gives commands, he means for them to be obeyed. God's commands are expressions of his authority and of his interest in us; they grow also out of our need for guidance. They are signboards, showing us the right road. To the Jew the commands of the law were guides to prosperity and peace. God knew the right way for them to go, and he graciously gave them the right directions in his commands. Human beings have a tendency to pass judgment on God's commands, and to pronounce some commands of less importance than others. In these latter days, they have gone even further and pronounced some commands as nonessential! Virtually they have taken down some of God's highway signs. The scribes and Pharisees had graded God's commands, and pronounced some as less than others. In this sermon Jesus teaches a lesson based on

their own rating. The commands that they considered least must not be broken, nor must they teach others to break any command. They must be faithful in obeying and teaching every command. Jesus thus exalts faithful obedience. No approved servant of God ever habitually disregarded any command of God nor taught others that it was safe to do so. To live right one must obey the commands of God, and must urge others to do so. The Pharisees were very particular about keeping the outward forms of the law, and that they should have done. They even tithed the products of their gardens, which was proper and right; but they neglected "the weightier matters of law, justice, and mercy, and faith." They were unjust in their dealings, unmerciful to those who did not live up to their unjust demands, and their religion was a form without faith. "Ye blind guides, that strain out the gnat and swallow the camel." (Matt. 23:23,24.) The Pharisees put themselves forward as models of righteousness, and the people generally so regarded them. Yet Jesus taught the people that their righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, or else they should in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. This latter statement of Jesus shows that entrance into the kingdom of heaven is conditional. All obedience must come from the heart. (Rom. 6:17, 18.)

Some Reflections

Christianity is God's character factory in which he fits and prepares men and women for dwelling with him and his holy angels in the world to come.

Obedience must be learned. The will seeks independence of action regardless of results. It must be intelligently trained to submit to authority, to be regulated by law. If we do not learn obedience in this life, we would not fit into the society of heaven; for God's will is supreme in heaven.

When some people help the poor, they do it in such a way as to humiliate the poor, and to make any self-respecting poor person wish in his heart that he could afford to refuse their

gifts. Giving to the needy in such a way as to help them in spirit as well as body is a fine art. Seek to develop it.

21, 22. Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire.

21, 22. Jesus lived under the law of Moses, and kept it so perfectly that no one could convict him of sin and he taught his disciples to obey the law. Jesus was not therefore in this sermon setting aside the law, nor contradicting it; he was going back of the deeds to the thoughts that give rise to violations of the law. Jesus condemned the anger that might lead to murder. Hot anger is a dangerous emotion, and should be carefully guarded against as a dangerous contagion. Never try to justify fits of anger on the grounds of temper; that is really a confession of weakness, for the will should be stronger than your feelings of resentment and anger. Many hotheads have worked on themselves till they became gentle and free of fits of anger. You cannot excuse yourself for violating God's word. It is generally understood that judgment here refers to the sentence passed by the Jewish court. Raca was an expression of contempt, as brainless, or worthless. To call a brother such names was to be in danger of the council, the Jewish high court. Neither should he say "Thou fool." Jesus was warning them against rough and harsh expression about a fellow Jew. Such habits are too common amongst Christians; it shows a lack of regard for others and for the truth. The habit of using such expressions grows on people, if they make no effort to hold themselves in check. Respect for the Golden Rule will prevent such speech.

23-26. If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art with him in the way; lest haply the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee,

Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou have paid the last farthing.

23-26. Some of the things Jesus taught his disciples were designed to regulate their conduct under the law of Moses. An example: "the scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses' seat: all things therefore whatsoever they bid you, these do and observe: but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not." (Matt. 23:2, 3.) We cannot follow literally the things said in this section of the lesson. We do not, and cannot, bring gifts to the altar, as did the Jews. But even so, the lesson to us is plain. If the Jew, as he was about to make his offering, remembered that his brother had aught against him, could not worship God acceptably till he first made things right with the brother he had wronged, it is certainly binding on us to undo any wrong to a brother. If your heart is not right toward a brother, it cannot be right with God. Verse 25 shows that the offended brother was bringing suit, or was about to bring suit, against the offending brother, and that he had grounds for suit. The offender should hasten to make things right with the offended brother "lest haply the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison." If he was cast into prison for a debt, and was not able to pay himself out, and no friend would do so, he remained there till he died. If that is a type of what is to be the final doom of the disciple of Christ who refuses to make right any wrong he has done to a brother, the final doom of such is sealed, for in the Lord's prison for offenders none will ever have anything with which to pay. It is hard for the average person to realize that it is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong. You want to contend for your rights? But know this, your fancied rights may often trespass on the actual rights of others. "Why not rather take wrong? Why not rather be defrauded. Nay, but ye yourselves do wrong, and defraud, and that your own brethren." (1 Cor. 6:7, **8.**) Several evils come from contending for fancied or real rights. Generally the one who wins loses; he certainly loses influence and friends, and sometimes stirs up trouble in a community. A lawsuit, or a

squabble, between two members of the church is certain to do a great injury to the church. The plea that one is contending for his rights is a poor excuse for working injury to the body of Christ.

27, 28. Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

27, 28. Jesus did not countermand the law against adultery; he extended it so as to include the thoughts and desires of the heart. The law of Moses dealt with the act; Jesus deals with the thoughts and desires of the heart. The law of Moses did not make adultery include the desires of the heart; for the judges, whose duty it was to enforce the law could not know the condition of the heart, save as it expressed itself in action. But God the heart searcher, knows the condition of the heart, and can therefore judge accurately the thoughts, desires, and motives of the heart, as well as he can the deeds of the body. The desires and motives of the heart determine character. If a man desires money more than he desires to do right, he is dishonest, and lacks only the opportunity to commit fraud. It is true that his desires do not injure the other person as much as his deeds would, but they injure his own character. And if a man lusts after a woman, though he lacks the opportunity to carry out his lustful desires, he is an adulterer. Adultery here includes all lewdness, whether the man be married or unmarried. Notice the language: "Every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." "Every one" includes the married and the unmarried. "A woman"—any woman, whether married or unmarried. And so it is seen that the language of the Bible does not keep up a clear distinction between adultery and fornication.

29, 30. 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, ana not thy whole body be cast into hell. And if thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body go into hell.

29, 30. It is thought by some that Jesus meant for us to sever ourselves from anything, no matter how dear it is to us, if it is going to cause us to be lost. It is certainly true we should be willing to give up anything that stands in our way of being saved. It is difficult for us to see how our real right eye or right hand might be the occasion of our being cast into hell; but if this was about to be the case, why think the language so strange and harsh? Many have given up their lives rather than do something for which to be cast into hell. Giving up an eye or a hand is much less than giving up the life of the body.

31, 32. It was said also. Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, that every one that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress; and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery.

31. 32. "It was said also, whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a waiting of divorcement." Moses had said, "When a man taketh a wife, and marrieth her, then it shall be, if she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some unseemly thing in her, that he shall write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house." (Deut. 24:1.) On another occasion, when Jesus had answered a question propounded to him by the Pharisees, they asked, "Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it hath not been so." (Matt. 19:3-8.) It was a measure for the protection of the wife whose husband was not pleased with her, and was therefore harsh in his attitude toward her; but under the influence of the teaching of Christ men were supposed to become gentler and more considerate. This statement at first glance sounds a little peculiar: "But I say unto you, that every one that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress." This implies that her being put away would be the cause of her marrying another man, thus becoming an adulteress; and the man that married her would by so doing commit adultery.

Some young people who marry have never developed any feeling of personal responsibility. Their parents failed to teach them the fundamental principles of right living, failed to teach them to regard the rights of others, and failed to allow them to learn how to live by letting them work out their own problems. Life has been easy for them; they do not know how to meet on their own responsibility the hard realities of life. To such a couple married life soon turns out to be disappointing, they grow irritable and quarrelsome; the next thing is a separation and a divorce. When they marry again, they enter into an adulterous life; perhaps they are no better satisfied with their new companions than they were with each other. It seemingly does not occur to many people that marriage is a divine institution and that people cannot lightly regard the marriage vows without sin.

33-37. Again, ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by the heaven, for it is the throne of God; nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of his feet; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, for thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: and whatsoever is more than these is of the evil one.

33-37. To forswear one's self is to commit perjury! That was strictly forbidden under the Old Covenant. "When a man voweth a vow unto Jehovah, or sweareth an oath to bind his soul with a bond, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth." (Num. 30:2.) Hence, in making any ordinary vow or promise, the children of Israel were allowed to bind themselves under oath to Jehovah to fulfill a vow. On the matter of swearing McGarvey has this to say: "The only oath authorized by the law of Moses was one taken in the name of God. (Deut. 6:13.) The oaths which Jesus here proceeds to prohibit—'by heaven,' 'by earth,' 'by Jerusalem,' 'by thy head,'—were unauthorized by the law. Moreover, it is taught by the scribes that these oaths, and all others which did not include the name of God, had not the binding force of an oath. The universal prohibition, 'Swear not at all,' is distrib-

uted by the specification of these four forms of oaths, and is, therefore, most strictly interpreted as including only such oaths. Jesus surely did not intend to abolish now, in advance of the general abrogation of the law, those statutes of Moses which allowed, and in some instances required, the administration of an oath. (See Ex. 22:11; Num. 5:19.) What we style the judicial oaths of the law of Moses, then, were not included in the prohibition in the light of authoritative examples. God himself, 'because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself in confirming the promise to Abraham (Heb. 6:13); and he did the same in declaring the priesthood of Christ. (Heb. 7:21.) Jesus answered to an oath before the Sanhedrin—Caiaphas administering the oath in the form: 'I adjure thee by the living God, . . .' (Matt. 26:63.) Paul also made oath to the Corinthian church saying: 'I call upon God for a witness upon my soul, that to spare you I forbear to come unto Corinth.' (2 Cor. 1:23. See also Rom. 1:9; Gal. 1:20; Phil. 1:8; 1 Cor. 15:31; Rev. 10:5, 6.) We conclude, then, that judicial oaths, and oaths taken in the name of God on occasions of solemn religious importance, are not included in the prohibition; but as these are the only exceptions found in the scriptures, we conclude that all other oaths are forbidden." The language seems clearly to prohibit only the kinds of oaths mentioned. It is said that the Jews were much given to swearing all sorts of frivolous oaths, and that the people of that country are yet guilty of such profanity. They thought it wrong to swear these light oaths in the name of God, but all right in common conversation to swear these oaths that Jesus here prohibits. They did not regard such oaths as really binding. Jesus shows them that the heaven was God's throne, the earth was his footstool, and that Jerusalem was the city of the great king—God's presence was manifested in the temple in Jerusalem. Because of the relationship of all these things to God, they were too sacred to be invoked in all sorts of light and frivolous oaths. And it would be foolish for one to swear by his own head. In Matt. 23:16-22 Jesus exposes some more foolish notions the Jews had about swearing. "But let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: and

whatsoever is more than these is of the evil one." This indicates that Jesus was condemning the habit of swearing in their speech—their conversations. It is a disgusting habit that has a strong hold on many people now. It is crude, unnecessary, and sinful. Trying to emphasize one's words by profanity is folly; such profanity adds nothing to the truth of what one says, but detracts from it. It certainly does not make anyone's conversation any more entertaining. It is in no sense a social or a business asset.

LESSON LINKS

It has always been wrong to give false testimony. It has always been wrong to lie. A lie is defined to be a falsehood told or acted to deceive. It is a vicious lie when told to pervert justice or damage someone. Even in court and under oath men will give false testimony. One need only to hear a few trials in court to know that much false swearing is done. "Jehovah, who shall sojourn in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh truth in his heart; he that slandereth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his friend, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor; in whose eyes a reprobate is despised, but who honoreth them that fear Jehovah; he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not." (Ps. 15:1-4.) A true man will give true testimony, even if it is against his cause. Lie not—few liars reform, and none can be saved. Of course, the man who repents of lying is no longer a liar.

38, 39. Ye have heard that it was said. An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you. Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

38, 39. The law said, "And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbor; as he hath done so shall it be done to him: breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be rendered unto him." (Lev. 24:19, 20.) This did not mean that the Israelite was allowed then and there to take personal vengeance on the person who had

injured him; the penalty was to be assessed by the judges. It is said that the Jews had so perverted this law as to justify private, or personal, retaliation; but all such complaints were to be established before proper authorities, and they were to assess the penalties. A charge could not be established on the testimony of one witness. If a man could not establish by competent witnesses the charge he brought against a man, "then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to do unto his brother." This would tend to prevent the bringing of suits through spite. Jesus was not countermanding these demands of the law so long as the law was in force, but was condemning their so perverting the law as to justify personal retaliation. He would prevent personal brawls. He would not have a man to take matters in his own hands, and seek in a personal way to inflict the required penalty. Certainly he did not mean for his followers never under any circumstance to resist evil; for we are required to fight, and it certainly is evil that we are to fight, and to fight is to resist. Paul said. "I have fought the good fight." Christians are soldiers, and they are required to put on the protective armor, and then to use the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. But we are not to engage in personal combats with those who do us wrong. If we retaliate, we put ourselves in the class of the one who does us wrong.

40-42. And if any man. would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

40-42. If a man is about to bring suit against another, the presumption is that he thinks he has just grounds for his suit, though that is not always the case. A suit at law is an expensive thing to both parties. Aside from the right and wrong of the matter, the course recommended by the Lord is usually better from a financial standpoint. By not being at the expense of fighting the suit, you gain by even paying more than is demanded. No matter what are the grounds for his suit, if he is about to bring suit against a man for his coat, it is better to

settle the matter out of court, even if the party about to be sued has to give both his coat and his cloak to effect a settlement. Usually the one who gains a suit loses more than he gains. Few men can engage in a lawsuit without lowering their standard. A righteous man cannot resort to the tricks and schemes that the unrighteous use in suits; and because he cannot do so, and cannot resort to false testimony, he is likely to lose. For his own personal good—for his contentment and peace of mind, it is better to make a sacrifice to effect a settlement than for him to go through the worry of a suit. To seek to settle a grudge by bringing a suit, or to fight a suit because of pride and stubbornness, is poor business; and such actions do not make for good citizenship. Certainly no Christian should be moved by such motives. "Whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile." McGarvey said: "The custom alluded to is said to have originated with Cyrus, king of Persia, and it empowered a government courier to impress both men and horses to help him forward." Now the Jews so hated the Roman government that it would be especially unpleasant to a Jew for a Roman officer to require his services. Their duty therefore in this respect needed to be impressed upon them. When the government sent a man on a mission, he might need assistance along the way. He had the authority to require men to assist him. When such was necessary, it was likely to be very inconvenient, and even oppressive. Even so, it was better to double the required service than to refuse. If he did more than was required, no one could object; if he refused the assistance, he would likely get into trouble with the government. It is supposed that the man who asks for a gift or loan is in need. Those who have anything cannot turn a deaf ear to those who are in need. But our duty here does not go beyond our ability, for a person can neither give nor lend that which he has not. But let us not deceive ourselves into thinking we cannot, when we can; for we cannot deceive God. But our aid to people should be given in such a way as not to encourage idleness.

hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and unjust.

43-45. Through a mistaken conception of the law, or through a development of the tradition of the elders, the Jew had adopted many tenets not found in the law of Moses. The teaching to hate their enemies was one such tenet. The law of Moses had no such command. The law did say, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,..." (Lev. 19:18.) But it did not command them to hate their enemies. Hate was a doctrine the Jews had taught without the authority of the law. Perhaps they thought, since they were to love their neighbor, they were to pursue the opposite course toward their enemy. The requirement to love our neighbor and even our enemy does not mean that we must have real affection for them, such as we have for members of our own family, for affection cannot be commanded. We are fulfilling the command when we treat all men right. Jesus shows us how to love our enemies—"pray for them that persecute you." Or as stated by Luke: "Do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you." (Luke 6:27, 28.) To do this is to fulfill the command to love your enemy; and Jesus says you must do this, "that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust."

46-48. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have you? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the Gentiles the same? Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

46-48. It is an easy matter to be fair, and even generous, toward those who are good to us; but even so there are people who will take advantage of you when you try to be fair and honest with them, or even if you go out of your way to do them a favor. It is sometimes hard to know when you are doing good to folks like that. You certainly are not doing good to them if you put yourself in a position in which you become an easy victim

of their greed. That encourages them in their meanness, and that certainly is not good for them; but there is reward in treating such folks as that right, if you can manage to do so. But there is no reward in being good to people who are good to us. And it seems that the word "salute" means more than a nod of the head, but requires a certain amount of courtesy. It seems impossible for some people to show any degree of courtesy toward people they dislike. And some think it is below their dignity to show any courtesy, or even recognize, one whom they consider inferior. But to do what the Lord requires is to have the perfection he demands.

Matthew 6

1. Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them: else ye have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.

1. "Do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them." This requirement is of broad application, covering all that we do in the service of God. Many of the things we do must be done where others see us, but we are to do nothing to be seen of men; we are to render no service nor engage in any worship to gain the applause of men. To do service to God or man for the purpose of being honored by man is base and degrading.

2-4. 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. Verily I say unto you. They have received their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee.

2-4. Alms is defined to be anything given gratuitously to relieve the poor. It is easy to make a display of our helping the poor, for that is one thing people generally approve; but we are not to seek to attract attention to our generous giving. To

enforce this point Jesus uses a peculiar expression: "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." However, we are not to be so afraid that our left hand will know what our right hand does that we will not let our right do anything! The man who deals with the public has a strong temptation to give so as to be seen of men. As his prosperity depends on the good will of the people he is tempted to give in such a way as to turn the public sentiment in his favor. If he gives way to this common weakness, he can manage his giving in such a way as to make it very profitable advertising. Of course, the poor will receive some benefit from such giving, but Jesus shows plainly that such giving receives no reward from the Lord. Such a person may pretend to be giving as a servant of the Lord, but he is really giving to serve his own ends and purposes. Jesus calls such a giver a hypocrite. He is giving to gain the glory of men, and that is the reward he gets. He gets what he seeks—that, and nothing more. Nor can such a man be a real believer in the Lord. "How can ye believe, who receive glory one of another, and the glory that cometh from the only God ye seek not." (John 5:44.) Such a character may be a great pretender, but his condition of heart makes it impossible for him to be a true believer. Just here the temptation comes to the preacher with peculiar force. The preacher who seeks popularity is not a true believer, not a real Christian, for he belongs to that class of hypocrites who do things to be seen of men, to have the glory of men; and like other hypocrites he has no reward in heaven.

5. And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward.

5. Let us not put a wrong construction on the word "stand"; for a person can stand on his knees as well as his feet. In his prayer of dedication of the temple, "Solomon stood before the altar of Jehovah in the presence of all the assembly of Israel." And yet "when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto Jehovah, he arose from before the altar of Jehovah, from kneeling on his knees." (1 Kings

8:22, 54.) Solomon was standing on his knees. Besides, the word "stand" in the English and the Greek, frequently means to take a position on a certain point or for a certain purpose. A man frequently speaks about his *stand* on certain questions, and the army takes a *stand*. Jesus was here speaking of secret, or individual, prayers, as the next verse shows. In this country if a man should stop on the corner of the streets, and take a position to pray his secret prayer, people would laugh at him; but not so in Jerusalem at that time; for it was a religious city. The injunction is against our doing anything to make people think we are very devout and prayerful. To do so is to be hypocritical; a hypocrite has no favor with the Lord no matter how much people may praise him. There were many "pious" hypocrites in those days. Jesus makes this sweeping statement about the scribes and Pharisees: "But all their works they do to be seen of men"; and in that chapter (Matt. 23), Jesus delivers the most withering denunciation of them and their hypocrisies that could be made; he has not changed his attitude toward hypocrites.

Prayer is one of the essential parts of the Christian's life. It is part of his righteousness; hence his praying comes under the general principle set forth by the Savior in these words: "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them: else ye have no reward with your Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 6:1.) When a Christian does anything to gain the applause of men, that is the only reward he gets. It does seem that in praying to God the thought of gaining the applause of men would not so much as enter his mind. Yet there is danger along that line, else Jesus would not have given this warning: "And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have received their reward." (Matt. 6:5.) A man may attempt to make an eloquent speech in his pretending to pray, so as to have people praise the eloquence of the prayer; this is, to the pious man, an unthinkable thing.

"And it came to pass, as he was praying in a certain place,

that when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples." (Luke 11:1.) They knew they should pray, else they would not have asked the Lord to teach them to pray. Of course they meant for him to teach them how to pray and for what to pray. That sort of teaching is still needed. So many people now think that God is so limited by the laws of nature that he cannot answer prayer. In your mind place the teachings of God's word over against that theory.

"But if any man lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord; a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." (James 1:5-7.) "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:6, 7.) "Now unto him that is able to do exceedingly abundant above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen." (Eph. 3:20, 21.)

6. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee.

6. There is a difference between personal or secret prayers and public prayers, though the same general regulations cover both. If you are to engage in secret prayer, find a secret place to do your praying. Not only enter into your secret chamber, but shut the door so that no eye can behold you in your personal devotions. A hypocrite would not want to do that; he would want to leave the door open enough that people could see him on his knees. Once it was customary among a certain class of preachers, and may yet be so in some places, to

come to the meeting house after the crowd was well gathered, go up to the pulpit, and before the whole crowd kneel, and engage in secret prayer—a secret prayer in the most public place he could find! That is the sort of thing Jesus condemns.

7. 8. And in praying use not vain repetitions as the Gentiles do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

7. 8. Repetitions and vain repetitions are different things. A vain repetition is an empty repetition. The first petition was vain, or the repetition of it would not have been vain. Jesus certainly would not engage in what he himself condemned; yet he prayed the same prayer three times in rapid succession. His praying three times for the same thing in the Garden of Gethsemane was not vain repetition. Moreover, when a person is desperately in earnest about a thing, he will not be content with one petition; and the parable of the widow and the unjust judge shows that Jesus does not intend that we shall be satisfied with one request. (Luke 18:1-8.) He spoke the parable "to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint"; not to give up in despair. But the heathen thought there was merit in the mere repetition of a list of words. God knows what we need before we ask him. but he may defer an answer to test our earnestness. Besides, the things we ask for may not be the things we need. A child wants many things that would be ruinous to him: a wise parent withholds them. And the things we want would also frequently be ruinous to us. Fortunately for us God knows what we need.

9-13. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

9-13. This is generally referred to as the Lord's prayer, though it is his only in the sense that he is the author of it. There is no indication that he ever used these same words in a

prayer; neither did he intend for his disciples to do so. They were to pray "after this manner." If any of the disciples ever used that same prayer, we have no record of it. He mentioned things for which they were to pray.

The first petition was that God's name should be hallowed—held in reverence. A man cannot make that petition sincerely, and be accustomed to using the name of God in a light frivolous way. The next petition—"Thy kingdom come"—was appropriate before the kingdom was set up. When a man prays for a thing, he hopes for it; he does not hope for what he already has. So long as they hoped for the coming kingdom, they could sincerely pray for it to come; but why should a citizen of the kingdom pray for it to come? If he thinks the kingdom is yet future, he might in his ignorance consistently pray for it to come. "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." In heaven God's will is done faithfully. A man cannot sincerely make that petition, unless he is willing for God's will to be done in his own heart and life. There must be no rebellion or self-will in the heart of one who prays. His every thought must be in subjection to the will of God through Christ. In praying for our daily bread, we as in other matters, are praying for God to do the things which we can in nowise do. In praying for a harvest the farmer is not praying for God to plant the seed, or to cultivate the soil. He is praying for those things over which he has no control, but which are essential to a harvest. The same principle applies in all other things for which we pray. We are not able to return to God what we owe him, and must depend on being forgiven. If a person cannot make amends for the wrongs he has done us, on his repentance we must forgive him, or else not be forgiven. God does not tempt people to sin, but he tries them. We may pray to be kept from these trials, and to be delivered from the evil one.

14. 15. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

14, 15. If a man cannot pay what he owes you, or make

amends for the wrong he has done, but comes to you in penitence, asking for your forgiveness, what more can he do? You must forgive him, or else never expect God to forgive you. Forgive and ye shall be forgiven; forgive not, and ye shall not be forgiven. The language of Jesus here cannot be misunderstood.

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

16-18. They were not to make a display of their fasting. If a person wanted to fast, that was his business; but if he did fast, he should not put on a long face about it. When man becomes so low in religion, that by his conduct he virtually shouts to people, "Look at me; see how religious I am," he is not a servant of God—he is a base hypocrite, no matter what his pretensions may be.

19-21. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where thy treasure is, there will be thy heart also.

19-21. Jesus does not prohibit thrift and prosperity; neither does he encourage extravagant spending of our gains. We are commanded to work. "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need." (Eph. 4:28.) "If any man will not work, neither let him eat." (2 Thess. 3:10.) But Jesus does prohibit the hoarding up of wealth for selfish purposes. Such hoarding is beset with dangers. There are the schemers, the kidnappers, and the thieves, and those who murder for money. Business reverses may sweep it all away. But worst of all, the desire to be rich leads people into many temptations and snares of the devil, which drowns men's souls in perdition. (1 Tim. 6:9.) "But lay up for yourselves

treasures in heaven." Nothing is said here as to how this is done, but that is not hard for anyone to figure out. It is done by a godly life and the generous use of our means to help the needy and to promote worthy causes. If we do not lay up treasures in heaven, we will be poor indeed when in death we leave behind us all the treasures we have.

22-24. The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

22-24. The body receives its light through the eye. In a figurative sense, the heart, the mind, has eyes. "Having the eyes of your heart enlightened, . . ." (Eph. 1:18.) Frequently when a thing is explained, a person says, "I see." Paul was sent to open the eyes of the people. (Acts 26:16-18.) He was to lead them to see the truth. An eye that is single does not see double. Some men try to lay up treasures on earth and in heaven; they are men of double vision, their eye is not single. The person with an evil eye is not necessarily one who looks for evil things; he is one who has defective vision. He does not see things as they are, and therefore does not see the truth. He is trying to look to laying up treasures on earth and in heaven. At least, the connection leads to that view. If a man has the wrong view of things, the wrong philosophy of life, he may think he is really enlightened; but what he thinks is light is dense darkness. He thinks he can lay up treasures on earth and in heaven, too; but in trying to do so, he is trying to serve two masters, and that cannot be done. Hate frequently means to love less. It has that meaning here, for no one would voluntarily seek to serve a master toward whom he had bitter feelings. Treasures on earth and treasures in heaven are here regarded as two masters. The man who tries to serve both will certainly come to love one more than the other. Earthly riches are so deceptive and engage so much of one's time that they will finally absorb all his affections and energies. "Be not deceived."

25. Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body more than the raiment?

25. Jesus here goes against man's philosophy of life. All the planning and energies of most people are directed toward gaining material things. Something to eat and drink, and something to wear, are matters of continued anxiety with most of the people. Well we must have these things; but why be anxious about them? He then gives his first reason as to why people should not be anxious about these necessary things—the life is more than food, and the body than raiment. Life has higher aims and possibilities than food, and the body has greater uses than to be a dummy on which to hang fine clothing. The Lord gives other reasons as to why we should not be anxious about these necessary things.

26. Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they?

26. The birds are not given to worry about laying up food. They live the life God appointed them to live, and are content. They do not labor, as men do; and yet not many living things are busier than are birds. They are busy in the life God assigned them. If men lived as strictly within the life God has appointed for them they would be content and happy. God feeds the birds in his own appointed way. People are of much more value than birds. If we stuck as closely to our God-appointed life as do the birds, God would see that we have food and clothing.

27. And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life?

27. Anxiety accomplishes nothing. For the measure of his life, the marginal reading has his stature. Scholars are divided as to which it should be; but it makes little difference which it is, for anxiety can add nothing to one's height nor to the length of one's life. Anxiety may shorten one's life, but it

certainly does not lengthen it. Neither can anxiety bring the things that sustain life. It is therefore useless to be anxious about what we shall eat or what we shall wear. As it adds nothing to our well-being, why be anxious? It certainly does cheat us out of satisfaction and rest.

28-30. And why are you anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

28-30. In these verses Jesus does not mention the matter of food, but of raiment. "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin." How do they grow? There are mysteries in all vegetable growth, and yet there are some things about vegetable growth that are plain enough. The lily grows in perfect harmony with the laws governing it. It has no will of its own; it does not rebel at the laws governing it; it tries no new schemes; it has no anxiety; and yet it grows and blooms into such a thing of beauty "that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Suppose a Christian lived as perfectly in harmony with the laws of his growth and development as does the lily, the Christian character would be a most beautiful thing to behold. Grass is here used to include all herbage, even the lily. If God so clothes the lily, which soon dies, and is burned in the oven, "shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" But we must not forget one thing, and that is, that the lily's life span is lived out in perfect harmony with God's law, the law of nature. "The grass, or rather the herbage, is spoken of as being cast into the oven, because it was used by the Jews to heat their bake ovens. The country about Jerusalem had long ago been stripped of its timber."—McGarvey.

31, 32. Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewith all shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

31,32. The Gentiles, having no heavenly Father in whom to trust and to whom to look for blessings, and knowing nothing of a higher spiritual life, can have no higher aspirations than to provide for themselves food and drink and clothing. If our whole efforts are directed toward providing these things, then we are no better than these heathen Gentiles. Our heavenly Father knows what we need; and if we are not idle, we will be fed and clothed; and we know that we should have higher aspirations and live better lives than do the heathen. But we sometimes imagine that we need things that we do not really need. We neglect our spiritual needs striving after imaginary material needs.

33. But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.

33. "But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness." The wording of this command shows that we should seek the necessary things of life, but that we must make the kingdom of God and his righteousness the main object of all our endeavors. In all of our plans these must come first. We must seek to enter that kingdom, and then to make ourselves into useful and faithful citizens. And we must seek God's righteousness. We cannot seek our own personal righteousness, for every one's personal righteousness is a thing that belongs exclusively to him; but there is a righteousness that God bestows on those who obey him. It is a righteousness to which we attain by obedience to the gospel. When a person attains to the forgiveness of his sins, there is then nothing against him. For the time being he is as free from sin and its guilt as if he had never sinned. He is righteous. That righteousness we must seek, and we must seek it in God's appointed way. There is no other way to find it. And the Lord's language here shows that entrance into His kingdom and obtaining his righteousness are conditional; we must seek them. This must be first and uppermost in everything we do. In doing this we will work to make an honest living and to be able to help the needy and worthy causes, for God requires us to do so. In doing this, the things we need will

be added.

34. Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

34. Each day has its own problems, worries, and evils. If we add the anxieties of tomorrow to the worries of today, each day has the worries of two days. Why thus heap up our worries? The things we fear for tomorrow may not come; and if they do, worrying about them today will not help. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." There are two kinds of evils—moral and physical. Each day has its physical evils, such as sickness, accidents, calamities; it is not helpful to borrow the evils of tomorrow.

Some Reflections

If a man's heart is centered on earthly treasures, and they are lost, as frequently they are, he has nothing left on which to draw for comfort. Many such have become mentally unbalanced, and many have gone the suicide route.

"Ye cannot serve God and mammon." When we serve riches, they become our god. Any property we have should be a servant instead of a master. Property is a relentless and degrading master, but it can be made a useful servant.

To make the kingdom of God and his righteousness the object of all our activities is to lay up treasures in heaven. What we lay up here is not really ours, for it belongs to God, and will fall into the hands of those who follow us. The treasures we lay up in heaven will be ours for ever and ever.

Matthew 7

LESSON LINKS

Concerning the Sermon on the Mount McGarvey has this to

say: "No doubt Matthew's chief object in reporting this sermon was to put on record the lessons which it teaches; but his closing remark in which he states its effect on the people (28, 29) shows that he had not lost sight of the line of argument which pervades the other parts of his narrative. Having in previous sections exhibited Jesus as the actual Son of God, he here represents him as speaking with authority suited to his divine nature. If he was the Son of God, he could not speak with less authority; and if he was not, it was the extreme of madness and wickedness for him to speak as he did. The latter conclusion is inconsistent with the entire course of his life, and we are forced to the only alternative that he was conscious of being the actual Son of the living God." The tone of the sermon and its calm assurance of authority to speak stamp the sermon as the product of deity.

1, 2. Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you.

1, 2. The command here does not prohibit our deciding about the right or wrong of things; nor does it prohibit our forming our conclusions about the conduct of others. Johnson gives some sensible comments: "The term 'judge' is used in more than one sense, but Christ's meaning is plain. (1) He does not prohibit the civil judgment of the courts upon evil doers, for this is approved throughout the Bible. (2) He does not prohibit the judgment of the church, through its officers, upon those who walk disorderly, for both he and the apostles have enjoined this. (3) He does not forbid those private judgments that we are compelled to form of wrongdoers, for he himself tells us that we are to judge man by their fruits. (See verses 15-20.) What he designs to prohibit is rash, uncharitable judgments, a fault-finding spirit, a disposition to condemn without examination of charges." "All judging from surmise or from insufficient premises, or from ill-will is prohibited."—McGarvey. Harsh and unreasonable judgments are certainly forbidden. Even our just decisions about people should be

tempered with mercy. "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged." "For judgment is without mercy to him that hath showed no mercy: mercy glorieth against judgment." (James 2:13.) There is no hope for us in the great day of accounts if God does not judge with mercy. To be judged with mercy then, we must judge with mercy now. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

3-5. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me cast out the mote out of thine eye; and lo, the beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

3-5. The mote, a little splinter, or such small objects as frequently get into people's eyes, is here used to represent small faults, mere trifles. The beam represents a much greater fault, a real wrong. It is singular that those who are guilty of great wrongs are so ready to criticize the faults of others. The sinner who makes no pretense at obeying God will readily criticize the shortcomings of members of the church. A member of the church who so loves money that he is a real idolater will criticize another who through poverty is slow to pay his bills. A preacher will ruthlessly divide a church to have his way and then will severely condemn others for some much smaller sin. And sometimes it appears that people criticize others to divert attention from their own sins. Also, being conscious of their own guilt and being ashamed of it and yet holding on to it, they condemn smaller wrongs in others. Jesus called such people hypocrites, for they are pretending to be better than they are. "Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." This cannot be construed to mean that we are to be absolutely perfect before we seek to correct other people, for no one is entirely free from faults; but we should not try to correct another when we are guilty of the same fault in a larger measure. We must first seek to get ourselves right. The elders of the church at Ephesus were to take heed to themselves first, and then to the flock.

(Acts 20:28.) Paul gave Timothy this charge: "Take heed to thyself, and to thy teaching." (1 Tim. 4:16.) If a man does not try to correct himself before seeking to correct others, he is a hypocrite. Besides, if he tries diligently and conscientiously to correct his own faults, he will not be so harsh in his judgments of others who are trying to overcome theirs.

6. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before the swine, lest haply they trample them under their feet, and turn and rend you.

6. We are not to be harsh in our judgments, nor overcritical of others, but we must exercise some judgment concerning the nature of the people with whom we have to do. Hogs and dogs were considered unclean animals; and yet Jesus was not speaking of real dogs and hogs, but of people possessing some of the characteristics of these unclean animals. The holy things were the things used in sacrifice. Parts of these animals that were offered in sacrifice were eaten by people who were clean, and what was not eaten was burned. It was not given to dogs, as are scraps that are left from our meals in our homes. These scraps could not be disposed of as the people saw fit. But to give holy things to dogs was to profane them. "We are here forbidden then, to use any religious office, work, or ordinance in such manner as to degrade or profane it."—McGarvey. Nor are we to cast our pearls before swine. Swine have no use for pearls. Do not try to feed hogs with pearls; they would only trample them under their feet, and might turn on the feeder. Excessive zeal sometimes leads a Christian to preach the gospel to people under circumstances that only infuriates them. To do so is to cast pearls before swine. And yet we cannot always tell, though we use all the wisdom we have. Besides, an audience is sometimes mixed; we must then preach for the sake of those who will give attention to what is said, even though some in the audience would like to tear us to pieces. The gospel is for those who are willing to hear; it infuriates those who are determined to continue in their chosen course. Jesus sometimes gave certain ones no direct answer to their ques-

tions because he knew they were not sincere in asking them. It is not wise to give information to a person who will not make proper use of it.

7-11. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask for a loaf, will give him a stone; or if he shall ask for a fish, will give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him.

7-11. Ask, seek, knock—these are but different ways of encouraging the disciples to pray. We ask for what we want, we seek for that which we wish to find, and we knock at a door for admission. Perhaps these different expressions do not signify exactly the same thing. People in destitution ask others for favors and needed things. All of us stand constantly in need of God's favors and blessings; our needs are too numerous to mention, even if it were possible to enumerate them. But be our needs more than we can count, God "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." (Eph. 3:20.) Hence, no matter what our needs may be, God is more than able and willing to meet them. But we are like children; we think we need many things, which would be really hurtful to us if we had them. However, there are many things we do really need. "Ask, and it shall be given you." We seek for that which we desire to find. A lost man seeks a way out. A sick man seeks to regain his health. A hungry man seeks food. An honorable man out of work seeks employment. In all these matters the person is doing more than just asking for something. We have to seek the truth, the way of life, or we will never know it. This requires effort on our part. Seeking is action directed toward the finding of something. Jesus has assured us that those who honestly seek the truth will find it. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." If a person hungers and thirsts for righteousness, he will seek the way of righteousness; and if he seeks, he will find. "Seek and ye shall find." People knock at a door for admission. Of

course, there is no literal door at which we knock for admission into the presence of God; and yet that is an impressive figure of speech—knocking at the door for admission into God's favors. Because of certain relationships God sustains to those who obey him, he is spoken of as Father. He is not a Father to us by virtue of creation—he is not a Father to everything he created. In that relationship he is our creator. This talk about the universal Fatherhood of God is a wrong conception. If God did not have a care for his obedient children similar to the interest parents have for their children, he would not be called a father. Now, if children ask for a loaf, no father would give them a stone. If they ask for something they need, no father would mock them by giving them something useless or dangerous. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" But up against the plain statements of the Lord we put our theories about miracles and laws of nature. The early Christians were not bothered about such theories. But there are certain elements in acceptable prayer. If we ask for forgiveness, we must forgive. We must put iniquity out of our hearts. (Ps. 66:18.) Our prayers must be in faith (James 1:6, 7), according to the will of God (1 John 5:14), and in a spirit of unselfishness. (James 4:3.)

If you doubt God's willingness to answer prayer, think of the attitude of an earthly father toward his children. He does not turn a deaf ear to the call of his child. He is not so bound by the laws of nature that he cannot answer his child. Has he more willingness and freedom of action than his creator? If a child trustingly asks his father for a good thing, the father will not give him a worthless thing. If the child asks for bread, the father will not give him a stone, nor refuse to give him anything. If children were to talk like some professed Christians, they would say something like this: "Pa and ma can't give us anything we ask for without working a miracle, for the laws of nature are fixed; so why ask them for anything?" But children are not so foolish as that; they ask for what they want, and let the parents worry about the answer. Now read again verse 11.

12. 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.

12. The statement in verse 12 has been aptly termed the Golden Rule though the Bible does not so name it. All good principles, as well as all other good things, may be abused. It would certainly be abusing the rule, if a judge or a juror should say to himself concerning a criminal before the court, "If I were in his place and he in mine, I would want him to free me; so will I do to him." No good principle should be so twisted as to make it support any evil. But the application of the rule, guided by reason and justice, will keep a man from doing any harm or injustice to anyone; and it will do more—it will cause a man to do what he can to help those who are in need. There is no place in the doctrine of Christ for the theory that might makes right. No one should say, "I am not responsible for the man's hard luck; why should I help him?" The priest and the Levite seem to have gone on that theory when they refused to help the wounded man; but the Samaritan, though he may never have heard of the Golden Rule, practiced its precept. (Luke 10:30-37.) "Go, and do thou likewise."

13,14. Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it.

13,14. Here we have two destinies mentioned—destruction and life. Each destiny is spoken of as if it were a walled city into which people enter through a gate. Few find the way to life because both the way and the gate to it are narrow. Do not think it strange that the gate to life is narrow, for truth on any point is narrow; error includes all the rest of space! Hence, the way to destruction is broad—as broad as all the sins and errors of the human family. "Enter ye in by the narrow gate"; that requires an effort, but the one who honestly seeks to enter that gate will do so.

24, 25. Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock: and

the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock.

24, 25. A serious error has found place in the thinking of some late writers, an error that would rob us of the use of the Sermon on the Mount, except some few of its principles. In his notes, Scofield says, "For these reasons the Sermon on the Mount in its primary application gives neither the privilege nor the duty of the church." His supposed reasons were, that this sermon was to be the law governing the kingdom which he supposed Jesus was about to restore to Israel, but which he deferred till some time yet future. Then the Sermon on the Mount will be binding. If that position were true, we would be perverting that sermon if we apply it to us now, or tried to obey its teaching. But students of the Bible should not cheat themselves out of this wonderful sermon by accepting such teaching. Only to forestall such a fatal blunder is the idea referred to in this connection. It would seem to any reader that, while the phrase, "these words of mine," applies immediately to the Sermon on the Mount, words spoken later were just as important. That sermon contained in condensed form all that was taught later on. It would require too much space to show how comprehensive many of these statements are, but this will illustrate the point: "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." That lacks little, if any, of including the whole plan of salvation. This shows why Jesus could make such statements about those who did, and those who did not, do his commands. To hear his words is to give attention to them—to hear with understanding. There is a difference between merely hearing a man's words, and really hearing what he says. To hear in an approved way, is to give heed to what is said. The man born blind, whose eyes Jesus had opened, said to his questioners, "I told ye even now, and ye did not hear." (John 9:27.) Again, "Many therefore of his disciples, when they heard this, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" (John 6:60.) They heard, and yet they did not hear. To some

Jews Jesus said, "Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word." (John 8:43.) To really hear, is to give interested approval to what is said. One who thus hears the words of Christ and does them, is like the wise man. A man cannot do what Jesus said, unless he so hears as to understand and believe what he said. To obey is to do what he says, and to do it because he says it. In obedience there is the recognition that the person obeyed has the authority to command. There is a difference between following advice and obeying constituted authority. Obeying authority is a duty which we cannot evade without punishment; following advice is a privilege which we can exercise or reject, as we please. The words of Jesus are authoritative; to obey him we must recognize the truth that he has authority to command; we must recognize him as the Christ, the Son of the living God. One who does not so recognize him cannot render acceptable obedience to him. Obedience to God's authority has always been necessary; and no blessings were ever promised to those who did not obey, and no one in disobedience ever received God's promised blessings. "But if the wicked turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die." (Ezek. 18:21.) One can therefore see why the one who hears and obeys the Lord is like the wise man who built his house on the rock. If there is nothing of importance attached to obeying what the Lord says, it would seem the part of wisdom not to waste any time in doing what he says. But since our eternal happiness depends on doing what he says, it is wise beyond measure to do what he says. Hearing and doing we build on the rock; and there is something solid and satisfying about such building. Luke records a similar statement: "Every one that cometh unto me, and heareth my words, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who digged and went deep, and laid a foundation upon the rock: and when a flood arose, the stream brake against that house, and could not shake it: because it had been well builded." (Luke 6:47, 48.) If a stone house, such as they built then in that

country, was built on the sand, not much washing under its foundation would be required to cause it to fall. A good foundation is essential to a good house. If a man builds his hope of eternal happiness on the solid rock of truth by hearing and doing the truth, his hope has a sure foundation. He who so builds is a wise man. "Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble: for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Pet. 1:10, 11.)

26, 27. And everyone 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 floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof.

26, 27. The foolish man knew nothing about building a house, and he did not try to find out before he began to build. With him it seemed to make no difference, just so the house was built. So he built it on the sand. The floods came and undermined his house—washed the sand from under its foundation, and it fell. His money and labor were lost. So will it be with the one who hears the words of Christ, but does not obey what Jesus taught. If a man builds his hopes of eternal life on anything save hearing and obeying the words of Jesus, he is building on the sand.

Some Reflections

The influence of the life of a good man is a power for good beyond measure; the influence of the life of a wicked man is ruinous beyond measure.

Two ways are open to man, and he may choose the way he desires to travel. "Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate and broad the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it."

Is anyone accused of being narrow? If you will think a little,

you will discover that truth on any matter is narrow; it is just a certain thing" or a certain way. Error covers all the ground not covered by the truth. No one would think of criticizing a person as narrow because his correct solution of a mathematical problem differed from the work of others who did not solve the problem correctly. Every one should be "broad-minded enough" to recognize this fact.

Mark 2

LESSON LINKS

Jesus performed many physical cures, but his mission was to save people from sin and to prepare them for habitation with God. He came to seek the lost, to call sinners to repentance, to give rest to the weary, to give eternal life to those who would follow him to the end. He begins to emphasize this feature of his mission in today's lesson.

1, 2. And when he entered again into Capernaum after some days, it was noised that he was in the house. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them, no, not even about the door: and he spake the word unto them.

1, 2. The people had become so excited over Jesus' healing the leper that he could not enter openly into a city. "And when he entered again into Capernaum after some days, it was noised that he was in the house." For "in the house" the marginal reading has "at home." He had entered into the city quietly, not "openly." He must have come into the city at night else the people would have seen him enter. Doubtless he had come home to rest, but not for long did he remain in quietness. The first neighbor that saw him would be sure to blaze it abroad. "And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them." In those days physicians were scarce and their methods of treating the sick were crude; but now there was one in their midst, who with a word, healed their

sick, cast out demons, made the blind to see, the lame to walk, and had no failures marked up against him. It was natural, therefore, for the people to be carried away with tremendous enthusiasm for one who was doing so many great things for them. Jesus took advantage of their interest in what he was doing, and preached to them what they should do. The people had become so interested in what Jesus was doing that they were losing sight of their own obligations. It is even now easy for people to study so much about what the Lord has done and will do, that they forget to think anything about what they should do, or that they should do anything. We should know that the Lord does his part promptly and thoroughly, if we do our part faithfully. Let us praise God for what he does, and show our appreciation by faithful service.

3, 4. And they come, bringing unto him a man sick of the palsy, borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the crowd, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed whereon the sick of the palsy lay.

3, 4. "And they come, bringing unto him a man sick of the palsy, borne of four." The term "palsy" seems to have been applied to the loss of motion or feeling, of any part of the body, no matter what might have been the cause. This man was so paralyzed as to be helpless. Nothing is said as to what caused his helplessness. Matthew and Luke tell us that they brought him on a bed. Such helplessness, with the suffering of body and mind that accompanied it, is pitiful. And no one likes to be such a burden to his family and friends. This man had friends that sympathized with him and did what they could for him. They could minister to him in his helplessness, but could not heal him. Now they learn of one who they believe can cure even the palsy.

Jesus was in his home. They could not bring the palsied man to Jesus through the door, for the crowd was so dense as to block the door. To us it seems that the people would have made it possible for the man to be carried in through the door. Frequently people are not as considerate as they should be.

Less resolute souls than these four friends might have given up, but not these. The failure of the crowd to show any interest in their helpless friend did not discourage these men. If there was no way open, they would open up a way. There must have been a stairway on the outside leading up to the roof. It is a difficult thing to carry a helpless man up a flight of stairs, but these men had their hearts set on a certain goal. When they found it impossible to carry him through the door, they carried the palsied man up the stairs to the top of the house, removed some of the roof, and let the palsied man down through the hole into the presence of Jesus. These were men of great determination, and their persistence in the face of difficulties showed how much regard they had for their friend and also how much faith they had in the power and willingness of Jesus to heal all manner of diseases. They showed their faith by their works.

5-9. And Jesus seeing their faith saith unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins are forgiven. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak? he blasphemeth: who can forgive sins but one, even God? And straightway Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, saith unto them. Why reason ye these things in your hearts? 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?

5-9. "And Jesus seeing their faith." They made their faith visible by action. Action is the only way in which people can show their faith. The faith of these men was strong enough to overcome difficulties, but there is no indication that they believed Jesus to be the Christ. They believed he had the power to heal disease; but they likely thought of him only as a great prophet of God. It is likely that the palsied man showed his faith by his confident, hopeful look. The first thing Jesus said to the man must have been a surprise to these men as well as to all others who heard him. "Son, thy sins are forgiven." Matthew records Jesus as saying, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven." The admonition, "Be of good cheer," carried with it the promise of better things for the sick man. But the man had not been brought that his sins might be forgiven. Can sins be forgiven where there is no repentance? Jesus could look

into the heart of that man and see what was there, as well as he could see what was in the hearts of the scribes. He must have seen that the man was penitent, else he would not have said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." The final outcome shows that the man received more than he and his friends hoped he would receive, for they had evidently expected no more than that he would be relieved of his physical ailment. It does not appear that Jesus had previous to this claimed to have power to forgive sins. But let this thought sink into your hearts: Faith only would have left the palsied man at home in his palsied condition and in his sins, and faith only today will leave a sinner where he is and in his sins. "Faith apart from works is dead."

"There were certain of the scribes sitting there." Luke says, "There were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by." The Pharisees were a sect of the Jews. They were very strict in conforming to the forms of the law and also to the traditions of the elders. Because they were skilled expounders of the law the scribes were called also lawyers, sometimes, doctors of the law. It seems that they were usually Pharisees. Naturally the scribes and Pharisees would feel hostile toward any teacher who had not been trained in their schools, and who was not sanctioned by the authorities in Jerusalem. Jesus was so active as a teacher, and his fame had become so widely spread, that these men felt that they must look into matters. So, on this occasion, "there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, who were come out of every village of Galilee and Judaea and Jerusalem." Likely those from Jerusalem and Judaea had been sent down by the authorities to inquire into this new teaching. The events of this day developed the first real antagonism of these leaders toward Jesus. If they had not been friendly, they at least had not been active in their opposition to him. On this occasion, though they were keeping quiet, they were "reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak? He blasphemeth: who can forgive sins but one, even God?" "The scribes were right in charging him with blasphemy, if he were not the Son of God. He doubtless made the remark for the purpose of framing the issue, and thereby

preparing his hearers for the demonstration which followed."—McGarvey. If he could forgive sins, then he was God manifest in the flesh; if he could not forgive sins, then he was an impostor and a blasphemer. But he would show them that he was not a blasphemous impostor.

Jesus had accurately read the unspoken thoughts of his critics, and they must have been astonished when his words showed them that he had done so. "Why reason ye these things in your hearts? 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?" So far as the mere pronouncing of the words is concerned, it is as easy to say one as the other. Evidently Jesus meant, which is easier, to forgive sins or to cure the palsy? It would be as impossible for a man without God's power to cure the palsy as to forgive sins. A miracle wrought through a man proved that God was with him; it was a sign that God was with the man. Even the bigoted scribes and Pharisees should have known this, and also that God would not be with a blasphemer. Nicodemus expressed the truth when he said, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him." (John 3:2.) Jesus would, therefore, cure the man, and thereby prove that he was neither a blasphemer nor an impostor.

10-12. But that ye may know that the Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house. And he arose, and straightway took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

10-12. "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins"—that they might know, at least have proof—that he was no blasphemer, he turned his attention to the sick man and said, "I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house." Try to visualize that scene. It was a tense moment. A great crowd of people, some interested and some merely curious, were present. Jesus, calm and assured, stood in their midst. The antagonism of the scribes and his ready reply to their thoughts would further put the

people "on edge." Do not forget the four friends on the roof, most likely sprawled out on the roof with their faces over the hole in the roof, anxiously listening and watching to see the outcome. Will the sick man be cured? Will he be able to do as bidden? "And he arose, and straightway took up his bed, and went forth before them all." And thus Jesus demonstrated before them all that God was with him, and that he was therefore not a blasphemous impostor. The feeling of suspense that gripped all gave way to a feeling of amazement, "insomuch that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion." It appears that the critical scribes and Pharisees were so astounded at what they had seen that they could say nothing.

Some Reflections

We cannot perform miracles, but we can do much to relieve human suffering. We can demonstrate before the critical and unbelieving world that our religion is helpful and uplifting, and therefore divine. Let the scoffer and unbeliever sit down and try to figure out just what condition the world would now be in if Jesus had never come to earth, or if no one were now teaching and practicing his precepts.

LESSON LINKS

The law of Moses was given to regulate the entire life of the Jew. To this law they had from time to time added certain refinements or requirements, which they called the traditions of the elders, and which they regarded as equal, or even superior, to the law of Moses. The law and these traditions covered the entire life and activities of the Jew, home, social, business, and political. Jesus paid no attention to the traditions of the elders. The social requirements of these traditions meant nothing to him. It seems that Jesus ignored the social order bound on the Jews by their traditions; he merely proceeded as if no such social order existed.

13, 14. And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them. And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the place of toll, and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

13, 14. The crowds became too large for comfort in Capernaum, and again Jesus went out into the open country—this time, to the seaside—to teach the increasing multitudes. Here the multitudes came to him and he taught them. Jesus worked miracles as cases came to him, but his main work was teaching and preaching. Apparently, the tax collector's office was by the roadside, near the seashore. Levi, who also bore the name Matthew, was in charge of this office. Jesus called Levi to follow him. We would not understand that Levi started out the very moment that Jesus called him. He had a responsible position, and would certainly make arrangements for someone to take his place. He would have to give proper account of the affairs of his office. But his decision to follow Jesus was prompt and final. We can be sure that he lost no time in setting things in order so that he could follow Jesus. When he became a believer in Christ we are not told; but Jesus was no stranger to him at this time, else Levi would not have followed him. A man fit to become an apostle would not have followed one of whom he knew nothing; nor would Jesus have had him do so.

15-17. And it came to pass, that he was sitting at meat in his house, and many publicans and sinners sat down with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him. And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with the sinners and publicans, said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? And when Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

15-17. In Luke 5:27, 28 we read: "And after these things he went forth, and beheld a publican, named Levi, sitting at the place of toll, and said to him, Follow me. And he forsook all, and rose up and followed him. And Levi made him a great feast in his house: and there was a great multitude of publicans and of others that were sitting at meat with them." Matthew says, "Many publicans and sinners came and sat down with

Jesus and his disciples." It would require much food and many helpers to feed a multitude of people. Levi, or Matthew, made that feast in honor of Jesus. Perhaps his object in inviting the publicans and sinners to his feast was twofold. They were his associates, and he naturally wanted to entertain them in his home: and being a disciple of Jesus, he wanted his associates to become better acquainted with Jesus and to hear more of his teaching. With the Jews, if a man was a member of a synagogue he was not classed as a sinner; and a sinner was not necessarily a wicked man. If he did not conform to the forms of the law nor keep the traditions of the elders, he was turned out of the synagogue—he was a sinner. Such a man was a religious outcast. To be a religious outcast among the Jews was also to be a social outcast. The scribes and Pharisees would not eat at the same table with such a man. To touch a man of that sort was to become unclean. Such were their feelings and deep-seated prejudices. Even with this in mind we can have but a faint idea of the shock they experienced when they saw Jesus sitting at meat with sinners. Especially would they be shocked at his eating with publicans, who in their estimation, had become so low as to collect taxes off their own people to support the hated Roman government. Of course these scribes and Pharisees were not eating at Matthew's table; they would not so much as enter such a man's house.

These scribes did not voice their protest to Jesus, but asked his disciples for an explanation of his conduct. "When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." Jesus did not mean that his critics were sound spiritually so as not to need him, or that they were righteous; but for the purpose of meeting their criticism he took them at their own valuation. Jesus came to cure the morally sick; he came to call sinners to repentance. To do so, he had to come into contact with such characters. Besides, before he could benefit people, they must realize their need of him. These scribes and Pharisees felt thoroughly well and righteous. Jesus did not come to call such people; yet no one needed

him more than they did. No other class of people was ever so severely denounced by Jesus as were these scribes and Pharisees. Those who think Jesus was always mild and persuasive of speech should read what he said of these men as recorded in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew.

Some Reflections

"But go ye and learn what this meaneth, I desire mercy and not sacrifice." (Matt. 9:13.) What does this language mean? Evidently God had desired sacrifice, else he would not have required it. By comparing this statement with similar statements about other things, we conclude that it means, I desire mercy more than sacrifice. It is a peculiar form of speech in which one thing is denied in order to emphasize the other. Example: "Work not for the food that perisheth, but the food which abideth unto eternal life." (John 6:27.) Jesus did not mean to prohibit our working for material food, but to emphasize the fact that there is food more important. So I understand that, in the statement in question, he meant that God desires mercy more than sacrifice. That was a very appropriate lesson for that occasion, for mercy was not a part of the Pharisees' religion. If a man was a sinner, he was to be condemned and avoided rather than helped to a better life—that was the Pharisees' idea. There is too much of that spirit in the world today.

18. And John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting: and they come and say unto him, Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?

18. John had already been cast into prison; and though John had pointed Jesus out as the Messiah, not all of his followers had followed Jesus. The parallel passage in Matthew says the disciples of John asked this question; Luke represents the Pharisees as asking it. Mark clears up the seeming discrepancy by saying the disciples of John and the Pharisees both asked the question. Besides, it is evident that these disciples of John were also classed as Pharisees. However, there is no

evidence that John's disciples felt any enmity toward Jesus; neither does it seem that the scribes and Pharisees had at this time become very hostile toward him. Apparently both classes were sincere in asking the question. The Jews had established certain fast days. They felt that these traditional fast days were binding upon all Jews. Levi had made his great feast on one of these days that tradition had established as a day for fasting. Of course John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting on that day, and it seemed to them as a thing entirely out of place for Jesus, as a religious teacher and leader, to disregard an established religious custom, and to be feasting while others were fasting. As it appeared that they asked the question, not in criticism, but in sincerity, so Jesus in his reply, treated the question with due consideration, and answered them with patience.

19-22. And Jesus said unto them, Can the sons of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then will they fast in that day. No man seweth a piece of undressed cloth on an old garment: else that which should fill it up taketh from it, the new from the old, and a worse rent is made. And no man putteth new wine into old wine-skins; else the wine will burst the skins, and the wine perisheth, and the skins: but they put new wine into fresh wine-skins.

19-22. With the possible exception of the great day of atonement, it does not seem that any days of fasting were set apart in the law of Moses. The number of fast days were established by human authority. Of course, any individual might set aside certain days for fasting, but he had no right to require others to observe his fast days. It is said that "fasting has in all ages and among all nations, been practiced in times of mourning, sorrow, and affliction." But Jesus was with his disciples, they were rejoicing in their happy lot, and there was no occasion for fasting. Jesus did not object to voluntary fasting; in fact, he gave regulations governing such fastings (Matt. 6:16-18); but for him and his disciples to fast when there was no occasion for it except to comply with a regulation made by man would have been to honor man-made laws and to recognize men's right to impose religious duties and ceremonies on

their fellow man. To have done so would have been to enthrone man on an equality with Jehovah, and to sacrifice a fundamental principle, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Undressed Cloth and Old Garments.—"No man seweth a piece of undressed cloth on an old garment: else that which should fill it up taketh from it, the new from the old, and a worse rent is made." Undressed cloth was unfulled cloth; cloth that had not been shrunk by wetting and heating. Such cloth used to patch an old garment would shrink and make a worse rent than it patched. It would be foolish to do that; and it would be just as foolish for the disciples to fast when there was no occasion for it. Some have fancied that Jesus meant by this illustration that no piece of the old law was to be patched onto his new religion, but that application of his language cannot be correct. In the first place, Jesus said that his disciples could not fast then, but the time would come when they would fast. Are we to understand that Jesus was saying that the disciples could not tack a part of the old law on his religion while he was with them, but that it would be proper for them to do so after he was taken away? The thought is absurd. In the second place that application of his illustration reverses his illustration. Jesus was talking about putting new cloth on old garments, not putting a piece of the old garment, the old law, on his new garment, his new teaching. The application in question misses the facts entirely. The fast days were no part of the law of Moses, but inventions, or innovations, of their own making. Surely we are not to understand Jesus as saying that the disciples could not tack human inventions on his teaching while he lived, but when he was taken away it would be proper and right for them to do so.

Wine and Wineskins.—"And no man putteth new wine into old wine-skins; else the wine will burst the skins, and the wine perisheth, and the skins: but they put new wine in fresh wineskins." These "wine-skins" were usually goatskins made so as to hold liquids. "Such bottles, being more portable and less breakable than earthenware, were peculiarly well suited to

primitive and nomad people, as they are to the roving Bedouins of today."—*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. There would be some fermentation in new wine. It would be safe, however, to put new wine into new wine-skins, for they would stretch as the new wine fermented; but old wine-skins, already stretched, dry, and brittle, would burst under the pressure.

The Lesson. —As already suggested, some have thought that the old cloth represented the old law, and that the new cloth represented the teaching of Christ. They also think the old wine and the old wine-skins represented the old law and that the new wine and new wine-skins represented the teaching of Christ, and that it was not safe to mix the two. Others have thought that Jesus was contrasting the corrupted religion of the Pharisees with his own pure religion, and that the two should not be mixed. But such positions are not at all tenable. Jesus was not contrasting the law and the gospel, nor the corrupt religion of the Pharisees with his religion. Nor did Jesus say that his disciples refrained from fasting because fasting belonged to the old order or the corrupt religion of the Pharisees. The reason he gave for their not fasting was the fact that he was with them, but that they would fast when he was taken away. That involves the absurdity of representing him as saying that his disciples could not safely mix the old order of the corrupt religion of the Pharisees with his religion while he was with them, but that they could safely do so after he was taken away. Besides, to argue that the old things mentioned represent either the law or the corrupt religion of the Pharisees and the new things mentioned represent the religion of Christ is to represent him as saying that the old law or the corrupt religion of the Pharisees was better than his religion; for, in Luke's account, Jesus immediately adds, "And no man having drunk old wine desireth new; for he saith, The old is good," or "better." What then is the point? Simply that for his disciples to fast while he was with them would be as foolish and as absurd as to put a new patch on an old garment or to put new wine into old wineskins.

John 5

LESSON LINKS

It seems that most of the commentators and critics understand the feast mentioned in verse one to be the Passover—"After these things there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem." This would be the second Passover Jesus attended after he began his public ministry. Matthew, Mark and Luke mention many events of this Galilean ministry not mentioned by John.

2, 3. Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a multitude of them that were sick, blind, halt, withered.

2, 3. When Nehemiah rebuilt the wall around Jerusalem, among the several gates built in the wall was one called the sheepgate. (Neh. 3:1, 32; 12:39.) The sheepgate is supposed to have been a gate in the wall through which animals for sacrifice were brought into the city. By this gate was the pool Bethesda, the waters of which were regarded by the people as having healing power. Connected with it were five porches to shelter those who came to be healed. In these porches were a multitude of people afflicted with various ailments. Many critics consider the latter part of the third verse and the entire fourth verse as an interpolation. The American Standard Version leaves that portion out of the text, but has this note: "***Many ancient authorities insert, wholly or in part, waiting for the moving of the water: for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole, with whatsoever disease he was holden.***" This seems to fit in with the narrative, and to give force and meaning to verse seven.

5-8. And a certain man was there, who had been thirty and eight years in his infirmity. When Jesus saw him lying, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wouldest thou be made whole? The sick man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Arise, take up thy bed, and walk.

5-8. Among the multitude of sick and hopeless people was a man who had been in his infirmity thirty-eight years. If Jesus healed more than one, nothing is said about it. Perhaps Jesus selected the one man because his condition was such, and he was so well-known as a helpless man, that no one would dispute that a real miracle had been performed. When Jesus went to that pool on a Sabbath day, he knew what he would find, and what he would do. If Jesus healed any of the others that were there, then this one case is mentioned because of its outstanding character. But it seems that other cures would have been mentioned, had others been healed. It all shows that Jesus healed people, not simply to relieve suffering, but to convince people that he was the Son of God. Had he been healing people merely to relieve suffering, he would have healed all the sick in the world at that time and on down through the ages. He did not have to be present to effect a cure. He could even cause that there be no sickness or infirmities of any kind. He had a definite purpose in performing miracles. The man must have thought it strange for Jesus, a stranger to him, to ask, "Wouldst thou be made whole?" for he was there for that purpose. However had Jesus cured him without saying anything, no one, not even the man himself, would have known whence the power came. The people would have been astonished, but not enlightened; no one would have known that God was working through Jesus. But the question asked would gain the attention of the man, and also of the people. The man did not give a direct answer to the question, but stated his difficulty in getting into the water. He was so afflicted that he could move but slowly, and he had no one to help him into the water. Always some one stepped into the water before him. It seems from this statement of his difficulty, that there was a notion that only one cure could be effected after each troubling of the water. But the man was persistent. Thirty-eight years he had suffered, and still had hope. What is stated in the verse omitted from the text is implied in verse seven. Whether the people were right or wrong in their belief about the curative power of the waters of this pool is of no special importance to us. The

point of interest to us is this miracle of healing. In a very striking way it showed the power of Jesus over disease. Perhaps nothing else could have so astonished the man and the people who heard as the command of Jesus: "Arise, take up thy bed, and walk." But strength and courage to try came to him with the command; "and straightway the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked." And so his long desire for health and strength was gratified in a way he had never dreamed of. But Jesus is able to save the sinner from a worse affliction than that which afflicted this man, and does so when the sinner promptly obeys the Lord's command, as did this afflicted man. Jesus came to seek the lost, died to save sinners, and "became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation." Jesus is the physician of souls, but people must desire release from sin before they will come to him. They may come with this assurance: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

9-11. And straightway the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked. Now it was the sabbath on that day. So the Jews said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath, and it is not lawful for thee to take up thy bed. But he answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk.

9-11. The law of the Sabbath required the Jews to keep the Sabbath holy, and not to do any work on that day; but the law did not prohibit deeds of mercy on that day. But the Jews in their long history had added numerous requirements, which were called the tradition of the elders. They claimed that these requirements had been delivered orally by Moses; and up to the time of our lesson they had never been put into writing, but had been transmitted by word of mouth to each succeeding generation. The Jews held that these traditions were more binding than the written law. So wedded to them were they that Jesus said, "Ye leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men. And he said unto them, Full well do ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your tradition." (Mark 7:8, 9.) Their tradition prohibited all efforts to heal people on the Sabbath, or to carry anything on that day.

Hence when the Jews saw⁷ the man carrying his bed, which would be nothing more than a pallet, they said, "It is the sabbath, and it is not lawful for thee to take up thy bed." By the term Jews, John usually meant the authorities in Jerusalem. It was therefore some of the rulers who charged the man with breaking the law of the Sabbath. It is likely that the man himself recognized the tradition of the elders as binding; hence the only defense he had was, "He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk." Jesus would not have told the man to do a thing that would violate the law of Moses; that would have been telling the man to sin, for the law of Moses was still in force.

12, 13. They asked him, Who is the man that said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk? But he that was healed knew not who it was; for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in the place.

12,13. The Jews were not satisfied with the answer the man gave them. They wanted more information; and they had no good purpose in seeking that information, even though they blindly thought they had. In their estimation the tradition of the elders had been violated, and they wanted to find the man who was guilty of the crime of healing a man on the Sabbath. That a man had been practically helpless for the long period of thirty-eight years was no concern of theirs. They did not stop to reason that only the power of God could have wrought such a miracle. It evidently did not occur to them that the one who did the healing had effectively practiced the law⁸ given in Lev. 19:18: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." There is one peculiar thing about this miracle of healing. In other miraculous healings some degree of faith was manifested; but in this case the man healed did not so much as know who healed him. "But he that was healed knew not who it was; for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in the place."

14, 15. Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him. Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee. The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him whole.

14, 15. "Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple." This

language indicates that Jesus had sought him out. He had an important admonition for him: "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee." Is there not a hint here that the man had brought his afflictions on himself by indulging in sin? Jesus had not cautioned this man to tell no one, as he did on other occasions. But if the man knew the attitude of the Jews (Jewish authorities) toward Jesus, he did a very ungenerous thing by going at once to them to tell them who had made him whole.

16, 17. And for this cause the Jews persecuted Jesus, because he did these things on the sabbath. But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh even until now, and I work.

16,17. Jesus honored the law of Moses, but he had no regard for the tradition of the elders. Because he did a good deed on the Sabbath, they persecuted him. He made himself more of a criminal in their sight when he said, "My Father worketh even until now, and I work." The Jews understood him to mean God was his father in a special sense that put him on an equality with God. Believing him to be a mere man, they regarded such claim as blasphemy. They therefore had grounds, as they thought, for two charges against him—Sabbath breaking and blasphemy. (See verse 18.) If a person was guilty of either crime, he would have been subject to the death penalty. God rested from his work of creation on the seventh day, but did not become idle; his work of operating and preserving his creation has continued day and night, seven days in the week, even until now. Necessary works, and works of mercy, were not prohibited on the Sabbath. The Jews recognized this in part, for they watered and fed their domestic animals on the Sabbath. It is strange that they allowed on the Sabbath deeds of mercy to a domestic animal, but thought Jesus committed a great sin in showing mercy to a man who had been practically helpless for a period of thirty-eight years. Jesus violated no law of God in making the man whole; he was without sin. The opposition of the Jews to Jesus grew out of their ignorance; and their own notions and their devotion to their traditions kept them from

learning the truth. On the cross Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." In his second sermon in Jerusalem Peter said, "And now, brethren, I know that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." And Paul, in a sermon at Antioch of Pisidia, said, "For they that dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him." Their ignorance was not due to lack of available evidence and information, they stopped their ears and closed their eyes, because they did not want to know. Custom becomes more sacred to some people than Holy Writ.

Mark 2

LESSON LINKS

The last day of the week, the day we call Saturday, was the Hebrew Sabbath. "The seventh day is a sabbath unto Jehovah thy God." (Ex. 20:10.) This Sabbath law was given to the Hebrews, and to no one else. Said Jehovah to the children of Israel, "Verily ye shall keep my sabbaths: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations;... it is holy unto you. . . . Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath——It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever." (Ex. 31:12-17.) The Sabbath was holy to Israel, and they were commanded to keep it. If the whole world had been commanded to keep the Sabbath, it could not have been a sign between Jehovah and the Israelites. Again, "And thou shalt remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and Jehovah thy God brought thee out thence by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm: therefore Jehovah thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day." (Deut. 5:15.) The law of the Sabbath ended at the cross. (Eph. 2:14-16; Col. 2:13-15.) It

would therefore be wrong for us to attempt to observe the Sabbath, inasmuch as Jehovah himself abrogated it. Jesus and his disciples were on their way from Jerusalem to Galilee, or had already reached Galilee, when they plucked the ears of corn as they passed through a field. The synagogue of our lesson was evidently the synagogue in Capernaum.

23, 24. And it came to pass, that he was going on the sabbath day through the grainfields; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?

23, 24. "And it came to pass, that he was going on the sabbath day through the grainfields; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears." Luke says, "His disciples plucked the ears, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands." The roads passing through the fields were not separated from the tilled land by fences; so it was an easy matter for the disciples, "as they went to pluck the ears." It does not seem that any one could have found fault with their seemingly innocent actions. It is true that the law prohibited work on the Sabbath, but it does not seem that what these disciples were doing could be classed as work. However, the Pharisees asked Jesus, "Why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?" They could not question the right of the disciples to eat a few handfuls of grain as they passed through the fields, for the law plainly said, "When thou comest into thy neighbor's standing grain, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thy hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbor's standing grain." (Deut. 23:25.) Though there was nothing in the original Sabbath law that condemned what the disciples were doing, yet the Pharisees considered their actions a violation of the Sabbath. Through the centuries the Jewish leaders had added certain definitions and limitations not found in the law of Moses. The law prohibited a journey on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders made a regulation as to how far one might go on the Sabbath, and called the distance a Sabbath day's journey. The law also, in prohibiting work on the Sabbath, of course, prohibited reaping and threshing, but the Jews had so refined that

law as to make plucking the ears a sort of reaping and the rubbing the grains out a sort of threshing. The disciples were not really violating the Sabbath law, but were going contrary to the additions the Jews had made to that law. The leaders had strained the Sabbath law beyond all reason. Jesus kept the Sabbath according to the law, for it is plainly stated that he did no sin; yet he did not respect the requirements the Jews had added to that law. The Sabbath law, as well as the rest of the law, was made for man, and did not prohibit deeds of mercy or of necessity.

25-28. And he said unto them, Did ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was hungry, he, and they that were with him? How he entered into the house of God when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the showbread, which it is not lawful to eat save for the priests, and gave also to them that were with him? And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: so that the Son of man is lord even of the sabbath.

25-28. "And he said unto them, Did ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was hungry, he, and they that were with him?" There is in this question a severe rebuke to these interpreters and guardians of the law for their ignorance of its real application. David and those with him had eaten the showbread, "which it is not lawful to eat, save for the priests." The imperative need overrode the plain law respecting the showbread. (For an account of this incident read 1 Sam. 21:1-6.) Did not the disciples have the same need that David had? Why, then, be so inconsistent as to excuse David and yet condemn these disciples? Besides, the disciples were not really violating God's law concerning the Sabbath; but Jesus did not raise that point—he answered his critics as if the disciples had really violated the Sabbath law, as the Pharisees charged. "And he said unto them, the sabbath was made for man and not man for the sabbath." Man needed one day in seven for rest and meditation; to meet that need the Sabbath was given; but the law was never intended to be enforced to the injury of man. There is no proof that the Sabbath day was changed from the seventh day to the first day of the week, yet in an important sense the Lord's day serves a similar purpose.

If it is devoted to the Lord in a manner true to its name, selfish pleasures and business will be laid aside on that day. The words in the Greek really mean, "a day devoted to the Lord," just as Lord's Supper means "a supper devoted to the Lord." Hence, the Lord's day should not be used as a common day, any more than the Lord's Supper should be used as a common meal. They are the Lord's, not ours.

Mark 3

1-4. And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there who had his hand withered. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him. And he saith unto the man who had his hand withered, Stand forth. And he saith unto them, Is it lawful on the sabbath day to do good, or to do harm? to save a life, or to kill? But they held their peace.

1-4. "And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there who had his hand withered." Luke tells us that the man's right hand was withered. Perhaps this was said to emphasize the inconvenience of the man's affliction.

The Enemies Present.—The scribes and Pharisees were becoming more antagonistic. They had reached the point where they were not looking for any good in Jesus, but for grounds on which they might take legal action against him. "And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him." They could find no grounds for action against him in the grainfields incident; for it was the disciples, not he, that plucked the ears and rubbed them out with their hands. But his defense of his disciples, being a reflection on his critics, left them in a worse humor, and more determined than ever to find something against him. They expected him to relieve suffering wherever he found it; so, according to Matthew, they asked Jesus, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? that they might accuse

him." But did the healing, performed in the manner it was, furnish anything for which they might accuse him? That every one might see plainly what was done, Jesus said to the man, "Stand forth." He would have the man in full view of all.

A Searching Question.—"And he saith unto them, Is it lawful on the sabbath day to do good, or to do harm? to save a life, or to kill?" That question must have startled these spies; for they had come to do Jesus harm, to find him guilty of something for which they could kill him. They did not expect to be caught in such a trap. If Jesus cured the man, he would be doing a good deed to the man, and saving a life to usefulness. Now, his point was, which is right? They could not answer him without condemning themselves. If they said it was right to do good on the Sabbath day, they would clear Jesus of the charge they expected to make against him; if they said it was wrong for him to do good on the Sabbath day and right to do harm on that day, they would make out a worse case against themselves. It is no wonder that "they held their peace." And their silence angered Jesus. For all the Pharisees cared, the man might go on in his affliction. All they wanted out of the occasion was a chance to accuse Jesus of breaking the Sabbath law. Being angered at such perversity and grieved that men could so sell themselves to do evil, Jesus gazed at them for a time, and then dismissed them as unworthy of any further attention, and directed his attention to the afflicted man. To be thus ignored was a blow to their pride.

5. And when he had looked round about them with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their heart, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he stretched it forth; and his hand was restored.

5. "He saith unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand." The man's faith prompted him to do what Jesus said; and in so doing, he was healed. And so a good deed was done to a man; but who did it? Even if curing a man on the Sabbath had been a crime sufficient to condemn a man in the court, as the Pharisees thought, could they have found grounds for bringing action against Jesus in this case? If Jesus healed the man, they

already had their plans laid to bring action against him; but could they prove Jesus healed the man? He did not touch the man; neither did he say anything about healing him. He merely told the man to stretch forth his hand, and there was certainly no law against asking a man to stretch forth his hand. Not even their tradition condemned that. There was no way in which they could prove that Jesus healed the man. So far as they knew an invisible spirit direct from heaven might have cured the man. It was a case of their own setting, for the purpose of finding Jesus guilty of healing a man on the Sabbath day; but he had evaded their trap, and had so managed the whole affair that they knew they could not make out a case against him. They knew also that the way matters turned out, they were left in a bad light before the people. This further enraged them. Luke says, "They were filled with madness"—actually so enraged that they were put out of their senses. Their own carefully built-up scheme fell down on their own heads. They were so angry now that they decided not to wait for court action.

6. And the Pharisees went out, and straightway with the Herodians took counsel against him, how they might destroy him.

6. These Pharisees, having failed in their scheme to find grounds for legal action against Jesus, now plot with the Herodians to murder him. They who had professed such high regard for God's law now plot to commit murder in violation of that law, and they plot with their enemies, the Herodians. Herodians were partisans of the Herods, and favored Roman rule. Pharisees were bitter against what the Herodians favored. Though antagonists, they joined together in this murder scheme. They were united only on their hatred of Jesus. Hatred is a strange basis for union. But that sort of union is found even today among both religionists and politicians. Gospel preachers meet up with such combinations.

LESSON LINKS

Our last lesson closed with the statement that the Pharisees

left the synagogue in such a fury as to be beside themselves, and that they formed a plot with the Herodians to kill Jesus. Matthew adds this: "And Jesus perceiving it withdrew from thence: and many followed him; and he healed them all, and charged them that they should not make him known."

7, 8. And Jesus and his disciples withdrew to the sea: and great multitudes from Galilee followed; and from Judaea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and beyond the Jordan, and about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, hearing what great things he did, came unto him.

7, 8. As the fame of Jesus grew and spread over the surrounding countries the hostility of the Pharisees increased. Of course, when the plot to destroy Jesus became known, the many thousands who were then so friendly toward Jesus would be stirred with resentment. Such feelings amid so much excitement might lead to serious consequences. It may be that Jesus left the city, and went out by the Sea of Galilee to draw his friends away from the center of excitement, so as to avoid a possible conflict.

"And a great multitude from Galilee followed; and from Judaea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and beyond the Jordan, and about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, hearing what great things he did, came unto him." Because Jesus was then in Galilee and because the greater part of his work had been in Galilee, a vast throng would gather about him from the cities of Galilee. It is worthy of note that none had come to him from the near-by province of Samaria. The three divisions of Palestine at that time, beginning at the north and noting them in order, were: Galilee; Samaria, south of Galilee; Judea, south of Samaria. Of course Jerusalem was in Judea. South of Judea lay Idumaea, or Edom, the land of Esau and his descendants. "Beyond the Jordan" was the district of Perea. Tyre and Sidon, cities on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, were a considerable distance to the northwest from the Sea of Galilee. They were not Jewish cities, though, of course, many Jews lived in them. The great multitude of Galileans and the great multitude from other regions and cities, when brought

together, made an immense gathering of people. Their coming from these distant places shows how widely spread the fame of Jesus had become. They came because they had heard "what great things he did." And the report of the great things he was doing was principally spread over these distant countries by word of mouth.

9-12. And he spake to his disciples, that a little boat should wait on him because of the crowd, lest they should throng him: for he had healed many: insomuch that as many as had plagues pressed upon him that they might touch him. And the unclean spirits, whensoever they beheld him, fell down before him. and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. And he charged them much that they should not make him known.

9-12. Jesus saw that the gathering crowds would so press upon him that he could do nothing. "And he spake to his disciples, that a little boat should wait on him because of the crowd, lest they should throng him." Peter, Andrew, James and John likely still retained their interest in the boats which they had left with Zebedee when they left their fishing business to follow Jesus. Whether they did or not, they would know men who owned boats. Procuring the use of a boat was an easy matter. "The pressure of the people to hear him often caused discomfort to him, confusion to themselves, and indistinct hearing of his speeches. The small ship enabled him to put a narrow strip of water between him and them, thus removing all occasion for their crowding one another, and securing that quietness which is necessary to thoughtful attention."—McGarvey. Jesus did not take these measures to get away from the pressure of the crowds because he did not like people, but these enthusiastic and persistent people, who had followed him out to the sea, were becoming so excited and anxious for cures that they might have pressed upon him beyond endurance, as the next verse shows.

"For he had healed many; insomuch that as many as had plagues pressed upon him that they might touch him." In an effort to see a noted man, people will press upon one another so as to make it very uncomfortable, and sometimes even perilous. Or let a merchant announce a sale, and people will run

over one another to be the first to enter the store. But here was a greater cause for excitement—a person whose cures had made him famous throughout Palestine and adjoining countries. Likely various motives had brought this immense throng to Jesus. Some had come to see one who had such great power and had done such great things; others came to be healed of various diseases; others came to bring the more helpless to be cured; perhaps many came to hear and learn. And "that as many as had plagues"—scourges, perhaps diseases pronounced incurable—"pressed upon him." Hope had sprung up in the hearts of the hopeless. No longer resigned to their fate, they were pressing upon Jesus for cures. Literally, according to the Greek, they fell upon him. So determined were they to secure healing that they were even rude about it, even disregarding the comfort of Jesus whose blessings they sought. The boat would be a convenient and effective means of escaping such unpleasant pressure.

Those possessed of unclean spirits fell down before Jesus, crying, "Thou art the Son of God." Some one has said, "It is worthy of notice that the afflicted people 'fell upon Jesus,' but the unclean spirits 'fell down before him'—and this not out of love or devotion, but out of abject fear, dreading lest he should drive them out of the possessed and send them before their time to their destined torments. It is just possible that this homage paid to our Lord may have been an act of cunning—a ruse, as it were, to lead people to suppose that our Lord was in league with evil spirits." These demons possessed superhuman knowledge and recognized the true nature and mission of Jesus, but Jesus would have none of their testimony. Our faith must be better than that of demons. "Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well: the demons also believe, and shudder." (James 2:19.) They believed and shuddered; we must believe and obey.

Luke 6

LESSON LINKS

Jesus made a number of journeys, performed many miracles, and did much teaching before he appointed the twelve apostles. At the time of our lesson he had gathered about him a number of disciples. In addition to the twelve whom he made apostles he was continuously accompanied by others in his travels. In the gathering at Jerusalem, when Matthias was constituted an apostle, Peter said, "Of the men therefore that have accompanied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and went out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto the day that he was received up from us, of these must one become a witness with us of his resurrection." (Acts 1:21, 22.) Jesus did not appoint the twelve apostles at the time he called them to be his followers, but about a year or more later. They first passed through a period of training and testing.

The purpose Jesus had in view in selecting and training his apostles should be of more interest to us than any facts about their early history or their personal traits. He selected them that they might first be with him in a period of training for the work he had in view for them; at the proper time he would send them forth to announce his gospel. Through them the whole plan of human redemption was to be made known, and the Lord firmly established in the earth.

In the revelation and the execution of this plan they were, and are yet—

1. **Judges.**—"And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that 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." (Matt. 19:28.) We are now living in the regeneration—that is, the time when men and women are being regenerated; and the apostles through their teaching judge who shall be saved.

2. **Ministers of the New Testament.**—"Our sufficiency is from God who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new

covenant." (2 Cor. 3:5, 6.)

3. *Ambassadors*—"We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ as though God were entreating you by us." (2 Cor. 5:20.) Through their ministry the world was to be reconciled to God. As ambassadors they represented Christ—acted in his stead.

4. *Witnesses*.—"And ye shall be my witnesses . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8.) They were qualified witnesses, for they knew the things whereof they testified and were willing to seal their testimony with their blood.

12,13. And it came to pass in these days, that he went out into the mountain to pray; and he continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called his disciples; and he chose from them twelve, whom he also named apostles.

12,13. The appointing of twelve men for the greatest work that had ever been committed to a group of men was a momentous and solemn occasion. It must be done in such a way as to impress these men with a deep sense of the responsibility he was placing upon them, and that could not be done in the midst of a clamorous throng who were pressing upon him for the cure of their bodily ailments. It was necessary to get away from such confusion; so he went up into a mountain, perhaps taking a group of his disciples with him; but before he engaged in the important business of appointing the apostles he spent the night in prayer. It is useless for us to speculate as to why the God-man Christ Jesus felt the need of prayer to the extent that he spent a night in prayer. While others slept he prayed, undisturbed by the multitudes. He was about to make a move that would profoundly influence the world for all time; from this one fact, we may gather a small part of his reasons for spending an entire night in prayer. However it was not a matter that at the moment concerned the multitudes. Their presence would cause confusion, and disturb the solemnity of the occasion.

"And when it was day, he called his disciples." We have no idea how many disciples gathered about him; more than the

twelve were with him, for he chose the twelve from those who were with him. These he called apostles, for he meant to send them forth into all the world to preach his gospel. An apostle is one who is sent. These men had been with Jesus long enough to prove their character; but they needed now to begin to realize that Jesus had some special work for them to do, and that they needed special training for that work. No set of men had ever had such a teacher as these men now had. Little did they then know what was before them in the work for which Jesus had selected them. They were to have power to work miracles. Matthew reports that he "gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of disease and all manner of sickness." By these miracles they would be able to prove that God was with them and that their preaching was therefore true. The miracles would also show that the religion of Christ was intended to do men good and not harm—the miracles mentioned were of a benevolent nature. While men do not now work miracles, the religion of Christ has so influenced the world that even those who are not Christians do much toward relieving human suffering. Hospitals, asylums, and other benevolent institutions, as well as much individual ministrations, follow the spread of Christianity. Such has never been the case where Christianity was unknown.

14-16. Simon, whom he also named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip and Bartholomew, and Matthew and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

14-16. In the list of the names of the twelve apostles the different writers do not follow the same order. If the student will take the list as given by Matthew, letting the names fall into groups of four, it is easy to memorize the names.

Simon—When Andrew brought Simon to Jesus, Jesus said to Simon, "Thou art Simon the son of John; thou shalt be called Cephas." (John 1:42.) Cephas was the Hebrew word for stone; the Greek equivalent is Peter. On account of Simon's boldness and activity he is often mentioned. His activities were too

varied and numerous to be mentioned in the short space allotted to this lesson.

Andrew—Andrew was Simon Peter's brother. Perhaps the greatest thing he ever did was the bringing of his brother Simon to Jesus. It seems that he was free from selfish ambition, yet he was practical. As soon as he became acquainted with Jesus, he went in search of Simon. It was he who found the lad with the loaves and fishes when the five thousand were fed. Various temperaments are needed in a group of men to give the group effectiveness and a proper balance.

James and John—James and John were brothers, sons of Zebedee. Jesus surnamed them "Sons of thunder." They must have been of a fiery and tempestuous temperament to merit such a name. And such they were; for when a village of Samaria would not receive Jesus, they said, "Lord, wilt thou that we bid fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?" (Luke 9:54.) But the mellowing influence of Christ and his gospel made different men of them.

Philip and Bartholomew—We have no direct information as to the activities of these two men; tradition is of little value.

Matthew and Thomas—In Matthew's list of the names of the apostles he still refers to himself as the publican long after he had ceased to be a publican. Thomas was called "Didymus," the twin.

James and Simon—By way of distinction this James is also called "James the less." This Simon was not Simon Peter, but Simon the Zealot, sometimes called Simon the Cananaean. We should not confuse Cananaean with Canaanite. The Cananaeans were a group, or party of Zealots—an intensely patriotic party, fiercely opposed to Roman rule.

Judas—This Judas is evidently the Thaddaeus of Matthew and Mark. Two names were not uncommon.

Judas Iscariot—"Who became a traitor." And then took his own life.

17-19. And he came down with them, and stood on a level place, and a great multitude of his disciples, and a great number of people from all Judaea and Jerusalem, and the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear him, and to

be healed of their diseases; and they that were troubled with unclean spirits were healed. And all the multitude sought to touch him; for power came forth from him, and healed them all.

17-19. After Jesus appointed the twelve, "he came down with them, and stood on a level place." Here was a suitable place for the great multitude to assemble. It must have been an immense crowd, for there was "a great multitude of his disciples, and a great number of the people from all Judaea and Jerusalem, and the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon." By consulting the map it will be seen that many of these people had come a considerable distance. Tyre and Sidon were not Jewish cities; but it is to be supposed that those who came from these cities were Jews who were then living in those cities. All had come "to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases." Even those "that were troubled with unclean spirits were healed." So numerous were the healings that no mention is made of individual cases; even to touch him brought healing to the afflicted—"power came forth from him, and healed them all."

20-23. And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed are ye poor; for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh. Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy: for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the same manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

20-23. Some have thought that the sermon from which this part of our lesson is taken is the same sermon recorded in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of Matthew. Whether or not they are the same is a matter of no great importance to us. There is a similarity, and yet there is a difference, in the two records. The circumstances of the two sermons are different. Jesus went up into a mountain, and there preached the sermon recorded by Matthew; he came down out of a mountain and "stood on a level place" to preach the sermon recorded by Luke. There is nothing strange in concluding that he preached two sermons somewhat alike. Many fundamental truths needed repeating again and again—so do they now.

The teaching set forth in these beatitudes is unlike anything originated by man. It is in many ways a reversal of worldly philosophy. It seems that Jesus was talking directly to his disciples, but of course many in that vast throng heard what he said. Perhaps some of them profited by it.

"Blessed are ye poor." Poor in respect to what? There are many ways in which a person can be poor—poor in health, poor in friends, poor in right traits, poor in spiritual attainments and blessings, as well as poor in this world's goods. In reporting the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew gives a fuller statement Jesus made on that occasion: "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Spirit-poverty is destitution in spiritual things. It is to recognize ourselves as destitute of those qualities and blessings that the spirit needs, and that in and of ourselves we cannot supply those needs. This is a real "first principle"—an essential quality before one will even try to enter the kingdom.

And there are many things for which we may hunger. Realizing our spiritual destitution we may hunger for spiritual blessings—hunger for spiritual attainments. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." And this is evidently the hunger to which Jesus referred in our lesson. The weeping referred to grows out of some sense of being lost and of the terribleness of being lost. In and of themselves the qualities just mentioned are not a cause for rejoicing, but may put a person in a condition of heart and mind that will lead him to the Lord where joys abound forevermore. And it is not pleasant to be persecuted; but the faithful Christian will be persecuted, and such can rejoice that they are counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ. But to be a blessing, that persecution must come on account of our relation to Christ, and not because of some evil practice, or some foolish theory. Real good men, men who have been useful servants of God, have always been persecuted.

24-26. But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you, ye that are full now! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you, ye that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for in the same manner did their fathers to the false

prophets.

24-26. It is said that a man is as rich as he thinks he is. It is true also that Jesus sometimes for purposes of rebuke took men at their own valuation of themselves. In high attainments in righteousness the Pharisee of Luke 18:10-12 considered himself much richer than the rest of men. And the church at Laodicea felt themselves rich in all spiritual attainments, but they were really poor, and blind, and naked. (Rev. 3:14-22.) They had nothing they really needed. Woe to such. Woe to those who are full now—woe to those who are satisfied, that feel full of righteousness and spiritual blessings. Some people laugh at Christians—laugh at those who try to do right. Woe is pronounced on such, and their day of mourning will come. Then there is the fellow who has so conducted himself as to be popular with both the righteous and the wicked. Everybody speaks well of him. A man who really loves righteousness and hates sin cannot gain such popularity with all classes.

Notice the striking contrast in the beatitudes and the woes. For the poor, blessedness; for the rich, woe; blessed are they that hunger, woe to those that are full; blessedness for those who weep now; for those who laugh now, woe; blessed are those who are persecuted; woe, if all men speak well of you.

27, 28. But I say unto you that hear, Love your enemies, do good unto them that hate you, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you.

27,28. "But I say unto you that hear, Love your enemies." To the average reader this seems like a hard demand—even impossible. But the Lord does not require impossibilities. It is, however, impossible to have the same feelings toward an enemy that seeks to do us harm, that we have toward the members of our own family, or even toward our close friends; neither does the Lord demand such a thing. The Greeks had two words for love. The word here used is more abstract and practical than the other, and does not necessarily call for an exercise of the affections. The next words of the Lord show us how to love our enemies; that is, they show us in what way we

are to carry out the demand to love our enemies. "Do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you." It sometimes happens that our enemies will not allow us to perform any material service to them, if they know it. To curse did not mean to use blasphemy, but to call down evil upon one; that is, to wish evil upon him; it is the opposite of bless. Yes, there are those who wish evil to come upon the Christian, but we must wish blessings for them. The Christian must even pray for those who spitefully use him. This should be done quietly, secretly. It would be arrogant and repulsive to say to one who was doing you wrong, "I will pray for you." But why such instructions? For two reasons: (1) that the Christian may develop a Christlike character, and (2) that he may win the enemy to Christ. To accomplish these ends a right spirit is necessary. To assume a holier-than-thou attitude toward an enemy is as hypocritical as it is repulsive. Conducting one's self properly toward an enemy is a fine art, which few master.

29, 30. To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and from him that taketh away thy cloak withhold not thy coat also. Give to every one that asketh thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

29, 30. "To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other." Human beings are inclined to retaliate—to pay back in kind; but Jesus would not have it so. Yet we might offer the other cheek in such a manner as to be really a dare, an insulting gesture; this would make the enemy even more angry. Jesus would have us act in such a way as to soften the anger of the enemy, instead of stirring it to greater heat. The spirit and the manner in which we do a thing has much to do with its results. Be peaceable, not ready with a blow. "Render to no man evil for evil. Take thought for things honorable in the sight of all men." (Rom. 12:17, 18.) "And from him that taketh away thy cloak withhold not thy coat also." In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, "And if a man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat let him have thy cloak also." (Matt. 5:40.) A lawsuit is bad at best; if you win, you

usually lose more than you gain. Besides, a suit stirs up a bad spirit in the community. Concerning going to law, Paul inquires, "Why not rather take wrong? why not rather be defrauded?" "Give to every one that asketh thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again." A similar demand is made in Matt. 5:42. On that verse J. W. McGarvey remarks: "No lending was provided for by the law of Moses except for benevolent purposes, for no interest was allowed, and all debts were canceled every seventh year. The giving and lending referred to, then, are limited to cases of real want, and the amount given or loaned is to be regulated accordingly. Giving or lending to the encouragement of vice or indolence cannot, of course, be here included." Certainly no precept of the gospel is intended to encourage dishonesty.

31-34. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. And if ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for even sinners love those that love them. And if ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye? for even sinners do the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? even sinners lend to sinners, to receive again as much.

31-34. "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." This is called the Golden Rule. It is the highest and most comprehensive statement of social relations that had ever been made. Others had stated a sort of negative rule: Do not do to others what you would not have them do to you. That is merely refraining from doing harm to others; in addition to that, the Golden Rule requires that we do good to others. We must be better than sinners. Sinners love those who love them. There is no praise due such love as that. If Christians do not do better than sinners do, how are they better? Jesus would have his disciples to love their enemies, and not merely those who love them. It is easy to do good to those who do good to us—sinners do that. We would like for others to be fair and square in their treatment of us, even though they may be enemies. We must therefore be just as fair in our relations with them, even if they are not likeable characters. To be a Christian should mean something—certainly it is more than a

mere profession. It should enter into our hearts and regulate our conduct, and, so doing, should lift our manner of life above that of the world. The question of verse 33 is another way of saying that we should practice the Golden Rule in our dealings with those who do not do good to us; we certainly would like for them to do good to us. There is no reward nor merit in lending to those, who, we feel, will certainly return the loan, even though in so doing we help a person out of a temporary difficulty. If you were in dire need of food and clothing for yourself and family, and were to ask a brother for a loan to supply your needs, you would not like for him to ask if you would be able to repay him, and if so, when? The man who asks you for a loan may fully intend to repay the loan, but you see no chance for him to do so; what then? Give him what he needs, and help him to maintain his self-respect by telling him he can pay it back when he can. But professed Christians will sometimes exact interest on a loan to a poor person, who borrows to meet his actual needs. Such practices are not even up to the requirements of the law of Moses. Of course to lend money which is to be used in business or speculation is an entirely different matter.

35, 36. But love your enemies, and do them good, and lend, never despairing; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High: for he is kind toward the unthankful and evil. Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

35, 36. "But love your enemies, and do them good, and lend never despairing." This is a repetition in condensed form of what has already been said. It is repeated here for emphasis, and to bring it into close connection with the promises which are immediately stated. The things stated must be done in order that the promises be obtained; the language plainly shows this to be so. Do as commanded, "and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the sons of the Most High." To be sons of God—joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ—is as great a reward as anyone needs to desire. "And if children, then heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that ye suffer with

him, that ye may be also glorified with him." (Rom. 8:17.) "For he is kind toward the unthankful and evil." This seems to be what is meant by loving enemies and doing them good. God is kind toward those who show no gratitude for his blessings—toward those who do not obey him. His mercy and forbearance are amazing. "Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful." Mercy is kind or compassionate treatment of the suffering or condemned. God's mercy is seen in what he has done for the sinner, and in his long-suffering and forbearance toward him. And as he is merciful, so must we be. There is frequently too much harshness on the part of Christians toward those whom they deem to be wrong in morals or doctrine. Rebuke them? yes, with all long-suffering and teaching.

37. And judge not, and ye shall not be judged: and condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: release, and ye shall be released.

37. "And judge not, and ye shall not be judged." In the Sermon on the Mount we have these added words: "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged." The Lord does not mean that we are to form no judgments as to the character of people; for he himself said that a tree is known by its fruit and that we are to beware of false prophets. How could they beware of false prophets if they were to form no judgments as to who was true and who was false? A church could not discipline an unruly member if it be denied the right to decide as to character. We could not render honor to whom honor is due, as Paul enjoins us to do, if we are to form no opinion as to who is worthy of honor and who is not. But we are not to judge harshly; as we are usually too ready to condemn. This is what is prohibited, as the rest of the verse shows. "And condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: release, and ye shall be released." We are certainly not to judge a man as guilty on a mere suspicion, not on probabilities. If he did wrong, under the same circumstances, would we have done better? To judge a man as guilty without definite proof is evil surmising, and that is condemned.

38. Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom. For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again.

38. To sell by short measure or weight is another way of stealing; a Christian cannot afford to practice such dishonest tricks. He cannot afford to let people starve if he can help it. "Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom." Liberal giving is rewarded. Do not give grudgingly and sparingly. Give full measure in all your dealings. "For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." As we sow so shall we reap. The whole lesson shows that our manner of judging others and our manner of dealing with them will be taken into consideration in God's dealings with us. It is of vital importance, therefore, that we do good to all men.

39, 40. And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind guide the blind? shall they not both fall into a pit? The disciple is not above his teacher: but every one when he is perfected shall be as his teacher.

39,40. "And he spake a parable unto them." It is a very short parable, a figure, an illustration. "Can the blind guide the blind? shall they not both fall into a pit?" In another place Jesus refers to blind guides. Any teacher who does not see the truth clearly is a blind guide, a blind leader; and one who follows such is equally blind. And the blind who lead and the blind who are led are more than they who see. "The disciple is not above his teacher." The blind man who is being led by the blind cannot make better progress than his teacher, or leader. "But every one when he is perfected shall be as his teacher."

The blind cannot be a safe leader, whether the blindness be physical, or intellectual, or moral, or spiritual. It is almost certain that no one but a blind man would allow a blind man to lead him, and he would not, if he knew the proposed leader was blind. People are blind spiritually because they close their eyes against the truth of Christ. (Matt. 13:15.) The leaders of the Jews flattered themselves that they were the only true

guides in the world, but they were blind guides. When the disciples complained to Jesus that the Pharisees did not like what he had said to them, Jesus replied, "Let them alone: they are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit." (Matt. 15:12-14.) It was a warning to the disciples to let these blind guides alone. Later, in severely rebuking the Pharisees, Jesus used such terms as these: "Ye blind guides," "Ye fools and blind." (Read Matt. 23:13-36.) And yet practically the whole Jewish people looked to the Pharisees for religious guidance, and that was a case of the blind leading the blind. If the people were not blind, the blind leaders would be without any following. And today the world is full of blind leaders, and each has a group of blind followers. And as it was with the Pharisees, so it is today, the blind leaders think they are the only people that can see clearly.

A disciple is a learner, a pupil; he is a follower of one whom he has selected as his guide in philosophy or religion. Jesus makes a statement that applies to all teachers and pupils no matter what is being taught. No one would follow a teacher if he thought he knew more than the teacher. If a pupil reached the point where he knew as much as his teacher, the teacher would pronounce him perfect; he would be as his teacher. But the one who puts himself under Christ as his teacher will not reach the point where he knows as much as Christ; he will not reach absolute perfection in his life. If he does the best he can, his efforts are perfect and that is all anyone can do.

41, 42. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me cast out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.

41, 42. No one could really have a beam in his eye; but Jesus uses an exaggerated figure of speech to illustrate a common fault, namely, to criticize minor faults in others while the critic is himself guilty of greater faults. In our estimate of the conduct of others, we so often fail to consider our own faults.

We busy ourselves in trying to correct others when we ourselves stand in greater need of correction. Of course this is not always true; nor did Jesus mean to discourage all efforts to correct others. The remarks of Jesus were aimed mainly at the Pharisees, who considered themselves righteous and all others as unworthy of notice. They saw many faults in others, but none in themselves. That is illustrated in the speech of the Pharisee whom Jesus mentions in Luke 18:9-14. It was right for them to pay tithes even on their garden vegetables; but they "left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, and mercy, and faith." (Matt. 23:23.) They neglected these weightier matters of the law, but were strict in observing the small things of their traditions, and criticized others for not doing so. (Mark 7:1-8.) It is right to rebuke those who do wrong, and seek to correct them. (2 Tim. 4:1, 2.) But the critic should first consider and correct his own faults. (Acts 20:28-31; Gal. 6:1.) If a man seeks to correct others, but makes no effort to do right himself, he is a hypocrite. "Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote that is in thy brother's eye." But some people find pleasure in criticizing others, but find it rather painful to eliminate their own faults. It pains a fellow less to get a mote out of the other fellow's eye than to get a beam out of his own eye!

43-45. For there is no good tree that bringeth forth corrupt fruit; nor again a corrupt tree that bringeth forth good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth that which is evil: for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

43-45. In his parables and illustrations Jesus used things and incidents with which the people were familiar. Palestine was a country of figs and grapes. All his hearers knew that the nature of the tree determined the nature of the fruit it bears; but even so, they knew also that some faulty fruit would appear on the best of trees or vines. A good tree is not to be condemned because one finds some fault or worm-eaten fruit.

On account of the abundance of the good apples on a tree we pay no attention to the few faulty ones that appear. But a sweet apple tree does not bear sour apples, nor does it bear lemons. "For each tree is known by its own fruit." And no one condemns a whole orchard because it has in it one worthless tree; but some men will condemn a whole church because they have had dealings with a crooked member. They do not see the good, but only the bad; or else they merely use that as an excuse for their disobedience to God. If a man's heart is good, it will produce good results in a man's life, no matter what others do, or fail to do. A good and honest heart receives the word of God, and brings forth fruit in the life. (Luke 8:15.) It is the body with its members that perform good deeds, but it is the heart that controls the actions of the body. "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth that which is evil: for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." "For from within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetings, wickednesses, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness; all these evil things proceed from within, and defile the man." (Mark 7:21-23.) We all live out in our lives the thoughts and purposes of the heart; it is the power, or dynamo that generates the power, that sets the machinery of the body in action.

Luke 7

2, 3. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick and at the point of death. And when he heard concerning Jesus, he sent unto him elders of the Jews, asking him that he would come and save his servant.

2, 3. This centurion was, of course, not a Jew, but a Roman citizen. The Roman government had soldiers stationed in various places to keep down any trouble. The centurions men-

tioned in the New Testament seem to have been men of good character. This one had a servant, a bondservant, a slave, that he prized very highly—"who was dear to him." In the wars of those days, men of ability and good character were captured and sold as slaves. This slave was evidently of good character and ability. At the time Jesus entered Capernaum on this occasion this servant of the centurion was sick, and at the point of death. The centurion knew of the miracles of healing that Jesus had been performing. When therefore he heard that Jesus had returned to Capernaum, "he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, asking him that he would come and save his servant." There was nothing arrogant about this centurion. Some army officers, placed, as this centurion was, amongst a people who did not even have the rights of citizenship, would have been inclined to send an order for the appearance of Jesus, but not this centurion. He even had elders of the Jews to do the talking for him. He showed a remarkable degree of humility.

4, 5. And they, when they came to Jesus, besought him earnestly, saying, He is worthy that thou shouldest do this for him; for he loveth our nation, and himself built us our synagogue.

4, 5. If you will consider the circumstances, it will seem remarkable that such happy relations existed between these elders and the centurion. The Jews hated the Roman government, and would be inclined to have a special hatred for the soldiers who were placed in their midst to make them respect the Roman authorities; but no such feelings existed toward this centurion. "He loveth our nation, and himself built us our synagogue." They therefore considered him worthy of any good thing Jesus might do for him. There was nothing tyrannical about this centurion. That any foreigner could gain such praise from leaders of the Jews is remarkable; and especially so, that a centurion should be so highly praised by them. And this centurion must have been a man of means, for a synagogue large enough to accomodate the people of as populous a city as Capernaum would cost quite a sum of money. He was also a

generous man or he would not have built that synagogue.

6, 7. And Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say the word, and my servant shall be healed.

6, 7. As Jesus neared the centurion's home, the centurion sent friends, most likely Jewish friends, to Jesus with the word: "Lord, trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee." The elders of the Jews said he was worthy; he himself said he was not worthy even to go out to meet Jesus, much less so to have Jesus to come into his house. A man of real worth never boasts of his importance. A man is never richly endowed with any accomplishment of which he boasts.

8-10. For I also am a man set under authority, having under myself soldiers: and I say to this one, *Go*. and he goeth; and to another, *Come*, and he cometh; and to my servant, *Do this*, and he doeth it. And when Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him. and turned and said unto the multitude that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole.

8-10. "Say the word, and my servant shall be healed." The centurion knew what it meant to speak by authority. He was under authority himself. He knew that when the government at Rome ordered him to do a thing, he did it. The emperor did not have to come into personal contact with him to get him to move. The emperor's word was sufficient. And even though the centurion's power was thus limited, there was power in his word. Those under him were subject to his orders; he did not have to come into personal contact with those under him to have them do what he desired them to do. "I say unto this one, *Go*, and he goeth; and to another, *Come*, and he cometh; and to my servant, *Do this* and he doeth it." He knew the power of a word of authority; the miracles that Jesus had been performing in that district convinced him that Jesus had power over all human ailments. He knew, therefore, that Jesus had power

to heal his servant without coming into personal contact with him. He could command the sickness of the servant to go, and it would depart. Contrast his faith with the faith of the Jews who thought they had to touch Jesus, or be touched by him, in order to be healed, and you can see the significance of what Jesus said: "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Many Jews had come to Jesus for healing, but none had so high a conception of the power and authority of Jesus as did this centurion. Many today limit the power of the Holy Spirit by arguing that he cannot do anything for the sinner without coming into personal contact with him. Their faith does not measure up to that of the centurion's. It would be well for all such thinkers to ponder seriously what the centurion said, and what Jesus said of his faith. In more ways than one it is an outstanding incident.

11-13. And it came to pass soon afterwards, that he went to a city called Nain; and his disciples went with him, and a great multitude. Now when he drew near to the gate of the city, behold, there was carried out one that was dead, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.

11-13. If it were according to the plans and purposes of God, he could keep all people from dying; and he would not have to be present in person to do so. Martha and Mary both said to Jesus, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." But Jesus could have kept him from dying without being in that home; but to do so would not have served his purpose. Such a miracle would not have caused anyone to believe in him, for no one would have known that he had anything to do with preventing the death of Lazarus. And Jesus could have prevented the death of the only son of the widow of Nain, without leaving Capernaum; but it would not have served his purpose to do so. This again brings up the purpose of Christ in working miracles. Miracles were not wrought by him primarily for the sake of the sick or the bereaved, but to show his power, and to convince people that he was what he claimed to be. It would seem that the results of

this visit to Nain shows the purpose of the visit. The visit was so timed as to meet the funeral procession near the gate of the city. This was not a mere accidental meeting. Jesus had a purpose in doing what he was now about to do, and he so timed the meeting that the deed might be performed in the most public place. As John wrote about the miracles to produce faith, so were the miracles performed for the same purpose. "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, 31.) Concerning the signs which he did, Jesus himself said, "The very works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me"; "The works that I do in my Father's name, these bear witness of me"; "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do them, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father"; "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works sake." (John 5:36; 10:25, 37, 38; 14:11.) The foregoing quotations leave no doubt as to why Jesus performed miracles.

14, 15. And he came nigh and touched the bier: and the bearers stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother.

14, 15. Jesus had compassion on the sorrowing widow. To him death and human suffering were not delusions of the mortal mind, but real. To regard sickness, suffering, and death as delusions of the mortal mind destroys all sympathy for sufferings. The fact that Jesus did not recognize death and sufferings as delusions of the mortal mind proves that such an idea is itself a delusion. "And he came nigh and touched the bier: and the bearers stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak." The inspired penman said he was dead; the young man had not deluded himself into thinking he was dead.

16, 17. And fear took hold on all: and they glorified God, saying, A great prophet is arisen among us: and, God hath visited his people. And this report went forth concerning him in the whole of Judaea, and all the region round about.

16, 17. "And fear took hold on all: and they glorified God, saying, A great prophet is arisen among us: and, God hath visited his people." But Jesus was more than a prophet. However he was the prophet foretold by Moses. (Deut. 18:15-19.) Such a great miracle convinced these people that Jesus was from God; only words could tell them that he was the Son of God, the Messiah. Jesus was not yet ready to have that truth announced. Raising a dead person would create no end of talk. This miracle was performed in Nain of Galilee, but it was reported in other places. "And this report went forth concerning him in the whole of Judaea, and all the region round about."

Matthew 11

LESSON LINKS

The fame of Jesus had spread through all the countries of the Jews and into regions beyond. His forerunner, John the Baptist, was languishing in prison at Machaerus east of the Dead Sea where Herod had imprisoned him. Whether John had become doubtful or whether he made the move to strengthen the faith of his disciples, the record does not say; but we are informed that he sent two of his disciples to Jesus with a question: "Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?"

2. Now when John heard in the prison the works of the Christ, he sent by his disciples.

2. "Now when John heard in the prison the works of the Christ." John the Baptist had been fearless in denouncing the sins of the people. We are not informed just when or how he

first came into contact with Herod, but he was just as bold and fearless in denouncing the sins of Herod as he had been in denouncing the sins of the people. The Herod of this lesson is Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great. He ruled over Perea, and had contracted an unholy alliance with Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. John boldly denounced such an unholy relation. From Matt. 14:3, we learn that Herodias had been the cause of his being cast into prison. "For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her." In prison John had heard of the fame of Christ. Though John was in prison, in some way, he could communicate with his disciples. From Luke 7:18,19, we learn that he sent two of his disciples.

3. And said unto him, Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?

3. Does this show that John had begun to doubt? It is not clear that it does; but if it did, it would not, taking everything into consideration, be occasion for any great surprise. We have no proof that inspiration had revealed to him the nature of the approaching kingdom; perhaps he shared the common belief concerning the kingdom. If so, it would seem to him that Jesus was going on about his business of preaching and healing, with no thought of taking over the reins of government. As John's preaching had ended, he no longer had need of inspiration, and of course, was no longer inspired. He was just a man depending on his own thinking. He may have yet believed all that had been revealed to him about Jesus, and thought that there was yet another to come. The leaders in Jerusalem had made a distinction between the Messiah and the prophet that was to come. (John 1:19-25.) John might have done the same.

4, 5. And Jesus answered and said unto them, 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.

4, 5. "And Jesus answered and said unto them." He did not

directly answer them. He would give them proofs instead of words. "Go and tell John the things which ye hear and see." The works that he was then doing would be satisfactory evidence to John. These two disciples of John could report what they had actually witnessed—what they had seen and heard. "The blind receive their sight." It is said that blindness was very common at that time in that country, and is yet. Of course, the physicians of that day, had there been a full supply in Galilee, would not, with their crude knowledge and practice, have been able to do anything for so delicate a member of the body as the eye. But he who made the eye could readjust it, or replace one that had been destroyed. "And the lame walk." These two would be very noticeable miracles. Here is a well known blind man of the village or city now out on the streets with perfectly good eyes; and here is a lame man now out walking where he pleases. Everybody would notice such miracles as these. "The lepers are cleansed." Then the leper's case was considered hopeless, but with a word Jesus cured them. It was an amazing exhibition of divine power. "And the deaf hear." So far as medical skill was concerned the deaf were hopelessly afflicted, but deafness departed at the word of Jesus. "And the dead are raised up." As these disciples of John were to report to John what they had seen, it is evident that they saw Jesus raise the dead; the Greek being in the plural, "dead ones." This shows that some of the cases wherein Jesus raised the dead are not specifically mentioned. How many dead he raised we know not.

All the miracles here mentioned, which John's disciples saw, are of a very striking nature. None of the minor ailments are spoken of as having been cured at that time. In such matters there could be no possible chance for pretense or fraud.

"And the poor have good tidings preached to them." This is double proof that Jesus was the Messiah that was to come. First, an impostor would be more interested in going to the rich and powerful. The times were ripe then for some man of power to go before the leaders in Jerusalem, and, claiming to

be the long looked for Messiah, lead them in revolt against the Romans. But Jesus went among the poor and the outcasts, healed their sick, and preached the gospel to them. Second, the gospel was being preached. The most that any former prophet, including John, could do was to announce the coming of the one who would announce to the people the gospel of salvation. Jesus was doing that very thing, and had even pronounced forgiveness of sins to at least one sinner. The gospel then was being gradually opened up and revealed. In him, according to his own word (Luke 4:16-21), Isaiah 61:1-3 was then being fulfilled: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because Jehovah hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the year of Jehovah's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God," etc.

6. And blessed is he, whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me.

6. To have a lot of false ideas as to what the Messiah should be and then find that Jesus did not measure up to their ideas, was to find occasions of stumbling in him. Jesus was a stumbling block to the Jews, that is, to the leaders in Jerusalem. He was from the obscure village of Nazareth, and what good thing could come out of Nazareth? He associated with publicans and sinners; in their eyes that was below the dignity of any one who claimed any rank or standing. In their eyes he should have associated with the leaders of the nation. There should have been pomp and splendor. And he did not have any regard for the traditions of the elders. And last he was crucified. They could not imagine such a thing as the great Messiah suffering death as a criminal! He was a stumbling block to them. (1 Cor. 1:3.) Of course the cause of their stumbling was their own ignorance, rather than what he did. Because he did not come as they had figured out that he would come, they stumbled. Would John fall into the same error? "Blessed is he, whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me." This is a virtual affirmation that he was the one that was to come, and a warn-

ing to John not to allow anything to shake his faith.

16-19. But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the market places, who call unto their fellows and say, We piped unto you, and ye did not dance; we wailed, and ye did not mourn. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a demon. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold, a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! And wisdom is justified by her works.

16-19. After John's disciples departed, Jesus gave the multitude an estimate of John's character and work. John was not swayed about by every temptation and popular fancy as a weed is swayed by the passing breezes. He was not soft and effeminate—not brought up in luxury, nor trained to be too polite to rebuke people for their sins. John was a prophet, "and much more than a prophet." He was a messenger sent to prepare the way for the Lord. There had not risen a greater one than John the Baptist; and yet the least in the kingdom is greater than he. There are different ways to be great. A child is greater in a family than anybody outside can possibly be. The language shows that John was not in the kingdom. He could not have been in the kingdom, and yet less than the least in the kingdom. The kingdom of Christ existed then only in the sense that material was being prepared for it. All citizens in the kingdom would be, in their nearness to God and in their blessings, greater than John. Even in this preparatory stage of the kingdom it suffered from the violence of men; and some wanted to make Jesus king by force. John was the Elijah of Old Testament prophecy, because he came in the spirit and power of Elijah. Like Elijah he had denounced sin and called on the people to repent. Jesus had also been preaching for some time. John's life was severely simple. His food was locusts and wild honey. If he mingled with the people in their social gatherings, we have no account of it. His seems to have been a lonely life. By no stretch of speech could he have been called a "good mixer." Jesus did not live such a lonely life; each lived the life that was best suited to the work he was sent to do. Neither was he trying to be popular—not seeking to gain the applause of

the people. As a means of rebuking the self-righteous and haughty Pharisees and encouraging the poor, down-trodden and religious outcasts, Jesus went among such people, attended their feasts, and visited in their homes. The people did not respond to either as they should have done. Jesus compares that generation with contrary children at play in the market place. The children are supposed to be divided into two groups, one group to follow the lead of the other. When one side imitated the noise of the pipe, the other group was to dance to the music, but they would not. When the first group then set up a wail like mourners, the others were supposed to join in, but they would not. The application, "John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, he hath a demon. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold, a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners?" The people would not be pleased. If people want to criticize—and it seems to be a luxury most people enjoy—they can always find something to criticize. Jesus did not attend feasts to gratify himself, but to do the people good. "And wisdom is justified by her children." John and Jesus were both children of wisdom. Wisdom was justified by both, for both of them followed the course of life that was best adapted to the work he had to do.

20-24. Then he began to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works 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.

20-24. These were the cities in which Jesus had done most of his mighty works. Though they had seen his numerous and mighty miracles and heard his teaching, they had not repented. Of course, some had repented, but the great majority of them had not. They were obstinate and set in their ways. The people of Chorazin and Bethsaida were worse than those

of the Gentile cities of Tyre and Sidon. It would be very disagreeable to a Jew to be told that a city of Jews was worse than some Gentile cities, but truth is frequently disagreeable. Tyre and Sidon would fare better in the day of judgment than Chorazin and Bethsaida, for Tyre and Sidon had not had the opportunities to know what was right that Chorazin and Bethsaida had had. Capernaum felt itself to be a favored city—shall it be exalted to heaven? Perhaps some felt that it would be looked on with favor by Jehovah because Jesus Christ, his Son, had made his home there, but not so. But their failure to repent in the face of their greater opportunities would make their fate worse than that of Sodom. Responsibility is measured by opportunity, and judgment corresponds with opportunity. Capernaum had been specially favored, but had not repented; it would go down to Hades. For the wicked to go down to Hades means that they go to punishment. Where are these cities now? They utterly perished centuries ago.

25, 26. At that season Jesus answered and said, 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: yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight.

25, 26. Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum had miserably failed to grasp their opportunities. They must have been dominated by men who were too wise in their own eyes to listen to any but themselves. There is a note of sadness in the woes that Jesus pronounced upon them; and yet in the midst of his sad disappointment at their stubbornness he found cause for thanksgiving. He thanked the Father that the things he had taught in these cities were hidden from these who were so wise in their own conceits, and had been revealed unto babes. Nothing can be revealed to a person who is too conceited to learn. The world by its wisdom cannot know God. It is impossible even now for man to find out God through his scientific research and investigation. God does not discredit human learning in its legitimate field; he shows that human learning cannot find out God. That knowledge comes by revelation.

Those who are too wise in their estimation to accept revelation cannot know God. To know God one must have a teachable spirit. The Pharisees who rejected everything that did not correspond with their set ideas rejected the teaching of Christ. "And didst reveal them unto babes." In this sense the wisest of scholars may be a babe, that is, he may humble himself and be willing to be taught. Jesus thanked the Father that he had so arranged matters that the high and the low alike must be as babes to learn these things. With this revelation all are on a common level; no one is favored above another.

27. 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.

27. "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father." Jesus was the heir of all things, but he did not enter into the fullness of his powers till he was exalted at the Father's right hand. (Acts 2:29-36.) "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." Finite mind cannot grasp the infinite; one would have to be as wise as the Father and the Son to know them fully. We can know them only as they are revealed; the world by its wisdom cannot know them. The whole plan of human redemption is a matter of revelation.

28-30. 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.

28-30. No mere man could have conceived the idea of putting himself forward as the source of all spiritual blessings, and of inviting men to come to him and share those blessings. The invitation bears the stamp of deity. The language also shows that we can come to him, and that we must come in order to share the offered blessings. "All ye that labor and are heavy laden." The invitation is to those who are laboring under the vexing cares, doubts, and problems of life, and upon those

whose conscience sin weighs as a heavy burden. They long for some relief. The giddy, the frivolous, and those who delight in sin are not invited, and would not come if they were invited. The cares of life and sin are not the only things that weigh us down. We may be harassed with doubts almost to distraction and long to reach the point where we can say, "Now I know I am on the right road; now I can rest." From all these things Jesus promised to give us rest; rest from the burden of sin, rest from the vexing cares, rest from the harassing doubts—rest! "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me." That seems like a strange way to give rest, for a yoke suggests work. But the yoke he gives helps us to bear the necessary burdens of life; besides the yoke is lighter than the load he asks us to lay down. If we learn of him life is easier; for he teaches us the true way to live. The one who learns from Christ how to live is free from many things that disturb and annoy others; and the reward Jesus puts before us makes the burdens of life seem lighter by comparison. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward." (Rom. 8:18.) "For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of Glory." (2 Cor. 4:17.) When the reward is so immeasurably greater than the task, we count the task light. As Jesus is meek and lowly he will not lay upon us heavy burdens as a haughty tyrant would do. Many burdens come because we do not live as Jesus teaches us to live. "My yoke is easy, and my burden light." One reason some people find the effort to live the Christian life a burden, is they try to carry the world along with them. That makes an intolerable burden. "Ye shall find rest." Jesus gives us rest by showing us how to find it, and that is to learn from him how to live.

There is a note of authority in all that Jesus said. People often speak of the humility of Jesus, but he did not speak in a tone of humility, nor yet of arrogance, but of authority. Concerning the impression he made on the people in his Sermon on the Mount, Matthew says, "And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were astonished at

his teaching: for he taught them as one having authority and not as their scribes." (Matt. 7:28.) In that speech he referred several times to what Moses said, and each time added, "But I say...." He closed the speech by declaring that man's destiny depended on their treatment of his sayings. In the matter of his crucifixion he humbled himself, but not in his teaching. No mere man could have spoken with such authority and assurance as he did in this great invitation. Notice the commands and the promises—what mere man would have dared to so speak? "Come unto me." This is a command issued in the form of an invitation. This command-invitation sets forth at least three things: (1) the authority of Jesus—his right to command; (2) the fact that people are away from Christ; (3) that they can come to him. The distance between Christ and the sinner is not a distance to be measured by miles, or even by feet or inches; it is a moral and spiritual separation. "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, so that he will not hear." (Isa. 59:2.) While the distance between Christ and the sinner is great, by the power of the gospel man is enabled to come to him; and the jailer's experience proves that it need not take long to do so. (Acts 16:23, 24.) If a sinner wills to do so, he can come, and come quickly. "Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life." (John 5:40.) "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37.)

Luke 7

LESSON LINKS

Simon seems to have been a common name in Jesus' days. Two Simons had Jesus at a feast. Simon the Pharisee and Simon the leper. Simon the Pharisee to observe and find fault with him. Simon the leper to honor him. At both feasts he was

anointed with costly ointment. B. W. Johnson says: "This anointing is different from that recorded in Matt. 26:7, and elsewhere." From McGarvey we have: "Because the fast at Bethany was given in the house of Simon the leper, and because Jesus was anointed there also, some have been led to think that Jesus is here describing that supper,... But Simon the leper was not Simon the Pharisee."

36-38. And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he entered into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And behold, a woman who was in the city, a sinner; and when she knew that he was sitting at meat in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster cruse of ointment, and standing behind at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

36-38. "And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him." The treatment that this Pharisee accorded Jesus shows that he did not esteem Jesus as highly as he should. It was not therefore high esteem for Jesus that prompted the invitation. His reasons for so doing are not disclosed. "And he entered the Pharisee's house, and they sat at meat." This translation is made to fit present habits; in that time they reclined on a couch with their feet extended away from the table. "And behold, a woman who was in the city, a sinner." An immoral woman, a social and religious outcast. "And when she knew that he was sitting at meat in the Pharisee's home, she brought an alabaster cruse of ointment." As it is most likely she had bought this ointment to use in her life of shame (Prov. 7:17), her bringing it to use in anointing the feet of Jesus is an evidence of her determination to abandon her life of shame. "And standing behind his feet." In reclining at the table, the feet would be extended outward from the table. "Weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wipe them with the hair of her head, and kiss his feet, and anoint them with the ointment." Why did she feel free to thus come and minister in such a way to Jesus? She would not have dared to thus approach a stern Jewish teacher or a self-righteous Pharisee. Evidently she had in some way learned of the tender compas-

sion of Jesus. She might have heard even that day the Great Invitation, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." She was tired of the burden of sin, tired, perhaps even of life itself. She longed for tender sympathy and compassion. Tears for her own sins she used in washing his feet, and the ointment which she had purchased to be used in her life of shame she now used in giving some comfort to the tired feet of Jesus. It was all she could do. She uttered not a word—her tears and her kindly service were pleading for her.

39, 40. Now when the Pharisee that had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, 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. And Jesus answering saith unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Teacher, say on.

39,40. "Now when the Pharisee that had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself." He thought, but did not speak. "Saying, This man, if he were a prophet." This shows that he did not have a very high regard for Jesus. "Would have perceived who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner." Her tears, her penitence, her kindly service, which the Pharisee had neglected, meant nothing to the Pharisee. Her sins were degrading and loathsome; the Pharisee's sins were disgusting and contemptible. But he thought he was exceedingly righteous; he would not allow such a sinner to touch him! "And Jesus answering said unto him." It should have opened the Pharisee's eyes to learn that Jesus could answer his unspoken thoughts. "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee." "And he saith, Teacher, say on." Perhaps he thought Jesus would compliment him for his carefulness and exact righteousness, or for his fine dinner.

41-43. A certain lender had two debtors: the one owed five hundred shillings, and the other fifty. When they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him most? Simon answered and said, He, I suppose, to whom he forgave the most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

41-43. "A certain leader had two debtors: the one owed five

hundred shillings, and the other fifty." The piece of money referred to would now be worth about seventeen cents; then about the price of a day's labor. Its purchasing power was then many times what it is now. For a poor man then the debts mentioned would be burdensome. The smallest of these debts would represent nearly 300 days of labor, the other ten times that. "When they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both." In this parable our sins are represented as a debt to God, which we never can pay, for the thing between us and God is our guilt of sin. We owe him perfect obedience every day; and when we fail, we have nothing with which to pay. Our only hope is his mercy and forgiveness. "Which of them therefore will love him most?" Jesus was seeking to get an expression from Simon. "Simon answered and said, He, I suppose, to whom he forgave the most." There is a degree of impatience and arrogant contempt in Simon's "I suppose," as if he meant, "It's a childish question; what has it to do with this occasion?" He could not see that his answer entrapped himself. "And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged." Many a man can see an abstract truth, but cannot see just how it affects himself.

44-46. And turning to the woman, he said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thy house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath wetted my feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. Thou gavest me no kiss: but she, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but she hath anointed my feet with ointment.

44-46. "And turning to the woman, he saith unto Simon, Seest thou this woman?" Simon was so self-righteous that he would not let his eyes rest upon such a sinner any more than he could help. "I entered into thy house, thou gavest me no water for my feet." In those days they wore sandals, and their feet became soiled in walking along the hot dusty roads. A pleasant custom prevailed of furnishing a guest water to wash his feet. As a special act of courtesy the host washed his guest's feet. Simon had done neither; his reception of Jesus had been cold and inconsiderate, devoid of one of the commonest acts of hospitality. "But she hath wetted my feet with her tears, and

wiped them with her hair." She, an unwelcome intruder into Simon's house, was performing a service that the discourteous host had neglected. Could there have been a more withering rebuke? The sinful woman whom Simon would not touch was more courteous and considerate of the comfort of Simon's guest than he was! Weeping does not cure sins, but there is hope of reformation in one whose sins weigh so heavy upon him as to crush the tears from his eyes. "Thou gavest me no kiss." A common method of salutation like shaking hands. Simon had neglected that. "But she, since she came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet." Among equals the salutation was a kiss on the cheek. Simon had not recognized Jesus as his equal. The woman, humble like a slave, had kissed his feet, "kissed much," for so the Greek word means. "My head with oil thou didst not anoint." This was considered a special act of hospitality. "But she hath anointed my feet with ointment." More costly than oil. Simon had withheld the cheaper oil from his head; she had bestowed the costlier ointment upon his feet. In every act of common courtesy the sinner had exceeded the self-righteous Pharisee.

47. 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.

47. "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much." Jesus did not in the least condone the life she had been living. Whether she loved because she had already been forgiven or was forgiven because she loved has been a matter of controversy among commentators. The sense of the parable seems to be that the one loved much because he had been forgiven much; but the application Jesus made of the parable seems to be that the one was forgiven because he loved much. Certainly one is not forgiven without faith, and genuine faith always includes love. In fact, the Savior in this case uses them as interchangeable terms; for in the last verse he said to the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee." Besides, if she had been forgiven before she wept and washed his feet, she did not know it. In that case, her

love could not have resulted from forgiveness. She knew nothing of her forgiveness till after Jesus had spoken of her great love. So she did not love because she had been forgiven, but she was forgiven because she loved.

48-50. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that even forgiveth sins? And he said unto the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

48-50. "And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven." This is the first intimation that her sins were forgiven. Such words would bring great joy to such a sin-burdened soul. "And they that sat at meat with him." There were other guests present. "Began to say within themselves, Who is this that even forgiveth sins?" It seems that they were not so stirred up as were the Pharisees when Jesus forgave the paralytic (Luke 5:17-26), but were rather puzzled to know how he could forgive sins. "And he said unto the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee." Her faith, the condition on which Jesus forgave her, but hers was a faith that worked by love. "Go in peace." Literally, "Go into peace." Peace was here represented as a condition of life into which she was now entering.

Luke 8

1-3. And it came to pass soon afterwards, that he went about through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good tidings of the kingdom of God, and with him the twelve, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary that was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna the wife of Chuzas Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who ministered unto them of their substance.

1-3. "And it came to pass soon afterwards, that he went about through the cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good tidings of the kingdom of God." Soon after the events of the last lesson, Jesus extended his labors to other cities and villages. The kingdom of God was the burden of his preaching.

With him were the twelve apostles. "And certain of the women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities." Demon possession brought with it certain other infirmities; when the demon was cast out, all was well. Evidently Jesus had cast the demons out of these women, and in gratitude they were following him and assisting him. "Mary that was called Magdalene." Mary of Magdala, on the east coast of the sea of Galilee. There is no reason for supposing, as some have done, that she was the sinner of our last lesson. Nothing here is said about Jesus casting evil spirits out of that woman. Everything we know about Mary Magdalene shows her to be an exceptionally fine woman. "And Joanna the wife of Chuzas Herod's steward." This was Herod Antipas, son of the so-called Herod the Great. A steward was one who had charge of the domestic affairs of another, but from Luke 16 it seems that their duties sometimes included some of the business affairs of the man for whom they worked. "And Susanna, and many others, who ministered unto them of their substance." This shows that Jesus and his disciples, while they went about preaching and healing, were supported by the free-will offerings of others. These women gave freely of their substance.

Mark 3

20, 21. 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.

20, 21. After Jesus returned from the mountain where he appointed the twelve apostles, the multitude again came together in such numbers "that they could not so much as eat bread." His friends could see no reason in such conduct, and they said: "He is beside himself." They felt sure he had become unbalanced in mind, and they went out to take him in hand.

22. And the scribes that came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and, By the prince of demons casteth he out the demons.

22. The fame of Jesus had become so great that the scribes and Pharisees at Jerusalem decided to look into matters. Those who came down were most likely sent as a committee of inquiry. They did not come with a friendly feeling toward Jesus, so they made the worst explanation of his powers they could think of. They said: "He hath Beelzebub, and, By the prince of demons casteth he out the demons."

23-30. And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan hath risen against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. But no one can enter into the house of the strong man, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house. 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.

23-30. Jesus showed them how a kingdom or house divided against itself cannot stand, and added: "And if Satan hath risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. But no one can enter in to the house of the strong man, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house." As Jesus was then spoiling the goods of Satan, it is certain that he had first bound Satan.

31-35. And there come his mother and his brethren; and, standing without, they sent unto him, calling him. And a multitude was sitting about him; and they say unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. And he answereth them, and saith, Who is my mother and my brethren? And looking round on them that sat round 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.

31-35. It seems that his mother and his brothers became uneasy about him. They could not make out just what Jesus was doing. Perhaps they, too, shared the opinion of his friends—at least, they may have thought that his friends had

fallen upon the right solution of matters. They sought to reach him that they might talk with him.

Matthew 13

LESSON LINKS

When Jesus cast out demons, the Pharisees said that he did it by Beelzebub, the prince of demons. Jesus showed them the folly of such a charge. In chapter thirteen a speech of parables is recorded. Verse 34 says, "Without a parable spake he nothing unto them." From this remark some have thoughtlessly concluded that Jesus always spoke in parables; whereas Matthew's remark applies only to that speech. In fact, it was such a departure from his usual method of teaching that the disciples asked him, "Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" Now a parable is species of allegory, a sort of extended simile. In the Savior's parables there is a recital of known material facts or truths for the purpose of illustrating spiritual things. It is an approach to the unknown through the known. The disciples were already familiar with the facts of his parables, but they were not acquainted with the nature of the coming kingdom. His parables were illustrations of various phases of his kingdom; in them he placed the unknown things of his kingdom by the side of well-known material things, and showed the likeness between the two. Care should be exercised in interpreting parables. There is danger that we try to carry the likeness further than Jesus intended. Of course, when Jesus explains a parable, as he did the parable of the sower, there is no room for any blunder. We must accept the points of likeness only as far as he points them out. Where he did not explain a parable, we must not make an interpretation of it that contradicts any plain passage of scripture; neither should we force a meaning into a figure of speech that will destroy the force of another figure relating to the same

thing. Common sense and a general knowledge of the teaching of the Bible will usually save a person from making any serious blunders in the interpretation of parables and other figures of speech. Nothing will safeguard a person who is lacking in these qualifications.

1, 2. On that day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And there were gathered unto him great multitudes, so that he entered into a boat, and sat; and all the multitude stood on the beach.

1, 2. "On that day." On the day in which he had spoken the things related in chapter 12. He was in a house when his mother and brethren had sought an interview with him as related in 12:46-50. He might have gone out by the sea side for rest and meditation. If so, his rest was soon disturbed. "And there were gathered unto him great multitudes." The carping scribes and Pharisees had not yet turned the multitudes against him. "So that he entered into a boat, and sat." They thronged him so that he could not teach them so well on the shore. In a boat he could get a little away from them, and still be close enough for them to hear. Besides, on the boat he would be somewhat elevated so as to be seen by more people. We like to see the speaker to whom we are listening. As his usual custom was, he sat while he taught. It was an ideal situation for teaching; for Jesus had some elevation on the boat and the people back from the water were naturally on higher ground than those next to the water.

3-8. And he spake unto them many things in parables, saying. Behold, the sower went forth to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the birds came and devoured them: and others fell upon the rocky places, where they had not much earth: and straightway they sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And others fell upon the thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked them: and others fell upon the good ground, and yielded fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

3-8. The parable of the sower is true to nature in every detail. As people lived in towns and cities, the farmer literally went forth to sow. Jesus did not recite the facts of the parable for the purpose of teaching his hearers anything about farm-

ing; they were acquainted with all the facts he stated. Before explaining the meaning of the parable, he told his disciples why he spoke in parables. To have taught the multitudes in plain language the lessons he taught in these parables would have stirred up more opposition from the Pharisees, for their ideas of the kingdom-to-be resembled nothing that was set forth in these parables. Their hearts were hardened against such teaching, so materialistic were they. As Jesus explained the parable in verses 18-23, it is best to consider the facts of the parable and the explanation as we proceed.

The Seed.—The seed in the parable represents the word of God. "The sower soweth the word." (Mark.) "The seed is the word of God." (Luke.) Just as the germ of vegetable life is in the seed, so is the germ of spiritual life in the word, the seed of the kingdom.

The Sower.—The sower of the parable represents the one who preaches the word. Primarily Jesus is the sower, but all who teach and preach the word are sowers.

The Soil.—The soil represents human hearts. Jesus makes this truth very clear in his explanation of the parable. There are various conditions of human hearts just as there are various conditions of soil.

The Wayside Soil.—*Beaten* paths ran along beside the grainfields. In broadcasting grain some would fall in these paths. The explanation: "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the evil one, and snatcheth away that which was sown in the heart." Luke's report says that the devil takes away the word out of the heart, that they may not believe and be saved. The devil knows that there is no chance then for them to believe. These wayside hearts have been so abused by allowing every sort of idea, notion, and whim to run over them, that no serious impression can be made upon them. Perhaps these are they who boast of having open minds. Some people have an open mind like an open road over which everything is allowed to pass and on which nothing stays.

The Stony Ground.—Shallow soil on an underlying rock will

soon warm up and cause the seed to come up and grow till dry weather and the hot sun kills it. This condition of soil represents the emotional person, who, having heard the word accepts it with joy; but lacking in stability of purpose, "when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway he stumbleth." The soil is too shallow.

The Thorny Ground.—There was nothing wrong with this soil, excepting that it had not been properly cleared of thorns and weeds. These noxious growths represent the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, the pleasure of life, and the lust of other things. Other things, as well as evil passions, may choke out the word. Some people let the cares of life so weigh them down as to crush out the word; the cares of life include all the problems of living, even moral and religious matters. Some people become so absorbed in affairs of the church that they forget that God has anything to do with it! To prevent all these things we need to constantly study the word and to meditate on divine things.

The Good Ground.—The good ground yielded fruit—thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold. There were two main kinds of soil represented in the parable, namely, the nonproductive and the productive. Each kind had three grades, six in all. "And he that was sown upon the good ground, this is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it." Such a one bears fruit. To understand the word means more than just to know what it takes to make a Christian—to know this and obey it puts the person where he can bear fruit. The stony and thorny ground hearers did that—each produced plants in the kingdom, but neither bore fruit. To understand the word is to comprehend what it really means to be a Christian, to know our duties and responsibilities, together with the advantages and rewards of the Christian life. The one who is fully persuaded as to what Christianity is and what it means to him will live the Christian life and bear fruit. The trouble is so many professed Christians have such little conception as to what it is all about.

heaven is likened unto a man that sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away. But when the blade sprang up and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. And the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? whence then hath it tares? And he said unto them, An enemy hath done this. And the servants say unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he saith, Nay; lest haply while ye gather up the tares, ye root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather up first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn.

24-30. Next after the parable of the sower, and somewhat like it, comes the parable of the good seed and the tares. A man sowed good seed in his field; then an enemy sowed tares, now called darnel. Both grew up together. The tares are not to be destroyed till the harvest; then they will be gathered up and burned.

36-43. And then he left the multitudes, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Explain unto us the parable of the tares of the field. And he answered and said, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; and the field is the world; and the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; and the enemy that sowed them is the devil: and the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered up and burned with fire; so shall it be in the end of the world. 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. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He that hath ears, let him hear.

36-43. The Son of man sows the good seed; the devil sows the tares. The field is the world; and the good seed are the children of the kingdom, and the tares are the children of the evil one. The good and the bad are allowed to grow in the world together till the end of the world, the time of the harvest. The statement of the Savior that both are to grow together till the harvest has nothing to do with discipline in the church. The question that brought forth this statement was, "Do you want us to gather up the tares?" That is the same as, "Do you want us to destroy the tares?" It would be a calamity to the Christians even now, if all who are not Christians were destroyed at once.

The lesson the Savior intended to teach by this parable is given in his own words: "As therefore the tares are gathered up and burned with fire so shall it be in the end of the world."

31-33. Another parable set he before them, saying. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is less than all seeds; but when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the heaven come and lodge in the branches thereof. Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened.

31-33. In the parable of the mustard seed the thought of seed is continued, but somewhat varied. Here the kingdom itself is represented as growing up from a very small seed, the least seed the farmers in that country sowed in their fields. It seems to represent the small beginning of the kingdom; no other kingdom began in such a small way. From a worldly point of view it was insignificant, weak, helpless, with no sort of promise of success. But as for that matter, men of science cannot analyze a seed and find in it the possibilities of a great plant. Some of the tall field plants that we grow were unknown to the people of Palestine. The mustard became greater than any other herb of the field, so that the birds lodged in its branches. The beginning of the kingdom, as here represented, was vastly different from what the Jews had figured out. The growth and expansion of the kingdom is set forth in the parable of the leaven. Leaven represents the active principle, the permeating power of the kingdom. Leaven spreads by contact, because it has in it a vital force. A church in a community should be the most vital force in the community.

44-46. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in the field; which a man found, and hid; and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls: and having found one pearl of great price, he went out and sold all that he had, and bought it.

44-46. The man who once owned the field and hid the treasure in it must have died without leaving any information as to his hidden treasure. If he had lived, he would know of the

treasure. The man who owned the field was ignorant of it. A man chanced to find a treasure, hides it again, and rushes off to buy the field; but to raise the money he has to sell what he had. The point of the parable is that the kingdom of heaven is so valuable that when a person has once discovered it he will give up all his other possessions, if need be, to come into possession of this great treasure. The trouble is so few know the value of the kingdom. If the man had not known the value of what he found, he would have cared nothing for it. If a person sees no value in the kingdom, he has a poor sense of values.

The merchant was not looking for cheap stuff, but was seeking goodly pearls. He found one pearl of great price—worth as much as all the goods he had. He knew a choice article when he saw it. Forthwith he sold all his other goods and bought that pearl. The point is that when a person really finds the kingdom he will realize that it is so valuable that he will give up all things else for it. The merchant knew the value of that pearl, but so few people realize the value of the kingdom of heaven.

47-50. Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was filled, they drew up on the beach: and they sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but the bad they cast away. So shall it be in the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

47-50. "Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind." This indicates that the kingdom will have in it all sorts of people. Of course, some who profess to be in the kingdom are not really in it, but they are classed as members of it. "Which when it was filled, they drew up on the beach." A drag net is here meant, as is shown by its being drawn up on the beach. "And they sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but the bad they cast away." This reminds us of the parable of the tares. There is this difference: in the parable of the tares the whole human family, good and bad, are taken into consideration; in the parable of the fish net, only those in the kingdom are considered. "So shall

it be in the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the righteous." Jude spoke of some who crept in privily among us. They became identified in name and profession with the kingdom. Others start in well, then become worthless, and yet retain their identity with those of the kingdom. But at the end of the world there will be a complete and final separation of the good and the bad. The wicked will be severed from among the righteous. "And shall cast them into the furnace of fire." This refers to the final abode and punishment of the wicked. "There shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth." This is expressive of great sorrow and anguish, and represents the awful condition of the wicked.

51, 52. Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea. And he said unto them, Therefore every scribe who hath been made a disciple to the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things old and new.

51, 52. "Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea." Of course, they could not have understood the full import of all these parables, for such understanding required experience and further development of the kingdom; but they could understand the main import of the parables.

"And he said unto them, Therefore every scribe who hath been made a disciple to the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things old and new." As the scribes under the law were teachers, the term is here applied to the disciples who instruct people concerning the kingdom of heaven. The richness of his teaching is compared to the abundance of food furnished by the householder to his guests.

Mark 4

21, 22. And he said unto them, Is the lamp brought to be put under the

bushel, or under the bed, and not to be put on the stand? For there is nothing hid, save that it should be manifested; neither was anything made secret, but that it should come to light.

21, 22. A lamp has one use—namely, to give light. No man, therefore, lights a lamp and puts it under a vessel or under a bed, "but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house." In this connection the student should read Matt. 5:13-16. To the disciples Jesus said: "Ye are the light of the world." But, of course, the disciple originates no light. David said: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and light unto my path." (Ps. 119:105.) Each disciple may be considered as a lampstand, upholding the lamp of truth so as to give light to the world. That idea is expressed by Paul: "Among whom ye are seen as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." (Phil. 2:15, 16.) No disciple or congregation should keep the word hidden, nor covered up with anything that obscures its light. Some cover up the word with cumbersome man-made creeds; others with traditions and customs; and others with speculative theories. Some also obscure the light entirely by ungodly lives. Let the light of the word shine, undimmed by anything you do or say.

"For there is nothing hid, save that it should be manifested; neither was anything made secret, but that it should come to light." This evidently refers to the counsel and purpose of God concerning man. "To some extent these had hitherto been hid and kept secret, but now all that had been hid was to be made manifest, and all that had been kept secret was to come abroad."—McGarvey. In the gospel the purposes and plans of God concerning man would be fully revealed. This language of the Savior seems to contradict the theory that the whole purposes and plans of God were plainly revealed in the types and prophecies of the Old Testament.

23-25. If any man hath ears to hear, let him hear. And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you; and more shall be given unto you. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath.

23-25. "If any man hath ears to hear, let him hear"—that is, if he has ears to hear God's word, let him hear it. Jesus had just presented the idea that the word of God was a lamp, a light; now he turns from that figure to a more literal speech—to the idea that the word of God is a voice to be heard. Some people have ears to hear, but not to hear God's word. When God speaks, "their ears are dull of hearing." Through the prophets God sent his word to Israel, but they refused to hear; "and stopped their ears, that they might not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which Jehovah of hosts had sent by his Spirit by the former prophets." (Zech. 7:11, 12.) But the admonition of Jesus is addressed to those who are willing to hear.

"Take heed what ye hear." People are inclined to hear only that which pleases them. But we are to give attention to all that God says, and we are not to give heed to things not in harmony with what God says. Our ears should be open to anything God says, but closed against anything that would lead us from God. It is well to have an open mind, if it is open to the right things; but our minds should not be like an open road over which every sort of traffic is carried on. If we receive God's word in full measure, God will bless us abundantly—mete out to us full measure of blessings, and more. If a man holds faithfully to the part of God's word that he has, he will grow into a fuller knowledge. Such a man grows in grace and in the knowledge of God. But if he does not properly use the little that he has, even that will be taken away from him. Have we not seen these things verified? A man starts off in the Christian life with a reasonably correct knowledge of the truth, then he becomes enmeshed in some worldly affairs or speculative theories, finally becoming so confused in his ideas of the Bible that we wonder how one who ever knew the truth could become so perverted in his ideas. He did not properly use the truth that he had, and then what he had was taken from him. Be honest with the truth, give it full measure of its influence in your life, if you would have it remain with you; otherwise something else will displace it.

26-29. And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth; and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how. The earth beareth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the fruit is ripe, straightway he putteth forth the sickle, because the harvest is come.

26-29. The kingdom of Christ does not grow in a showy way, as kingdoms do when their borders are extended by conquering armies. In the days of the Savior the seed men sowed was wheat and barley. It required no cultivation after it was sown. Whether the man was asleep or awake, the seed grew. After the seed was sown, "the earth beareth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear." In its growth the kingdom is like that. Producing a harvest and producing the kingdom are alike in that both come from seed. It is sometimes argued that the kingdom began with a miracle, just as did the human race; but that is not altogether true. It is true that miraculous powers of the Holy Spirit were present at the beginning of the kingdom, but it cannot be said that the first citizens of the kingdom were created by miracle; in fact, they became willing followers of Christ by having the seed planted in their hearts, just as people now become followers of Christ. This parable, as well as the parable of the sower, shows that spiritual life comes from seed, the word of God, and not by a miracle. The statement that the seed, when sown, springs up and grows, "he knoweth not how," need not bother anyone, for God does know, but the farmer does not know how it grows. He does know in part the things necessary to growth, but the real secret of growth is hid from him. How seed, under proper conditions can convert the dead elements of the soil into a living plant is beyond our powers to see and know. No man has ever been able to discover life in a seed, yet life is there; and no scientist has been able to understand the sprouting and growing of life, yet it does sprout and grow. Were these processes not so evident, the scientist would dispute their existence, for they are unable to demonstrate them by any chemical experiment. And the farmer cannot change the process of growth nor force a harvest. Having sown the seed, he must wait for the

ripening of the harvest.

And so it is in the kingdom of God! The days of seed sowing are days of activity, and so it is when the harvest is ripe; but having sown the seed, can we patiently await the harvest? Do we not sometimes "force" the harvest? For the farmer to harvest his wheat before the grain is ripe is an absolute loss. Perhaps that is the reason so many who are gathered into the church are soon lost sight of, they were not ready, not ripe for the harvest; the harvest had been "forced."

Again, I wish to caution the student against a careless or strained interpretation of parables and other figures of speech. To make a parable or other figure of speech apply at points never intended by the author is to do violence to his teaching. Herein many denominational preachers make serious blunders. In the Bible, the process of becoming a Christian is represented under various figures as well as in plain unfigurative language, such as a birth, a creation, an adoption, turning again, and obeying the gospel, etc. The Predestinarian used to say, "The thing created has no will in the matter." This is forcing the figure. No one should force a meaning into any figure or parable that contradicts any other figure or any plain unfigurative language.

Some Reflections

Here are some well-known facts of nature. (1) All life is the product of seed. (2) Seed must be planted in soil adapted to its growth. (3) All seed brings forth after its kind. (4) Seed sown unmixed will produce the same thing in any soil that is adapted to its growth, no matter who does the sowing. The parable of the sower warrants us to place over against these facts of nature some corresponding facts in the spiritual kingdom. (1) All spiritual life is the product of seed, the word of God. (2) This seed must be planted in soil adapted to its growth, namely, good and honest hearts. (3) This seed, this word of God, produces true to its nature. It brings forth after its kind. If not, why not? (4) The word sown unmixed with human

speculations and traditions will produce the same fruit the world over no matter who does the preaching. It will make Christians only, and only Christians. To say that it will not do so is to contradict the laws of nature and also the parable of the sower. If you want to make something else than Christians, you will have to sow something besides the word of God. People differ in religion because different seed have been sown in their hearts.

For a full account of this sermon of parables, read Matt. 13:1-53; Mark 4:1-34; Luke 8:4-18. Such a crowd had gathered that Jesus entered into a boat, and spoke to the people on the shore. As these are parables concerning the kingdom of God, it is fitting that we should gather as much information about the kingdom as we can in our limited space.

In the second chapter of Daniel, we learn that Nebuchadnezzar had a wonderful dream. The particulars of the dream faded from his memory, but it left a deep impression on him. Daniel told him the dream, and its interpretation. In that dream Nebuchadnezzar saw a great image, in the form of a man, but the different parts of the body were made of different materials. Daniel interpreted the dream to mean that Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold, and that his kingdom was to be followed by three other universal empires—the Roman government in existence at the time of Jesus the last. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream he saw a stone cut out of the mountain without hands. This stone cut out of the mountain destroyed the image. This stone was the kingdom of heaven which the God of heaven would set up. As the stone was cut out of the mountain, it was therefore smaller than the mountain from which it was cut, but it "became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." That sets forth the idea of the growth of the kingdom as set forth in the parable of the mustard seed. In the minds of some of these future-kingdom advocates there will be no growth of the kingdom, but it will suddenly burst upon the earth in full power and splendor, destroying all other kingdoms in a moment and then immediately taking possession of the whole earth. But a thing like that does not bother a person

obsessed with speculative theories. "In the days of these kings"—in the days of the kings of the image; for, while the kingdoms followed one another, they were seen in the image as existing all at the same time. So in the days while the image which Nebuchadnezzar saw still stood, "shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and shall consume all these kingdoms, and shall stand forever." The image that Nebuchadnezzar saw has long since disappeared—not one universal kingdom, not one vestige of that image remains. As the Roman kingdom was the last, it was during the existence of that kingdom that the kingdom of heaven was set up.

John the Baptist preached, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Later Jesus took up the same message. "At hand" means "near." When he sent the seventy out to preach he charged them to say, "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." (Luke 10:9.) How many disciples were present when Jesus made the following statement no one knows: "There are some here of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power." (Mark 9:1.) The kingdom came during the life-time of some who were present. The language implies that some would die before it came. James and John, through their mother, asked to "sit, one on thy right hand, and one on they left hand in thy kingdom." (Matt. 20:21.) According to Mark, they asked to "sit, one on thy right hand, and one on thy left hand, in thy glory." (Mark 10:37.) "In thy glory", and "thy kingdom" then mean the same thing. Hence, for Jesus to be glorified would be to enter into his kingdom, his reign. In explaining a speech of the Lord's at Jerusalem during a feast, John says, "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believed on him were to receive: for the Spirit had not yet been given; because Jesus was not yet glorified." (John 7:37-39.) So when Jesus should be glorified, or crowned king, he would send the Spirit.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter announced this glorification of our Lord. "Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted,

and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this which ye see and hear"—"Let all of the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified." (Acts 2:33, 36.) The descent of the Holy Spirit was proof that Jesus had been crowned king—had been exalted, glorified. His reign began.

Mark 5

LESSON LINKS

Jesus did not tell the public that he was the long-expected Messiah; neither did he allow his disciples to do so. He did not establish his kingdom during his public ministry; neither did he announce publicly that he would ever establish a kingdom. He did announce that the kingdom was at hand; John had previously done the same thing. Neither had said who would be the king. As they expected their Messiah to appear in royal splendor, they would not think of Jesus as an aspirant to the throne. They opposed him on other grounds. The leaders did not like his teaching; his disregard for their tradition and his healings on the Sabbath stirred up their enmity; and his denouncing them for their hypocrisies infuriated them; and they did not like it because he taught without their authority and went among sinners to do so. For these reasons they became his bitter foes; but they were not conscious of being foes of any kingdom excepting the Roman kingdom. They were, however, foes of the kingdom of Christ after it was established. While the works and teaching of Christ were stirring up all this hatred, he was gathering about him a group of devoted followers, who, in after years gave up their lives for him and his kingdom. Jesus challenged the attention of men. They could not be indifferent toward him; they could not be neutral; they were either for him or against him. "He that is

not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." (Matt. 12:30.) It is even so now—there are devoted friends of Christ and his kingdom and there are bitter enemies. It will be so till he comes again.

In Mark 4:1-34 we have a condensed report of a discourse in which Jesus set forth some of the phases of the kingdom. It was a peculiar sermon, in that it was made up entirely of parables. His enemies were becoming more intense in their hatred toward him, and had he at that time taught the public in plain language about his kingdom, his enemies would have become still more enraged, and would have perverted anything he might have said; but the parables were to them little more than beautiful little stories. There was nothing in them that they knew how to make capital of. Their hearts had waxed too gross—too materialistic—to accept any plain teaching about a spiritual kingdom. For that reason, as he himself explained, he spoke to them in parables. Even now some men are so materialistic that they can conceive of no kingdom except a kingdom after the fashion of world kingdoms. "And on that day, when even was come, he said to them, Let us go over unto the other side." Even his disciples might have wondered why he should leave such a multitude of his own race and religion to go over into a country of heathens. But if they voiced any protest, it was not recorded. "And leaving the multitude, they take him with them, even as he was in the boat." He had been teaching the people from the boat, and they left without any further preparations. Quite a number of disciples accompanied them, for other boats were used. The twelve apostles were not the only disciples that accompanied Jesus on his journeys. (See Acts 1:21, 22.) As they crossed the sea a great storm of wind arose, and the waves began to fill the boat, while Jesus himself calmly slept. In distress the disciples awoke him, and said, "Teacher, carest thou not that we perish?" According to Matthew they also said, "Save Lord; we perish." Jesus arose, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still." Here then was a double miracle—stopping the winds and calming the sea. That made it the more impressive; for the winds might

cease rather suddenly any way; but a raging sea does not suddenly become calm. And Jesus rebuked the disciples for their lack of faith. It seems that they thought Jesus was indifferent to their welfare, for their language shows that he could save them if he would. "And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" Had they then known Jesus as they later came to know him, they would not have been lacking in faith, nor feared, nor asked, "Who then is this?"

1-7. And they came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes. And when he was come out of the boat, straightway there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling in the tombs: and no man could any more bind him, no, not with a chain; because that he had been often 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. And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshipped him; and crying out with a loud voice, saith, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God? I adjure thee by God, torment me not.

1-7. "And they came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes." This was on the east side of the Sea of Galilee, "over against Galilee." It was a heathen country. The country of the Gerasenes was the country surrounding the village of Gerasa, or Gergasa. It was included in the territory known as Decapolis. It seems that not many, if any, Jews lived in that section of the country.

Immediately after coming out of the boat, "there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit." One of the strangest maladies was this demon possession. No effort to explain the reality of these demons can be made to harmonize with the plain statements of the New Testament. At least some of those who were possessed of demons had superhuman knowledge, and the man of our lesson had more than human strength. Matthew mentions two in this connection. Perhaps only one of them was in such desperate condition. He had left home, and had his dwelling in the tombs, doubtless the caves of the mountain where the natives buried their dead. No one

could tame him. Being often bound, he had broken the fetters. Being possessed of a legion of demons, he was a raving maniac, a wild man, possessed of superhuman strength, a terror to all; "exceeding fierce, so that no man could pass that way." Stripped of all clothing, "night and day, in the tombs and in the mountains, he was crying out and cutting himself with stones." The most pitiable and desperate of all the demon possessed. Though he was wild and raving, a terror to all, yet when he saw the Son of God, he fell down before him and worshiped him. Like others possessed of demons, he knew Jesus to be the Son of God, and cried out, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God? I adjure thee by God, torment me not." Matthew represents him as saying, "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" It seems that these evil spirits recognized that torment was in the future for them, and they feared that they might be immediately sent to their doom.

8-13. For he said unto him, Come forth, thou unclean spirit, out of the man. And he asked him. What is thy name? And he saith unto him, My name is Legion; for we are many. And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country. Now there was there on the mountain side a great herd of swine feeding. And they besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And he gave them leave. And the unclean spirits came out, and entered into the swine: and the herd rushed down the steep into the sea, in number about two thousand; and they were drowned in the sea.

8-13. How or why evil spirits entered into people is not known, nor why some people had more than one evil spirit. Mary Magdalene must have been more than ordinarily wicked, and the man in our lesson must have been a terror in wickedness, but no word or reproach was lodged against the character of either one, nor any of the others possessed of demons. But the demons themselves were doomed spirits—this they recognized. Luke reports these unclean spirits as begging Jesus not to command them to enter into the abyss. They therefore recognized the right and the power of Jesus to send them where he pleased. They did not yet want to be robbed of their freedom and sent to their final doom.

"Now there was there on the mountain side a great herd of

swine feeding" "in number about two thousand." The evil spirits, not wanting to be sent out of the country, begged Jesus that they be sent into the swine. When Jesus gave them leave to enter the swine, they came out of the man, and entered into the swine. Forthwith the swine became as crazy as the man had been. He had been wandering through the mountains night and day, crying out and cutting himself with stones; now, as soon as the unclean spirits entered the swine, they rushed down the mountain into the sea, and were drowned. The whole thing goes beyond our understanding. Why should two thousand hogs be destroyed? It has been pointed out that the Jews were forbidden to keep swine, for they were forbidden to eat the flesh of swine. It may have been that these hogs were owned by a renegade Jew in violation of the law—a sort of "bootlegger" in swine flesh. Such property is usually destroyed by the proper authorities. Trench has suggested that "if this granting of the evil spirits' request helped in any way the cure of the man, this would have been motive enough. Or still more probably, it may have been necessary for the healing of the man that he should have an outward evidence and testimony that the hellish powers which had held him in bondage had quitted their hold." Besides, the benefit to the whole country, to say nothing of the man's benefit, more than outweighed the loss of the swine, for the man had become so dangerous that no man could pass that way. Neither should we think of that drove of scrubs as being at all comparable to the fine porkers that have been developed within the memory of some men now living.

14, 15. And they that fed them fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they came to see what it was that had come to pass. And they come to Jesus, and behold him that was possessed with demons sitting, clothed and in his right mind, even him that had the legion: and they were afraid.

14, 15. "And they that fed them fled, and told it in the city, and in the country." They hastened to report the matter—perhaps also driven by fear of what might happen to them if they remained in the presence of the one who had such powers. The people gathered to see what had come to pass. "And they

come to Jesus, and behold him that was possessed with demons sitting, clothed and in his right mind." While the man was crazy he was a nudist; now that he was in his right mind he appropriately put on clothing. No civilized person in his right mind wants to go naked. Sanity and civilization demand clothing.

16, 17. And they that saw it declared unto them how it befell him that was possessed with demons, and concerning the swine. And they began to beseech him to depart from their borders.

16, 17. Gerasa was rather an isolated place. Outside affairs would not be much in the minds of the people. Isolated, with no newspapers, no telephones, no radios, and no means of rapid transportation, they would have little to engage their attention excepting local happenings. Hence, when a great thing occurred in their vicinity, there would be much excitement and no end of talk. No such powers had ever before been manifested in their section of country, and they were afraid. Afraid of what? Perhaps they would not have been able to express their fear in words that would make sense. No one else had brought, or could bring, such a blessing to them, and yet they were afraid. People are afraid of unusual powers and forces which they do not understand. "And they began to beseech him to depart from their borders." To us it seems that they would have begged him to remain longer. He had turned a dangerous man into a useful citizen. Jesus was the greatest person that had ever been in their midst, and in so benefiting the demoniac had conferred an immeasurable blessing on the whole country. Now they want him to go from them. But were they worse or more stupid than others? The people of Nazareth sought to kill him. The Pharisees and Herodians plotted to destroy him, and the authorities in Jerusalem murdered him. Many people today will not have him as their Savior and King. The printed text of our lesson does not give the full account of the incident. The student should read verses 18-20. As Jesus was entering the boat to return to Galilee, the man out of whom the evil spirits had been cast begged Jesus to be allowed to

accompany him. His attitude toward Jesus differed entirely from the attitude of the rest of the people of that section. He appreciated what had been done for him. But Jesus did not need him in his company, and so sent him back to tell his friends how great things the Lord had done for him, and how the Lord had mercy upon him. He could thus prepare the people so that Jesus would receive a welcome when he came again. "And he went his way, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men marveled." And his preaching in Decapolis did create a favorable impression; for the people of that section gave Jesus a fine reception on his next visit, as may be seen by reading Mark 7:31-37.

21-23. And when Jesus had crossed over again in the boat unto the other side, a great multitude was gathered unto him; and he was by the sea. And there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and seeing him, he falleth at his feet, and beseecheth him much, saying, My little daughter is at the point of death: I pray thee, that thou come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be made whole, and live.

21-23. When Jesus returned from the country of the Gerasenes, a great multitude met him at the shore of the sea near the city of Capernaum. Luke says: "The multitude welcomed him; for they were waiting for him." Of course his time would be immediately engaged in teaching and healing.

Jairus, anxiously watching over his desperately sick daughter as she neared death, perhaps had not learned as soon as the others that Jesus had returned. As he was ruler of the synagogue in Capernaum, he had often heard Jesus teach and had witnessed some of his miracles. What impression all this had made on him we know not. Most likely, being a ruler of the synagogue, his inclination would be to reject anything that seemed to him to be an innovation on the established order; but now he was in distress, and distress usually shatters our pride and makes us feel dependent. There is no other time in which we feel so helpless as when we watch our loved ones slipping away from us into the cold arms of death. We do all we can for them, but we cannot break the fever, allay the pains, nor stay

the progress of death. How helpless we feel! Jairus had felt all that for his only daughter, whom he loved so devotedly. Now, humble, anxious, grief-stricken, he comes to Jesus, falling at his feet in humble worship. "And beseeching him much, saying, My little daughter is at the point of death: I pray thee, that thou come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be made whole, and live." Matthew reports him as saying: "My daughter is even now dead." There is no discrepancy. His daughter was dying as he left her bedside, as Luke indicates. When he reached Jesus, he would feel sure that she was then dead. The words reported by Mark show that he feared she would be found dead when they reached her: "Come,... that she may be made whole, and live."

24. And he went with him; and a great multitude followed him, and they thronged him.

24. Jesus had compassion on the distressed and suffering. "And he went with him; and a great multitude followed him." "Followed him," "thronged him." There is a difference. A multitude might follow him with order and due respect. The more excitable and less considerate and less respectful thronged him. It is even so today—there are followers and there are throngers. The followers go through heat and cold, through good report and through evil report. They are regular and persistent. But the thronger is there only when he gets a thrill out of the push and jam of crowds. Let a big rush come on, and he is there. If there is a lot of "whooping" things up and a lot of noise and bluster, the thronger is there. When the protracted meeting warms up, he is on hand. But if there is not a thrill for him, he is not there—he is not a follower, just a thronger. The pity of it is that many religious workers and leaders are trying to attract the throngers instead of seeking to make real followers.

25-34. And a woman, who had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, having heard the things concerning Jesus, came in the crowd behind, and touched his garment. For she

said, If I touch but his garments, I shall be made whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her plague. And straightway Jesus, perceiving in himself that the power proceeding from him had gone forth, turned him about in the crowd, and said, Who touched my garments? And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou. Who touched me? And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what had been done to her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

25-34. There was a woman in that vast throng of people who had been a sufferer for twelve years. She had spent all she had in an effort to be cured, but grew worse. The nature of her trouble would cause her to be weak and emaciated, so that she could reach the Savior only by a great effort. How far she had come we know not. She had heard of Jesus and had come to be healed of her malady. She pressed her way through the crowd that she might touch the border of his garment. She evidently wanted to be healed without attracting any attention. She was greatly disturbed when she saw that Jesus knew about her being healed. But Jesus said to her: "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace." This is the only time on record that Jesus addressed a woman as "daughter." We know nothing of her life. She might have been an outcast, and many times in lonely hours and sickness she may have longed for some one to say to her gently, as a mother, "Daughter." Anyway, she needed that comforting word, else Jesus would not have so addressed her. Her faith in and of itself had not cured her, but it had brought her to Jesus, from whom the power to heal went out to her diseased body. Faith only would have left her where she was and in her sickness.

We can well imagine some of the feelings and thoughts of the anxious father during this delay. Under such circumstances we would likely say: "Oh, why this delay? This woman was in no immediate danger of death; she could have waited a while longer. My needs are urgent; the case is desperate. Does Jesus not care? Why this long conversation with the woman after she is healed?" And yet Jesus listened to the woman and talked to

her as if nothing else mattered. Jesus knew what he was going to do.

35, 36. While he yet spake, they come from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Teacher any further? But Jesus, not heeding the word spoken, saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Fear not, only believe.

35, 36. In their minds there was no further hope—nothing could be done. Jairus could not have been surprised at the announcement, for his daughter was dying when he left her bedside; but it was none the less heart-rending to him, and he must have felt himself that all hope was gone. But Jesus encouraged him by saying: "Fear not, only believe." The ruler's faith had prompted him to come to Jesus. He had done all he could to prevent his daughter's death; he could do nothing now but trust Jesus for further results. The principle holds good even now. In the matter of our salvation, after we have done all we can or are commanded to do, we then can only trust God for results.

37-43. And he suffered no man to follow with him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. And they come to the house of the ruler of the synagogue; and he beholdeth the tumult, and many weeping and wailing greatly. And when he was entered in, he saith unto them, Why make ye a tumult, and weep? the child is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But he, having put them all forth, taketh the father of the child and her mother and them that were with him, and goeth in where the child was. And taking the child by the hand, he saith unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise. And straightway the damsel rose up, and walked; for she was twelve years old. And they were amazed straightway with a great amazement. And he charged them much that no man should know this: and he commanded that something should be given her to eat.

37-43. "And he suffered no man to follow with him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James." It would be interesting to know why Jesus selected these three to be with him on some special occasions; but had it been profitable for us to know, the record would have informed us. When Jesus reached the house of Jairus, they found the people weeping and wailing greatly. Jesus said to them: "Why make ye a

tumult, and weep?" It seems that Jesus here mildly rebukes those who weep and wail without restraint. "The child is not dead"—not permanently dead—"but sleepeth." Not knowing what Jesus meant, "they laughed him to scorn." In that display of mockery, these hired mourners showed how little they knew of the powers of Him at whom they jeered. Usually ignorance is at the bottom of raillery. Such characters were not desired as witnesses of what Jesus was about to do. "But he, having put them forth, taketh the father of the child and her mother and them that were with him, and goeth in where the child was." They had not at first entered into the room where the child was. Now Jesus, the father, the mother, Peter, James, and John go into the room where the child is. He then took the dead child by the hand and said: "Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise." Can you imagine how tense and anxious those parents were as they watched every movement of the Lord? And suddenly their grief was turned into gladness, for "straightway the damsel rose up, and walked." Not only did they rejoice, but "they were amazed straightway with a great amazement." Of course, her severe sickness had greatly wasted and weakened her body. Jesus not only restored life to her body, but immediately gave to that body its accustomed strength and vitality. Jesus did not want this mighty miracle to become a subject of gossip. "He charged them much that no man should know this." And that course would save the family from much annoying notoriety. You can imagine how people would flock in to see one who had been dead and was now alive. They would all but torment that child to death asking her questions. Even now we would like to talk with a person who had been raised from the dead.

Jesus did not forget that which her parents in their joy and amazement naturally would not think of at the moment—that she needed food after her days of sickness, in which she had eaten little or nothing. "And he commanded that something should be given her to eat."

Mark 6

1-3. And he went out from thence; and cometh into his own country; and his disciples follow him. And when the sabbath was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, Whence hath this man these things? and, What is the wisdom that is given unto this man, and what mean such mighty works wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended in him.

1-3. Though Jesus had made his home at Capernaum since the people of Nazareth tried to kill him, Nazareth was still referred to as his own country or city. No one ever referred to him as Jesus of Capernaum, but always as Jesus of Nazareth. By that designation he was known in Jericho (Luke 18:37), and in Jerusalem at the time of his triumphal entry (Matt. 21:11), and at his arrest (John 18:5, 7), at his trial (Matt. 26:71), and at his crucifixion. (John 19:19.) In their preaching the apostles frequently referred to him, and he identified himself to Saul as Jesus of Nazareth. In our lesson we find him back at Nazareth—this time for a short visit. His disciples were with him. Some have assumed, without sufficient evidence, that this visit is the same as the one mentioned in Luke 4:15-30. At the visit mentioned by Luke the people became so angry that they sought to kill him; whereas, at this visit, the people were puzzled, or astonished at him, rather than angry with him. Other reasons might be given as to why the visits were not the same.

"Whence hath this man these things? and, What is the wisdom that is given unto this man, and what mean such mighty works wrought by his hands?" Such were the questions that his former neighbors and associates passed among themselves when Jesus taught on the Sabbath in their synagogue. It is not likely they began this talk till after the services were over. But let us not be too hard on the Nazarenes till, at least, we shall have advanced beyond them. They were human, as we are, and had about the same bias we have. Jesus had grown up in their midst, had followed an ordinary trade, had attended their synagogue, and had never gone off anywhere to school. So far

as they could see, he had no more education than they had. He belonged to the poorer class, the common people, and had worked in their midst as a carpenter. "His old shop stands over there"; "he made that ox yoke of mine"; "he made our table"; "he made my plow." Such thoughts would run through their minds, even if they did not speak them out. To them he was a puzzle, a riddle, a mystery—all in one, and they were bewildered—they could not understand. His education did not account for his powers. What then? His family, some hereditary powers? Not that, they knew his people, just ordinary folks. They knew them all.

"Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?" It is here, as well as elsewhere, plainly stated that Jesus had brothers and sisters. One of the plain and necessary rules of interpretation is, that we must take language in its plain and ordinary meaning, unless the circumstance of the connections forbid. Nothing militates against the idea that Mary had other children than Jesus. In fact the natural conclusion would be that she did have other children. Therefore, when the Bible plainly says that Jesus had brothers and sisters, it should be accepted as a fact. Whether or not Jesus had brothers and sisters would be of no special interest to us were it not that certain religionists worship her as the Virgin Mary, as if a virgin were so much holier than a natural mother. Their claim for the perpetual virginity of Mary is as unscriptural as it is unnatural, as idolatrous as it is unreasonable. There is incontrovertible proof to the contrary. We know not how many sisters Jesus had, but the language the people used shows that the sisters were still living in Nazareth. The people knew his family. None of them were considered great—where did Jesus get his greatness? So "they were offended in him" —literally, "they were caused to stumble." They tried to account for him as a man, as the natural son of poor parents, but from that angle they could not account for him at all. Many great intellects of later years have tried to do the same thing, and have been confronted with the same

unanswerable questions that baffled the people of Nazareth. They can be answered only on the grounds that he is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" Yes, that; but infinitely more—Immanuel, God with us.

4-6. And Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and among his own kin, and his own house. And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And he marveld because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages teaching.

4-6. "And Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house." Jesus here states a deplorable truth. It should not have been true; but it was, and still is, true. The people of Nazareth should have recognized Jesus for what he was, and especially should his own family have done so. For even his brethren did not believe on him. (John 7:5.) It appears that they did later come to believe on him. But in not believing in Jesus the people of Nazareth were much like all other people. It is a wise man that can recognize true greatness in the people close to him. Even now preachers from a distance are greater in the minds of most people than those at home. Distance diminishes the visibility of physical objects, but it magnifies character and personalities. Because of this senseless weakness in humanity, people cheat themselves out of much help that might be given them by the good people at home. The experience of Jesus at Nazareth is the experience in some degree of every other good man.

"And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them." By their unbelief they cheated themselves and the suffering members of their families. They did not have enough faith to call on him to cure the sick, with the exception of a few. His main purpose in performing miracles of healing was to prove that God was with him, and to gain a favorable hearing. As they still derided and rejected him after he had healed a few sick people, what was the use of performing more miracles? So far as his main

work was concerned, it would be a waste of time and energy to cure more people.

"And he marveled because of their unbelief." Twice it is said that Jesus marveled. In the other instance Jesus marveled at the faith of the centurion. (Matt. 8:10; Luke 7:9.) There he marveled at the greatness of faith, here he marveled at the greatness of unbelief. Having sought to benefit his old neighbors and his own people, and they rejected him, he left them and went through the villages of Galilee teaching.

Matthew 9

35, 36. 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. 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.

35, 36. "And Jesus went about all the cities and the villages." That is, the cities and villages of Galilee. "Teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom." He taught the people the practical duties of life, and announced the coming kingdom. By his miracles of healing he not only proved his divine mission, but also showed the benevolence of his mission, that is, that he had come to bless humanity. By healing their sick bodies he proved to them that he had power to heal their sinsick souls. "When he saw the multitudes." Mark says the multitudes thronged him and his disciples so much that they could not so much as eat bread. Luke says that at times the multitudes became so pressing as to tread upon one another. There was a great hungering among these people, and they had no very clear ideas as to what they needed. They were like vast herds of sheep wandering over the hills without purpose or aim and without any to lead them where they should go. They were as bewildered and helpless as lost sheep.

"He was moved with compassion on them." The Pharisees would have been moved with indignation at them because of their ignorance and sins; Jesus was moved with compassion. Any religion that robs one of compassion, as did Phariseeism, or as does so-called Christian Science, has no kinship with the Spirit of Christ. Compassion—that is a precious trait of Jesus. "Because they were distressed and scattered as sheep not having a shepherd." That is a vivid picture of people who have no leader. Jesus was the Son of God, but he was also the Son of man; and as such, he could not be everywhere at once.

37, 38. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest.

37, 38. "Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest indeed is plenteous." He quickly changes the figure. The people were like scattered sheep without a shepherd, and they were like a great waiting harvest, with no one to reap the ripened grain. It is a picture of distress and possible loss. "But the laborers are few." There were many pretended laborers among the scribes and the Pharisees; but they were too selfish, too self-righteous, to be of any practical benefit. They were ready to say, but negligent about doing. In a harvest laborers are needed. "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest." Jesus shows us here that where there is need, PRAY. If the harvest is meager, pray for an abundant harvest; if the laborers are few, pray for more laborers. You need not worry about how the Lord will answer your prayers—that is his business; yours to pray, his to answer.

In these verses Jesus was preparing his disciples for what followed. He would have them see how the people needed guidance. He would create in them sympathy for the distressed people. He would have them see how, in their condition, they were like a ripened harvest, and so they would see the need of laborers. He wanted them to see the needs, before he called on them to go. He was thus answering the prayers for more laborers.

Matthew 10

1. And he called unto him his twelve disciples, and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of disease and all manner of sickness.

1. "And he called unto him his twelve disciples." He had many other disciples, but these were called "his twelve disciples" by way of pre-eminence. A disciple is a learner, and these twelve were his special learners. "And he gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out." These unclean spirits are elsewhere called demons. He gave them power to cast out demons "and to heal all manner of disease and all manner of sickness." These miracles would prove that God was with them, and that therefore their preaching was true: for the people would know that God would not give miracle working power to false teachers. It will be noticed that the miracles they were to perform were all of a benevolent nature. This, too, would help to show that their object was to bring real blessings to the human family.

2-4. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

2-4. "Now the names of the twelve apostles are these." In verse one they are called disciples; in verse two, apostles. A disciple is a learner, and an apostle is one sent away. Of course the apostles were also learners, or disciples. It is easy to memorize the names of these twelve apostles, if we take them in groups of four: Peter and Andrew, James and John; Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus, Simon the Cananaean and Judas Iscariot.

When Andrew brought Simon to Jesus, Jesus said to Simon, "Thou art Simon the son of John: thou shalt be called Cephas." (John 1:42.) Cephas is Aramaic for "rock," and "Peter" is Greek for the same. On account of Peter's boldness and activity

we find him often mentioned.

Andrew's distinguishing trait was that he was Simon Peter's brother; and yet he brought Peter to the Lord. He seems to have been free from selfish ambitions, not self-assertive. He was practical, for it was he who found the lad who had five barley loaves and two fishes when the five thousand were fed. (John 6:5-14.) In a group of men various temperaments are needed to give the group effectiveness and a proper balance.

James and John were brothers, the sons of Zebedee. Jesus named them "Sons of Thunder." They must have been of a fiery and tempestuous temperament to merit such a name. James suffered death at the hands of Herod soon after the church began. (Acts 12:1, 2.) John lived to a ripe old age, and seems to have mellowed greatly under the influence of the gospel of Christ.

Very little is said of the activities of Philip and Bartholomew. Tradition is too unreliable to depend upon as to matters of fact.

Matthew still describes himself as the publican, long after he ceased to be a publican. Thomas was also called Didymus.

James is called the Less. Of Thaddeus we know very little. Simon the Cananean and Judas Iscariot. We should not get Cananean confused with Cananite. A Cananean was a member of a group of Zealots, very patriotic and fiercely opposed to Roman rule. Of course, all Bible readers know the fate of Judas Iscariot.

5, 6. These twelve Jesus sent forth, and charged them, saying, Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

5, 6. "These twelve Jesus sent forth." They were the first supply of laborers sent into the harvest. They were going out on a work that was an entirely new experience to them. They had traveled much with Jesus; but they had not undertaken any such journeys without his presence, and they needed some special instructions for the work. "Go not into any way of the

Gentiles." The heathen nations. The time had not yet come for a world-wide effort. "Enter not into any city of the Samaritans." The Samaritans were their next door neighbors. In fact, the land of Samaria lay between Galilee and Jerusalem. The religion of the Samaritans was a strange mixture of heathenism and the law of Moses. But the time had not come to make any decided move to teach them. "Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." They were better prepared to hear what the apostles were then to preach. We see that this commission of the apostles was a very limited commission, even though we may not be able to understand why it was thus limited. Later it was superseded by the world wide commission given to these apostles after Jesus arose from the dead. As the apostles went they were to preach "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." This had been the burden of John's preaching. Nothing was so calculated to stir the oppressed Jews as the announcement of the near approach of the kingdom. They were empowered to perform all sorts of miracles, even to raising the dead. "Freely ye received, freely give." Freely—without price, this applies not to their labor as a whole; but to their miracle working power. The power to work miracles might have been made a source of great gain, had the apostles been allowed so to employ it; but this would have robbed the power of its dignity and turned it into an article of merchandise; in no age of the world did the true prophets of God accept fees for the exercise of their miracle working powers.

17-23. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to councils, and in their synagogues they will scourge you; yea and 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. And 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. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee into the next: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.

17-23. And when they were delivered up before rulers they

were to take no thought what to say; "for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak." In such cases the Holy Spirit would use their vocal organs to do the talking himself. The preaching of the gospel would make believers of some, and stir others to great enmity. Such divisions would come even between members of the same family. Great enmity would be stirred up against these preachers; but the time was too short for them to tarry in a city that would not receive them. "But when they persecute you in this city, flee into the next: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come." The coming of the Lord must be his coming in his kingdom on the first Pentecost after his resurrection, for he was coming before they preached in all the cities of Israel. There are now no cities of Israel in which to preach.

24,25. The disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his teacher, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household!

24, 25. "The disciple is not above his teacher." It does not seem that Jesus was emphasizing the fact that a disciple is not more prominent or of more importance than his teacher. That is not the point he was presenting, but rather the matter of being persecuted. The disciple should not expect better treatment than his master. "If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household." Notice the relations here mentioned that exist between Jesus and his followers: The teacher and his disciples, or pupils; the master, or Lord, and his servants; master of the house and the inmates. Jesus is teacher, Lord, and master of all in his house, the church. At some time his enemies had called him Beelzebub. They also had said that he cast out demons by Beelzebub the prince of demons. (Matt. 12:24.) There has been much dispute about the origin of the name Beelzebub, and as to the spelling of the name; but it is not profitable to discuss that matter here. However, the name seems to have been

applied to an idol which the Jews detested, and that therefore they came to apply the name to Satan himself. Their calling Jesus Beelzebub shows what extreme hatred they had for him.

26, 27. Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in the darkness, speak ye in the light; and what ye hear in the ear, proclaim upon the housetops.

26, 27. The righteous are sometimes temporarily put to a disadvantage, for the evil designs of people may be covered by a pretense of working for the good of the people; but such designs, however well covered they may be at the time, will ultimately come to light. In opposing and crucifying Jesus, the Jewish leaders made the people believe for a time that they were serving the best interest of the nation, but their designs afterwards came to be known in their true light. And so it was with those who put Christians to death. Jesus did not do all his teaching in public. Had he made all his claims known to the public, his enemies would have been roused to greater opposition. The disciples were charged not to tell people that he was the Christ. The full revelation of what he was, and what his plans for the salvation of the world were, had to wait till he, by his death, resurrection, and ascension, fully demonstrated that he was the Son of God, and long-expected Messiah. Then the disciples were to proclaim to the public all that he had taught them in secret.

28-31. 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. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father: but the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows.

28-31. In going out to preach the disciples would face bitter persecution—persecution even unto death. But their enemies could do no more than kill the body. In Luke's account we have: "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I warn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell." "Fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

Hell here refers to the final abode of the wicked. The language shows that the man who kills another person's body does not kill his soul—the soul survives the death of the body. This is one reason they should not fear man; for if they failed to preach through fear of man then a still worse fate awaited them. Besides, God cares for his own; if they are killed they suffer no loss. If as small a bird as a sparrow falls to the ground, God knows it. A servant of God is of more value than many sparrows. His eyes are over the righteous. There is comfort in such teaching, especially so when men face death for being Christians.

32, 33. Everyone therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven.

32, 33. These verses do not refer directly to the confession made before baptism. Jesus was preparing his disciples to face persecution. Persecution must not cause them to deny Christ. If they did, he would treat them before the Father just as they had treated him before men. They would be condemned to death, but would be offered their life and liberty, if they would renounce Christ. That would be a severe test. Perhaps we are sometimes put to a severer test. No one likes to be laughed at, or mocked, or ostracised for being a Christian. Moral courage sometimes fails when physical courage would not. To be in a crowd of scoffers and have them turn loose on us a flood of sarcasm because of our religion is more than some can stand. Such an experience is embarrassing, but it would be infinitely worse to be denied by the Savior before the Father and the holy angels. If we confess him in every trial, he will confess us; if we deny him, and that means to renounce him, he will deny us.

34-36. Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law: and a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

34-36. There is a very important sense in which Jesus came to make peace. He came to reconcile man to God, thus making

peace between man and God. He came to take the law of Moses out of the way so that there might be peace between Jew and Gentile—between all Jews and Gentiles who would accept him. (Eph. 2:14-18.) There is peace between all who would faithfully follow him. But the result of all this is war between right and wrong. Enemies of truth and right became his bitter enemies, and the enemies of all who advocate his cause. Jesus and his apostles fought evil because they loved man; they were arrayed against anything that was hurtful to human beings. Jesus would have all men to be saved, but some are against him. He speaks of the results of his mission to earth as if he came for the sole purpose of stirring up strife. He assumes responsibility for what grows out of his mission to earth—the war between right and wrong. "For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law; and a man's foes shall be those of his own household." Usually a family will rally to the support of an accused member, but not often so when one member goes contrary to the accepted religion of the family. They are more apt to be bitter toward such a one than are his friends and acquaintances. In changing his religion, they feel that he has renounced his family allegiance—disgraced the family. Hence, their bitterness.

37-39. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that does not take his cross and follow after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

37-39. There is on the part of most people an aversion to going against the religion of father and mother. Jesus takes notice of that, and gives emphatic warning. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." There come times when we must make a choice between the Lord and other persons and things that we love; he must come first. We must be willing to sacrifice even our physical lives if necessary. The cross was an instrument of death. To take up our cross means more than to go against our feelings and desires.

The criminal, or condemned man, carried his cross to the place of execution. To take up one's cross means that the Christian marches to his death if need be. Let us not cheapen the idea of the cross by making cross-bearing mean no more than going contrary to our fleshly inclinations. In following Christ many of the early Christians were on their way to execution for the supposed crime of being Christians. Figuratively therefore they were carrying their cross to their own deaths—carrying that which would bring death to them. The word *life* is used in two senses in verse 39. If a man renounced Christ to save his physical life, he would lose his eternal life; but if he gave up his physical life for the sake of Christ, he would find eternal life. This verse is virtually a repetition of the teaching of verses 32 and 33.

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

40-42. In sending out the twelve, Jesus said, "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that rejecteth you rejecteth me; and he that rejecteth me rejecteth him that sent me." (Luke 10:16.) To receive the apostles whom Jesus sent is to receive him, for they go as his representatives. If we fail to hear them we reject Christ and God. "In the name of a prophet" does not here mean, "by the authority of a prophet," but it means to receive the prophet as a prophet, to treat him as one sent of God to speak God's word. In a measure it puts one in the same class with the prophet. He comes as God's representative, and you hear him as such. His reward is your reward. You receive a righteous man because he is a righteous man; such a deed shows that you are interested in righteousness, it puts you on a plane with the righteous man. And you receive a righteous man's reward. To give in the name of a disciple is to honor and recognize the Lord of that disciple. Ordinarily we think of a cup of cold

water as a very small thing, but what could be more grateful to a person burning with fever and thirst than a cup of cold water, such a gift will not lose its reward if it is made so as to honor Christ.

Mark 6

7. And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and he gave them authority over the unclean spirits.

7. They had been listening to his teaching, but now listening must be turned into action. The work to which he sent them needed to be done; and they, before going out on their world-wide mission, would need the training which this more limited work would give them. They were sent out "by two and two." They were going out to a work in which they had never engaged. They would meet with much difficulty and many enemies. In ways too numerous to mention, they could be a help one to the other.

8. And he charged them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no bread, no wallet, no money in their purse.

8. They were to take only a staff, and only one. They were to be at no expense in equipping themselves for the journey, neither were they to provide money to meet any expenses that might come up while on their journey. On this preaching journey the twelve were dependent on the people where they preached for support. The Jews were trained under the law to care for all who came their way. Paul evidently referred to this order of Jesus when he said, "Even so did the Lord ordain that they that proclaim the gospel should live of the gospel." (1 Cor. 9:14.) The wallet was a leather bag, usually suspended to a staff on the shoulder. As they were to carry no bread or other extra articles, they would need no wallet. The marginal read-

ing gives "girdle" as the word here translated "purse." This the translators did to accommodate the word to our use, for the ancients carried their money in the folds of their girdle. That was their "purse."

9,10. But to go shod with sandals: and said he, put not on two coats. And he said unto them, Wheresoever ye enter into a house, there abide till ye depart thence.

9, 10. "But to go shod with sandals: and said he, put not on two coats." Only one pair of sandals, and only one coat. "And he said unto them, Wheresoever ye enter into a house, there abide till ye depart thence." But, according to Matthew, when they entered into a city they were first to inquire for worthy people with whom to lodge, and then to stay there till they departed to another city. In a strange town or city, with no one to advise him, a preacher might take lodging with people whose character and reputation were such as to ruin his prospects for accomplishing anything. In many ways it is better now for a preacher to make one place his home during a meeting.

11. And whatsoever place shall not receive you, and they hear you not, as ye go forth thence, shake off the dust that is under your feet for a testimony unto them.

11. It is said that a Pharisee, on reaching the border of Judea from a journey into a Gentile country, stamped the dust off his feet. This act, required of the disciples on this mission, would say plainly, "We disclaim any connection with such people." On leaving Antioch in Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas "shook off the dust of their feet against them." (Acts 13:51.)

LESSON LINKS

In our last lesson Jesus sent out the twelve apostles on a preaching tour among the Jews. Matthew adds this statement: "And it came to pass when Jesus had finished commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and preach in their cities." (Matt. 11:1.) Just before the events of this lesson Herod had killed John the Baptist. The murder of John had

greatly stirred the people; but when Herod heard of the mighty works of Jesus he concluded that John had risen from the dead, "and therefore do these powers work in him." Herod's conscience was hurting him, for he knew John was a righteous man, and would not have killed him had it not been for the foolish notion that he must stick to a foolish oath which he had rashly made. In this he showed the weakness of his character. Men who thoughtlessly make foolish promises should have enough manhood about them not to carry them out. For an account of the imprisonment and murder of John the Baptist read Matthew 14:1-12; Mark 6:14-19; Luke 9:7-9.

30. And the apostles gather themselves together unto Jesus; and they told him all things, whatsoever they had done, and whatsoever they had taught.

30. The apostles soon returned from their preaching tour. As it appears that all returned about the same time, it seems that Jesus had appointed a time for their return. When they returned they told him all the things, "whatsoever they had done, and whatsoever they had taught." Jesus had sent them to do a certain work, it was their duty to report to him how well they had carried out his orders. That is recognized as a necessary procedure in all human transactions, whether it be in business, war, or religion. When the church at Antioch sent Barnabas and Saul on a preaching tour, they reported back to the church that sent them. (Acts 13:1-4; 14:27.) Those who are interested in a work want to know how successfully the work is done.

31, 32. And he saith unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while. For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they went away in a boat to a desert place apart.

31, 32. "And he saith unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while. For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat." The disciples had been on a strenuous and exhausting campaign, and needed rest. It is good to rest a while when we need rest—good for the body, mind, and soul; but when rest

becomes idleness, it is hurtful physically, mentally, and morally. They had no chance to rest where people were crowding them so that they had not even leisure to eat. From John 6:4 we learn that the Feast of the Passover was at hand. Great crowds would be passing through Capernaum on their way to the feast. Many of these had been in the multitude that had previously come to see Jesus, and to be healed of their sicknesses; many, of course, had seen his miracles and heard his teaching in the cities where he had gone. Perhaps many had only heard of him. All who, for any reason, felt friendly toward Jesus would want to see him as they passed through on their way to the Feast of the Passover. As the text puts it, "many coming and going." To be continually beset by a constant stream of comers and goers, demanding a few minutes of one's time, as they passed through, was, in itself, a drain on the strength of Jesus and his disciples that they would not care to stand very long. Hence, Jesus invited his disciples to go with him to a desert place away from the regular course of travel. From Matthew we learn that the excitement caused by the beheading of John the Baptist had some influence on Jesus in his deciding to withdraw for a time from the multitude.

33, 34. And the people saw them going-, and many knew them, and they ran together there on foot from all the cities, and outwent them. And he came forth and saw a great multitude, and he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.

33, 34. It will be noticed that Jesus and his disciples went to this desert place in a boat. A desert place was therefore not a waterless place, but a deserted place—an uninhabited place. It appears that they made slow progress in their boat. The wind must not have been in their favor. Anyway, the people who saw them going went on foot around the upper end of the Sea of Galilee, and reached the point of landing first. They would not give Jesus and his disciples much opportunity to rest. Of course, they had some rest from the pressure of the crowds while they were in the boat. John tells us why the multitude followed Jesus: "And a great multitude followed

him, because they beheld the signs which he did on them that were sick." They were more interested in being cured of physical ailments than they were in his teaching. Salvation from disease counts more with most people than salvation from sin. It appears also from what John says that the greater part of the multitude did not arrive till after Jesus and his disciples had landed and had gone up into the mountain.

"Jesus therefore lifting up his eyes, and seeing that a great multitude cometh unto him, saith unto Philip, Whence are we to buy bread, that these may eat?" (John 6:5.) Mark says, "And he came forth and saw a great multitude, and he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things." Jesus was not indifferent to humanity's needs. He had compassion on the sick and grief-stricken; and he had compassion on these people who were trying to serve God under the leadership of men who were selfish, and who had by their traditions made void the commandments of God, and who had bound burdens upon them grievous to be borne. The leaders were like whited sepulchers, which outwardly appear beautiful to men, but are full of corruption and dead men's bones. They were interested in themselves and their traditions, and not in the spiritual welfare of the people. Truly, the people "were as sheep not having a shepherd." People thus used and abused excited the compassion of Jesus. So full of compassion was he that he wept over Jerusalem because of the sins of the people and because of the calamities that were to come upon them.

35-44. And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, The place is desert, and the day is now far spent; send them away, that they may go into the country and villages round about, and buy themselves somewhat to eat. But he answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred shillings' worth of bread, and give them to eat? And he saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes. And he commanded them that all should sit down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties. And he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake the loaves; and he gave to the disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. And they all ate, and were filled. And they took up

broken pieces, twelve basketfuls, and also of the fishes. And they that ate the loaves were five thousand men.

35-44. As the day began to draw toward the close, the disciples began to think about the question of food for the multitude. In their haste and excitement the people had rushed to this place without making any preparation for something to eat. The disciples knew of no way for such a multitude to have food, unless they scattered out and bought it; so they asked Jesus to "send them away, that they may go into the country and villages round about, and buy themselves somewhat to eat." They wanted something to be done about the matter before darkness came on.

This is the one miracle that all the writers—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—recorded. Each writer tells only a part of what was said and done. Putting together what all of them say, we can imagine that the conversation ran about as follows: Jesus said to Philip, "Whence are we to buy bread, that these may eat?" Philip answered, "two hundred shillings' worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little." Jesus said, "Give them to eat." The other disciples said, "Shall we go and buy two hundred shillings' worth of bread, and give them to eat?" Then said Jesus, "How many loaves have ye? Go and see." After making a search, Andrew reported, "There is a lad here who hath five barley loaves, and two fishes: but what are these among so many?" That Philip and then the others mentioned two hundred shillings indicates that that was the amount Jesus and his disciples had on hand. Of course Jesus knew all the while how the multitude would be fed, but he wanted to prove his disciples and to bring matters to such a point that the miracle would be manifest to all. All must know of the meager supply, so that they would later know what a great miracle had been wrought in feeding them. It was good for the disciples to do what they could in meeting the emergency. Jesus would have us to use what we have, whether it be much or little. If a person can do much, he should do much; if he can do only a little, let him do that.

"And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties." In feeding so many some sort of system and order was necessary. An untrained multitude could not be depended upon to arrange themselves in an orderly way. Somebody had to superintend the seating of that crowd. From Luke we learn that Jesus had the apostles to arrange the people in groups, so as to make it convenient for the apostles to distribute food to them. It is said that "the Jewish dining room was arranged like the Roman: three tables forming three sides of a square, with the divans or couches following the outside line of the tables." To arrange this crowd in squares with one side of the square open, or to arrange them in a V-shape, made it so that the disciples could easily distribute the food to them; and also this orderly arrangement made it easy to count the number present. The green grass made a very pleasant carpet on which to recline or sit.

"And he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them." This does not mean that he blessed the bread and fishes, but that he praised, or blessed God; or, as John tells us, he gave thanks. Sometimes to bless and to give thanks are used interchangeably. In reporting the institution of the Lord's Supper, Matthew says, "Jesus took bread, and blessed." "It," as the object of blessed, is not in the original, nor is it in the American Standard Version. Luke says, "And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave to them." Paul uses the word thanks. Hence, in connection with eating, to bless and to give thanks are the same. The old-timer who was wont to say to the guest at the table, "Say the blessing," was not departing from the scriptural example. Every one should give thanks at the table for the food. Evidently the supply increased as Jesus broke the loaves and divided the fishes.

"And they all ate and were filled. And they took up broken pieces, twelve basketfuls, and also of the fishes." This shows that there were twelve basketfuls of the broken pieces of the bread, for the fishes are mentioned as an additional item. And five thousand men had been fed all they wanted, and Matthew

adds, "besides women and children." John reports Jesus as saying, "Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, that nothing be lost." There is a lesson on economy in this. No useful thing should be wasted; to waste useful things is a sin. Some people waste more than they use. Jesus would not have anything thrown away that could be used. But this question may arise: If he wanted nothing lost, why did he increase the amount so far above what they could eat? Think a little, and you will see. Had everything been eaten to the last scrap, even though everyone had been filled, they might have wondered how every one got enough out of so little; but when all were filled, and then more was taken up than they began with, everyone could readily see that a great miracle had been performed.

So we Reflect ions

The people had no idea of the nature of Christ's kingdom, and this miracle made them think that Jesus was the one to head the kingdom which they expected. The army would not need to worry about food! John says, "Jesus therefore perceiving that they were about... to make him king, withdrew again into the mountains himself alone."

The people had been fired to anger and indignation by the cruel fate of John the Baptist, and were ready to revolt. But it does seem, that, since they expected God to establish a kingdom, they would have been willing for him to work out his own plans, instead of trying to take matters in their own hands. However, they were not different from other people. People are constantly trying to improve on God's plans. It is a weakness that has brought on all the turmoil and strife that has afflicted Christianity from the beginning.

The next day after the miracle, when Jesus had returned to Capernaum, the multitudes "came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus." To them Jesus said, "Ye seek me, not because ye saw signs, but because ye ate of the loaves, and were filled." What an indictment! The real blessings which Jesus had for them

they did not want—only the loaves and fishes! They were not materialists in theory, but they were in practice. Only material things interested them—the main thing was something to eat. Jesus followed his rebuke with a sermon on the bread of life.

45, 46. And straightway he constrained his disciples to enter into the boat, and to go before him unto the other side to Bethsaida, while he himself sendeth the multitude away. And after he had taken leave of them, he departed into the mountain to pray.

45, 46. Jesus had just fed five thousand men, and they were slow about leaving him. But they could not remain there, they must go on about their daily affairs. He would feed them miraculously only as an emergency measure and to show his power. To feed them permanently as he did would not be good for them. So he arranges to send them away. But first he sent his disciples by boat to Bethsaida; then he sent the multitudes away. "And after he had taken leave of them, he departed into the mountain to pray." John gives this information as to why he went into the mountain to pray: "Jesus therefore perceiving that they were about to come and take him by force, to make him king, withdrew again into the mountain himself alone." To properly appreciate his getting away from that multitude we must realize that Jesus was tempted in all points as men are tempted. To have a vast throng anxious to proclaim him king would appeal to his human nature, as it would appeal to other men. These men wanted freedom from Rome, and to have a leader that could feed them as Jesus did would settle one big problem of army life. To avoid any further temptation and to quiet the rising tide among the people, he went alone into the mountain to pray.

47-52. And when even was come, the boat was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. And seeing them distressed in rowing, for the wind was contrary unto them, about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking on the sea; and he would have passed by them: but they, when they saw him walking on the sea, supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw him, and were troubled. But he straightway spake with them, and saith unto them. Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid. And he went up unto them into the boat; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in

themselves; for they understood not concerning the loaves, but their heart was hardened.

47-52. The disciples were making- slow progress. When they should have been on the other side, they were still in the midst of the sea. They were in distress, for the winds were contrary; they could make little progress rowing against a strong wind. "About the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking on the sea." Seeing him but dimly in the darkness of the night as he was about to pass them, they cried out in fear, supposing they were seeing a ghost, or a spirit. Let it be observed, in passing, that the disciples were not materialists, for they thought they were seeing a spirit. Jesus quieted their fears with his well-known voice, saying, "Re of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid." Then Jesus went up in the boat, and the winds ceased. "And they were sore amazed in themselves." They had not fully understood his powers in feeding the five thousand and performing other great miracles. Had they really known him, they would not have been amazed at anything he might do; and it is singular that they were so slow to comprehend his powers.

53-56. And when they had crossed over, they came to the land unto Gennesaret, and moored to the shore. And when they were come out of the boat, straightway the people knew him, and ran round about that whole region, and began to carry about on their beds those that were sick, where they heard he was. And wheresoever he entered, into villages, or into cities, or into the country, they laid the sick in the market places, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and many as touched him were made whole.

53-56. "And when they had crossed over, they came to the land unto Gennesaret." Gennesaret was a narrow strip of comparatively level country along the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was noted for its fertility. Capernaum was one of its many cities.

For a period of nearly two years the people had been blessed by the ministrations of Jesus. He had taught them much and had healed many of their ailments. Now, when he landed, word was soon passed along that he was with them again. Like

all normal people, these people were interested in any friends or members of their families who were sick. Every one would know of some sick person whom he would like to have healed. And so they "ran round about that whole region, and began to carry about on their beds those that were sick, where they heard Jesus was." Jesus was not remaining in any one place, but was going about through their cities and villages. Every where he went they "laid the sick in the market places and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment; and as many as touched him were made whole." Jesus could have cured all these sick people without their being brought to him; but had all the sick people throughout the land suddenly become well in their homes, the people would have marveled at what had occurred, but would not have known whence the power came. Besides, it was good for the people to do something. It is good for a person to feel that he is contributing something for the welfare of the needy. And when they brought them to Jesus to be cured, they knew whence the power came. And this was the main purpose of the miracles of healing. Jesus performed the miracles as signs that he was what he claimed to be and that God approved of him. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by many mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know." (Acts 2:22.) "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; and that believing ye may have life in his name." (John 20:30, 31.)

John 6

LESSON LINKS

The miracle of the feeding of the five thousand is the one

event recorded by all four gospels—Matthew chapter 14, Mark chapter 6, Luke chapter 9, and John chapter 6. The Passover was at hand, and throngs of people from the northern part of Galilee were passing through Capernaum on their way to Jerusalem. From Matthew we learn that word had reached Galilee that Herod had beheaded John the Baptist. From Mark and Luke we learn that the apostles had returned from their first preaching tour. Those who passed through Capernaum, or near that city, having seen Jesus in some of his journeys, or having heard about his wonderful works, would want to see him. "For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat." (Mark 6:31.) To escape these crowds Jesus and his disciples went by boat to the other side of the sea. When the people saw Jesus and his disciples going to the other side by boat they went around by foot: that Jesus and his disciples needed rest did not occur to them. When Jesus saw the multitudes, he had compassion on them, and healed them that were sick, and preached to the multitude the kingdom of God. The feeding of this multitude (five thousand men besides the women and children) had a profound effect on them.

14, 15. When therefore the people saw the sign which he did, they said, This is of a truth the prophet that cometh into the world. Jesus therefore perceiving that they were about to come and take him by force, to make him king, withdrew again into the mountain himself alone.

14, 15. This miracle stirred the people as no other miracle had. They decided that Jesus was the prophet foretold by Moses—their long expected deliverer. The Roman yoke was galling to them, and they had just heard that John the Baptist had been beheaded. They were stirred to anger. Jesus seemed to be the ideal leader, for he could feed an army anywhere. The food problem was settled to begin with. They wanted to make him king by force of arms. Had Jesus been so minded he could have called for speeches, made one himself, and at once started with an army of five thousand men, which would have been swelled by other thousands in a short time. But that sort of

war, and that sort of crown and kingdom, had no place in his plans. To allow this excitement to subside he "withdrew again into the mountain himself alone."

30, 31. And they said therefore unto him, What then doest thou for a sign, that we may see, and believe thee? what workest thou? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.

30, 31. During the height of the excitement after the five thousand were fed, Jesus and his disciples went back across the sea to Capernaum. On the morrow the multitude also crossed over to Capernaum, "seeking Jesus." To them Jesus said, "Ye seek me, not because ye saw signs, but because ye ate of the loaves, and were filled." He exhorted them to labor "for the food which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him the Father, even God, hath sealed. They said therefore unto him, What must we do, that we may work the works of God?" Jesus said unto them, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." If those who asked for a sign were of the five thousand whom he had fed the day before, it seems strange that they should now be asking for a sign; or perhaps they were asking for some great demonstration like that which accompanied the giving of the law from Sinai, or like giving of the manna; "as it is written, He gave them bread out of heaven." They evidently thought that was a greater miracle than Jesus performed the day before.

32-35. Jesus therefore said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, It was not Moses that gave you the bread out of heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven, and giveth life unto the world. They said therefore unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

32-35. It was not Moses that caused the manna to be formed about the camps, but the Father; and he does more—he gives the true bread out of heaven. The manna fed the body, and

perished with the using. "For the bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven, and giveth life unto the world." The true bread is that which gives and maintains spiritual life; nothing else can take its place. All nostrums invented by men and offered by them as substitutes utterly fail to give and to maintain life. Only from heaven comes the lifegiving bread. Sometimes people ask for things they know not. That was true of these Jews when they said, "Lord, evermore give us this bread." They must have had in mind material bread. Or if they had in mind bread to give spiritual life, they would have been glad to have that, if they could get it on their own terms, and in the way they wanted it. People are like that, even today. Many would like to be saved, if the Lord would save them on their own terms. Only the few are willing to give themselves wholly to the Lord, and accept life on his terms. "Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." This does not mean that merely coming to Christ satisfies all spiritual desires. There must still continue the hungering and thirsting for righteousness. But it does mean that the person who sincerely comes to the Lord will find in him full satisfaction for all the desires of his soul. He will seek spiritual food and drink nowhere else. We will never feed so much on this bread of life that we will want no more. Again Jesus says, verses 48-50, "I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which cometh down out of heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die." The fathers ate physical bread, and died physically; if a man eats this spiritual bread, he will live. No one literally eats the flesh and drinks the blood of Jesus. It is a figurative expression—we feed on him in a moral and spiritual sense by trusting him, learning of and obeying him. He is our daily food. Because Jesus said that he was the bread of life, and that "he that eateth this bread shall live forever," some of his disciples said, "this is a hard saying; who can bear it?" Many of them walked no more with him. "Jesus said therefore unto the twelve, Would ye also go away? Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we

go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

Some Reflections

Jesus is not literal bread—he is a person. We feed upon him by feeding upon his word. Said he, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matt. 4:4.) We will delight in feeding on the word, if we can say with David, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" "Therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold."

Mark 7

LESSON LINKS

After the miraculous feeding of the multitude, when the people found that Jesus had left them, they came to Capernaum seeking him. (John 6:22-24.) When they found him, he made a speech to them which John alone records. In that speech he urged them to work for the food which abides to eternal life. This food is Jesus himself. No one literally eats the flesh and drinks the blood of Jesus. It is a figurative expression—we feed on him in a moral and spiritual sense by trusting him, and obeying him. He is our daily spiritual food. Because Jesus said he was the bread of life, and that "he that eateth this bread, shall live forever," some of his disciples said, "This is a hard saying; who can bear it?" Many of them walked no more with him. "Jesus said therefore unto the twelve, Would ye also go away? Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

1, 2. And there are gathered together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, who had come from Jerusalem, and had seen that some of his disciples ate their bread with defiled, that is, unwashen, hands.

1, 2. This group of scribes and Pharisees were from Jerusalem. The local scribes and Pharisees had exhausted their skill in trying to find something against Jesus. Also, on a former occasion, some scribes and Pharisees came down from Jerusalem, and accused Jesus of casting out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons. (Matt. 12:22-37; Mark 3:22-30.) He had routed these, and they had returned to Jerusalem. Now another group had come down from Jerusalem. This was perhaps a select group. The fame of Jesus was becoming so great that the authorities in Jerusalem felt that something had to be done about it. Hence, we can feel confident that the shrewdest men of Jerusalem were sent on this occasion.

These scribes and Pharisees did not on this occasion find Jesus doing anything for which they could accuse him; but they "had seen that some of his disciples ate their bread with defiled, that is, unwashen, hands." They could not deny the reality of his miracles; neither had they been able to charge him with violating the law. The best they could do now was to find fault with his disciples—they had seen some of them eating without first washing their hands. They did not charge that the disciples were eating with filthy hands, but that they were violating a tradition of the elders. Matthew reports the Pharisees as saying, "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread." With the Pharisees, washing the hands before eating was a religious duty, no matter how clean the hands might be. The tradition of the elders required it—the hands must not only be actually clean, but must be ceremonially clean. But if they could have proved that the disciples were violating the law, it would not have involved Jesus in personal guilt, unless they could have in some way involved him in the matter. This was, no doubt, their real design, for they made their complaint to Jesus.

3-5. (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; and many other things there are, which they have received to hold, washings of cups, and

pots, and brasen vessels.) And the Pharisees and the scribes ask him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with defiled hands?

3-5. The Pharisees claimed that Moses, in addition to the law he wrote, delivered numerous instructions to the elders, and that these were handed down orally from generation to generation; but there is no foundation for such claim. Had there been such an unwritten law, it would have been so corrupted in transmitting it orally from generation to generation that it could not have been recognized in a few generations. It would certainly have been lost in those periods of idolatry through which the Jews so often passed. *The International Bible Encyclopedia* says, "The claim made by many that after the days of Ezra there existed a college of 120 called the 'Great Synagogue' cannot be proved. Entirely untenable also is the claim of the traditionally orthodox Jews, that ever since the days of Moses there had been in existence, side by side with the written law, also an oral law, with all necessary explanations and supplements to the written law." It was long forbidden to reduce this supposed oral law to writing. *The Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia* says it was not committed to writing till A.D. 550. Anyone who knows the tendency of religious people to originate new regulations and practices, and then to change, revise, and vary them as the need seems to demand can easily see how these traditions originated. It seemed necessary to go into this matter of tradition of the elders at length in order that we may understand the nature of the complaint the Pharisees made against the disciples. They did not accuse them of violating the written law, but the unwritten law. Because they regarded this unwritten law to be a sort of explanation and adaptation of the written law, they held it to be more binding than the written law.

Some Traditions Stated.—"For the Pharisees, and all Jews, except they wash their hands diligently, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders; and when they come from the market-place, except they bathe themselves, they eat not; and many other things there are, which they have received to hold, wash-

ings of cups, and pots, and brasen vessels." The market place was the gathering place for all sorts of people. Some of them would be considered ceremonially unclean, and the person who touched a person would be considered unclean. On the chance that he might have touched such a person or some thing, the Pharisee bathed on coming from the market place; he would not eat till he had bathed. The washing of pots and other cooking utensils was a matter of religion with him. To do all these things as a matter of cleanliness is necessary, but to do them as a religious ceremony, and to require others to do them on the same grounds, is to bind where God has not bound. It is to put human authority on an equality with God's authority, and that is to bring God's authority down on an equality with man's. But people are not so different today. They develop certain customs that become sacred to them. Such people, like the Pharisees, think it strange that any one claiming to be religious will disregard their customs. The Pharisees regarded people as sinners who disregarded their traditions.

6, 7. And he said unto them, Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoreth me with their lips, But their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men.

6, 7. Isaiah's words quoted here were spoken to the people of his day. They are words addressed to a class, and not to certain individuals. It was general rather than specific, and applies to any class of people who are like those Pharisees. They pretended to be very devoted to God, but were really devoted to their own affairs and their traditions. They were actors, playing a part; they were pretending to be what they were not. The word translated hypocrite is the word the Greeks applied to an actor on the stage. He acted a part; he was not the person he assumed to be. It is easy to see how the word would come to apply to a person who pretended to be a righteous man when he was not. He wears a pious mask to hide his real character. And these "pious" hypocrites had almost the whole Jewish nation fooled into believing them to be what they pretended to

be. How shocked they and their people must have been when Jesus called them hypocrites. They flattered God, wore pious faces, and served the devil. Men must honor God with their lips, but lip service for God and heart service for the devil make one a hypocrite. "But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men." Vain worship is empty worship. Men must worship God, but some worship is vain, sinful. "They that worship him must worship in spirit and truth." The spirit, the heart, must be in the worship, or it is not sincere; and it must be done in truth, according to the truth. Paul said, "Whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of his Son." (Rom. 1: 9.) Again, "But they flattered him with their mouth, and lied unto him with their tongue. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they faithful in his covenant." (Psalms 78: 36, 37.) It is right to praise God; but to speak words of praise when the heart is not right is to lie to him. Through Ezekiel God said, "Her priests have done violence to my law, and have profaned my holy things." How had they done so? He immediately explained: "They have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they caused men to discern between the clean and the unclean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them." (Ezek. 22:26.) The clean things, the holy things, were things that God had ordained; the common and unclean things were their own inventions and devices. By mixing man's inventions with God's requirements they profaned, or made common, God's holy things, and also did violence to God's law, for his law prohibited that very thing. (Deut. 12:32.) And when people today bring into the worship of God things not authorized such as burning incense, instrumental music, and such profane things, they profane God's holy worship, and do violence to God's law. To thus legislate for God is to bring God down on a level with man; it is to profane God.

8-13. Ye leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men. And he said unto them, Full well do ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your tradition. For Moses said, Honor thy father and thy mother; and, He that speaketh evil of father or mother, let him die the death: but ye say,

If a man shall say to his father or his mother, That wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is Corban, that is to say, Given to God; ye no longer suffer him to do aught for his father or his mother; making void the word of God by your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things ye do.

8-13. "Ye leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men." That is the natural and inevitable result. No one can serve two masters. If he begins to follow the doctrines of men, he will gradually come to hold to them more tenaciously than to the commandments of God. "Fanaticism is easily awakened in the defense of tradition. In the church of Rome the ecclesiastical regulations, e.g., the Fasts and Feasts, or celibacy of the clergy and the monastic vows, are enforced with greater severity than the original requirements of the gospel. The Roman Church, accepting the principle of tradition, has made the precepts of men into doctrines to such a degree that the New Testament is rightly regarded as a danger to the laity. A passage like the one before us is subversive to Roman teaching."—R. F. Horton, as quoted in *Tarbell's Teacher's Guide*. As respects custom and tradition, none of us are free from danger. Not so long ago many religionists held fanatical devotion to the man-invented mourner's bench system of conversion, and at the same time spoke contemptuously of God's command to be baptized. A certain congregation had the custom of walking forward and putting their contributions in a hat on the table. When the congregation grew larger, to preserve order and prevent confusion, baskets were passed. A brother had become so wedded to the old custom, or tradition, that he quit the Lord's day worship. Rather than surrender a man-made custom, he violated all the requirements concerning the Lord's day worship. It happened to him as Jesus said: "Full well do ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your tradition." This was a severe indictment, and it behooves us to look with care lest we also fall under the same condemnation.

Moses had commanded all children to honor their fathers and mothers; the penalty for failure to do so was death. (Ex.

20:12; 21:17; Lev. 20:9.) To honor father and mother is to render due obedience, to respect them, and to provide for their needs in their days of helplessness. This is also commanded in the New Testament: "Children obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right." It is difficult these days to teach children this lesson, and it requires strength of character on the part of children to render obedience; for to be submissive to parents is not considered "the thing" these days. In a way entirely different from that of the Pharisees we are today making void this commandment of God. "But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or his mother, That wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is Corban, that is to say, Given to God; ye no longer suffer him to do aught for his father or his mother; making void the word of God by your tradition, which ye have delivered." "Corban, which meant originally a sacrifice or gift to God, was used in the New Testament times as a mere word of vowing, without implying that the thing vowed would actually be given to God. Thus a man would say 'Corban to me is wine for such a time,' meaning that he took a vow to abstain from wine. Or a man would say to a friend, 'Corban to me for such a time is whatsoever I might be profited by thee,' meaning that for such a time he vowed he would receive neither hospitality nor any other benefit from his friend. Similarly, if a son said to his father or mother, 'Corban is whatsoever thou mightest have been profited by me,' he took a vow not to assist his father or mother in any way, however much they might require it. A vow of this kind was held by the scribes to excuse a man from the duty of supporting his parents, and thus by their tradition they made void the word of God."—*One Volume Commentary*. But this was only one example of the tradition. Jesus adds, "And many such like things ye do."

LESSON LINKS

After Jesus showed the scribes and Pharisees how by their traditions they made void the commandments of God he said, "Hear me all of you, and understand: there is nothing from

without the man, that going into him can defile him; but the things that proceed out of the man are those that defile the man." (Verses 14,15.) Apart from the multitude Jesus explains to his disciples. Nothing that a man eats can defile, for what he eats does not enter the heart. The heart is the source of evil deeds; "for from within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetings, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness: all these evil things proceed from within, and defile the man." (Verses 20-23.)

24. And from thence he arose, and went away into the borders of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered into a house, and would have no man know it; and he could not be hid.

24. In Galilee Jesus was kept so busy healing the sick and afflicted that he had little, if any, time to teach and develop his disciples. Besides this, the Pharisees were becoming so active and bitter in their opposition to him that it might be confusing and discouraging to his disciples. Matthew says Jesus withdrew into the parts of Tyre and Sidon. This language shows that he was seeking to get away from the conditions that prevailed in Galilee. In the Gentile territory of Tyre and Sidon he would not be followed by such crowds; neither would the scribes and Pharisees follow him into Gentile territory. "And he entered into a house, and would have no man know it." This language shows plainly that he was seeking quietness. In the excitement in Galilee he could find no opportunity for rest; neither could his disciples find time for serious thinking. But even here "he could not be hid." He had not come here to teach the multitudes nor to heal the sick. It seems that he had not entered the city of Tyre, but had stopped outside in some quiet place.

25-30. But straightway a woman, whose little daughter had an unclean spirit, having heard of him, came and fell down at his feet. Now the woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by race. And she besought him that he would cast forth the demon out of her daughter. And he said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs. But she answered and saith unto him, Yea, Lord; even the dogs

under the table eat of the children's crumbs. And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the demon is gone out of thy daughter. And she went away unto her house, and found the child laid upon the bed, and the demon gone out.

25-30. Soon after Jesus began his public ministry, "the report of him went forth into all Syria," as we learn from Matt. 4:24. Many had brought their sick people from that country to Jesus to be healed as he taught and healed the sick and afflicted people in Galilee. Likely, some of those who had seen him in Galilee recognized him and started the report that he was in their midst. Here, as elsewhere, the people who were in distress would not let him rest. "But straightway a woman, whose little daughter had an unclean spirit, having heard of him, came and fell down at his feet." She had heard of the wonderful works Jesus had performed in the country of the Jews; otherwise she would not have known that he could do anything for her afflicted daughter. "Now the woman was a Greek, a Syrophoenician by race." She lived in that part of Syria which was called "Phoenicia." But she evidently spoke the Greek language. After the conquest of Alexander the Great, the Jews distinguished the people politically as Jews and Greeks. The Greek language had become a sort of universal language. This woman was greatly distressed for her afflicted child. According to Matthew she said, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon." It is remarkable that this Gentile woman was well enough acquainted with the Old Testament promises and the works and claims of Jesus to identify him as the Son of David. She knew the promise of God made to David and believed that Jesus was the promised Son of David. She might have learned of the promises and the prophecies from the Jews or she might have had a copy of the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament. There was both hope and despair in the woman's plea. "Have mercy on me, . . . my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon." There is a certain amount of natural and justifiable selfishness in that plea. The condition of her daughter was heart-rending—an extreme case of demon possession. The mother's own suffering was intense

because of the love she had for her suffering daughter; but the relief she so much desired—the relief from her own heart suffering—could be obtained only by the healing of her daughter. Her plea amounted to this: Lift this intolerable burden from my heart by curing my daughter. "But he answered her not a word," as Matthew reports. He acted as if this extreme case of distress and suffering concerned him not at all. Naturally the woman felt that she had been rudely treated. Many would have given up, and gone away in despair, but not she. From Matthew's report it seems that she then went to the disciples to get them to intercede for her, for he reports that the disciples came to Jesus and besought him to send her away, "for she crieth after us." The language shows that she was persistent in her pleadings with them. Evidently they asked him to grant her request so as to get rid of her. They saw no other way to escape her pleadings. To them Jesus said, "I was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." As the next verse says she came to him, it is evident that she had held back for a time to see what effect the plea of the disciples might have. She had made her plea to Jesus before she went to the disciples. Now she comes again to Jesus, and worshiping him, renewed her plea: "Lord, help me." Again she pleads for herself, but the relief she sought for herself could be obtained only by the recovery of her daughter. But Jesus answered her, "Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." She knew to whom he referred. She was not surprised that a Jew should refer to the Jews as "the children" and to Gentiles as dogs, but she was too greatly distressed and too much in earnest to become offended at his seeming rudeness. She recognized that it was not right to take the children's bread and give it to the dogs; the dogs could eat the crumbs. But she would not give up; even these abrupt words of Jesus gave her grounds for another appeal. Recognizing the words of Jesus as appropriate, she replied, "Yea, Lord: even the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." She took Jesus at his word, and, on his words, based her plea. It would be hard to find a keener reply than she

made. "For this saying go thy way; the demon is gone out of thy daughter," said Jesus. Matthew reports these additional words of Jesus: O woman, great is thy faith." It is surprising that a woman of a heathen people should have such faith. Concerning the faith of another foreigner Jesus said, "I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel." (Matt. 8:10.) The faith of the woman was seen in her persistent efforts to secure the blessings she sought. "And she went away unto her house, and found the child laid upon the bed, and the demon gone out." We would expect a person like her to become a substantial member of the church when the full gospel was later preached in her section of the country.

31. And again he went out from the borders of Tyre, and came through Sidon unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the borders of Decapolis.

31. Though Jesus was near Tyre the record does not show that he went into that city at all. He went on farther north, and passed through Sidon before he turned east. So far as the records inform us, Sidon was the most northerly point visited by Jesus during his entire ministry. A glance at the map will show that Sidon is considerably farther north than is Caesarea Philippi. From Sidon Jesus traveled in a southeastward direction, and went into the regions east of the Sea of Galilee, the district called Decapolis. The name means "ten cities." As it is said that Jesus passed "through the midst of the borders of Decapolis," before reaching the Sea of Galilee, it must be that he came to the sea near its southern end. On this entire journey, so far as the records inform us, Jesus performed only the one miracle before coming into Decapolis.

32-35. And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to lay his hand upon him. And he took him aside from the multitude privately, and put his fingers in his ears, and he spat, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And his ears were opened, and the bond of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

32-35. Of the events of this visit to Decapolis, Matthew says, "And there came unto him great multitudes, having with

them the lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and they cast them down at his feet; and he healed them." This is the region where Jesus had cast the demons out of the fierce maniac, whose dwelling was in the tombs. On leaving the man, the evil spirits entered into a drove of hogs, which ran down the hill into the sea, and were drowned. (Mark 5:1-20.) Such manifestation of power so frightened the people that they asked Jesus to depart from them. But the man out of whom the demons were cast "went his way, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men marvelled." This man's cure and his so persistently publishing it so stirred the interest of the people that they welcomed Jesus on his return visit, and brought to him their variously afflicted people to be healed. "And they cast them down at his feet." What a silent plea for mercy! But, characteristic of the direct style of Mark, he selects a prominent one out of these many cures and tells how it was done. This man was deaf, "and had an impediment in his speech." He spoke with difficulty. He evidently had learned to speak before he became deaf, but had been so long deaf that he made himself understood with difficulty. Just why Jesus proceeded in this case as he did we know not. "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, said, "Be opened." "And his ears were opened, and the bond of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain."

36, 37. And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it. And they were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well; he maketh even the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

36, 37. On this occasion, as on many others, Jesus charged the people not to tell about the miracle. Publicity would create excitement and bring together too many people. But, when, on his former visit to this section, he cast the legion of demons out of the maniac, the people were so hostile toward him, that they needed to know more of him; hence, he told the man to go and

tell what great things the Lord had done for him. But now the more he charged the people not to tell any one, the more persistent they became in telling it. The very fact that they knew he wanted to do such things without notoriety made them the more anxious to tell it abroad. Their verdict this time was so different from what it was on his former visit: "And they were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well." Had they known who he really was, they would not have been astonished at any powers he might have shown. When we come to recognize Jesus as the Son of God, then it is easy for us to believe that he had all the powers claimed for him.

Matthew 16

LESSON LINKS

Jesus' teaching and miracles had gradually led the disciples into a deeper insight into his powers and person. During the same time the Pharisees had become more bitter in their enmity toward him, and they became more aggressive in their opposition to him. We marvel at their blind hostility; for they were expecting the Messiah, and they knew Jesus performed many miracles. Because Jesus did not come in the way they had mapped out for the Messiah to come, they rejected him. It is possible that those who are now engaged in forming and propagating definite plans for the Lord's second coming may be found, like the Pharisees, rejecting him because he did not come as they thought the scripture foretold.

13, 14. Now when Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is? And they said, some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.

13, 14. The teaching and the miracles of Jesus had given

him great fame. He had stirred the people; they could not treat him with indifference—they could not dismiss him with a shrug of the shoulders. They were either for him or against him. The hostility of the Pharisees was increasing daily. Many who were favorable to him had no just conception as to who he was or what his mission was. Apparently Jesus made this visit up into the regions of Caesarea Philippi to get away from the growing bitterness of the scribes and Pharisees, so that he could quietly teach his disciples some needed lessons. Jesus came into the world to save sinners; he could not do so unless they had the right attitude toward him. He could not be indifferent as to what people thought about him. It was especially important that his apostles had formed a fixed idea as to who he was. To lead them up to a definite confession of their faith in him, he first inquired of them, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" Every one who had seen Jesus, or even heard of him, had formed some sort of opinion about him, or else had come firmly to believe in him as the Savior of men. "Some say John the Baptist." Herod had advanced that opinion. "At that season Herod the tetrarch heard the report concerning Jesus, and said to his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore do these powers work in him." Perhaps others shared Herod's opinion. Others thought he was Elijah, or Jeremiah, or some other of the prophets. There is no proof in this, as some commentators claim, that the Jews believed in the transmigration of souls. It is singular, that, since they recognized him as a prophet, they did not believe what he said. They knew that he was no ordinary man, but they did not believe he was the Son of God. Their expressions compared with the confession of Peter, illustrates the difference between opinion and faith.

15, 16. He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

15, 16. Jesus had been training his disciples for the great work of preaching the gospel to the whole world. They could not do this if they had no higher conception of him than did the

masses of people. They must have more than a favorable opinion of him; they must have an abiding faith in him as the Christ, the Son of the living God. He would test them with a question; their answer to the question would determine their fitness for the work for which he had so patiently trained them. They had told Jesus what the people said. "But who say ye that I am?" The question called for a definite answer. Peter, always ready for immediate action, answered for all: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." That was an intelligent expression of faith, and not of mere opinion. The disciples had seen his mighty works, and had heard his matchless teaching, and knew the goodness of his character. With open hearts they had weighed the evidence, and were fully persuaded that he was the Messiah; and they gladly confessed their faith in him. The truth that Peter confessed—that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God—is the central truth of the Bible, the foundation upon which the whole structure of Christianity rests. If Peter's confession is not true, the Bible is a meaningless book, and Christianity is a huge and baseless fabrication. An affirmative answer to the question, "Do you believe with all your heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God?" means much. It is an avowal that he believes that Jesus is the Son of God in a special sense, and that he is the anointed prophet, priest, and king. He, in his own person, is the Christ. If, as some say, it takes Jesus and the church to constitute the Christ, then Jesus himself is not the Christ, and Peter's confession did not express the whole truth!

17, 18. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

17, 18. Peter had come into the possession of a truth that was a blessing to him here, and infinitely more so in the world to come. One must believe the truth Peter confessed in order to be saved. Simon Bar-Jonah means Simon son of Jonah. Flesh and blood had not revealed to Simon the great truth that he had

just confessed—God had revealed it to him. No intuition, no human reasoning, nor fleshly relationship had revealed this to Peter. While the Messiah had to come of the seed of Abraham, through the tribe of Judah, and the family of David, the mere fact that Jesus came that way did not prove him to be the Christ, for many others had the same fleshly connections. There was need that God point him out, or reveal him to be the Christ. This had been done in several ways. God said at his baptism, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." John and all present had heard that voice. God had told John how he should know when he had baptized the Christ. John told the people about this, and added, "I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." (John 1:29-34.) The mighty miracles and signs which God did by him had been further testimony that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. And that great truth is the foundation on which Jesus said he would build his church. It is the only foundation on which a church of Jesus Christ can be built. "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 3:11.) That great truth is the foundation of the church, the foundation of all our hopes. Hence the church was not built on Peter.

"I will build my church." That language shows clearly that the church had not then been built. It could not therefore have been built in the days of Abraham nor of John the Baptist. The foundation of the church had not yet been laid; for preaching Jesus as the Christ is laying the foundation, and they were not allowed to preach him as the Christ. (Matt. 16:20; 1 Cor. 3:10, 11.) The foundation was first laid in Jerusalem on Pentecost when Peter first declared that Jesus had been made both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2:33-36.) There and then the church had its beginning. Against this church the gates of Hades would not prevail—never prevail against its foundation, nor its being build, nor its continuance. To prevail at either point would be the destruction of the church, and that would never be.

soever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then charged he the disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ.

19, 20. Keys are a symbol of authority. Keys were not given to the apostles to enable them to open and to lock up something; they were the authority conferred on the apostles to bind and loose, as the language clearly shows; "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on the earth shall be loosed in heaven." There is nothing in this to resemble locking and unlocking doors. The same authority was given to all the apostles. (John 20:23.) Paul, though called later, had as much authority as any other apostle. "For I reckon that I am not a whit behind the very chiefest apostle." (2 Cor. 11:5.) And yet in and of themselves they had no authority. They were merely the mouthpieces of the Holy Spirit. (Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:4-8; 2:4.) The Holy Spirit in them did the talking—did the binding and loosing. Hence, they, as inspired apostles, spoke with authority on all matters pertaining to the whole scheme of redemption. But they were not yet prepared to announce Jesus as the Christ, nor had the time come for that announcement. "Then charged he the disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ." With their imperfect ideas as to his Messiahship, they would stir up more antagonism on the part of the Pharisees by announcing him as the Messiah, and would likely stir up the Roman authorities. If they announced him as about to set up such a kingdom as the Jews expected, the Roman authorities would consider him guilty of treason. Hence the disciples must hold their peace till they were infallibly guided by the Holy Spirit.

21. From that time began Jesus to show unto his disciples, that he must go up unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up.

21. "From that time began Jesus to show unto his disciples, that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed." The Jewish

high court was made up from these classes. Of them he would suffer many things besides his death. He must suffer the lies and slanders of his enemies, the betrayal of Judas, the agonies of Gethsemane, the cowardice of his apostles, and the taunts and cruelties connected with his trial. Previous to this Jesus had given obscure intimations of his coming death, but no one understood what he meant. Now he tells them plainly of his approaching death, and that it would be by the decree of the authorities in Jerusalem. "And the third day be raised up." In reporting this same statement Mark uses these words: "And after three days rise again." In the Jewish method of counting time, "after three days" and "on the third day" meant the same. "After three days" meant after three days had come, not after three days had passed. (1 Kings 12:5, 12.)

22, 23. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art a stumbling block unto me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men.

22, 23. It seems that the disciples, with the other Jews, did not believe the Messiah would be killed, but that he would abide forever. (John 12:32-34.) None of them had understood the prophecies concerning him. Peter, believing him to be the Messiah, and believing the Messiah would not be killed, rebuked Jesus, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee." This shows that Peter's knowledge of the person, plans, and purposes of Jesus was still imperfect. Had he fully grasped the significance of the confession he had just made, he would have known that nothing would happen to Jesus save as God had planned it, and anything Jesus foretold would certainly come to pass.

"Get thee behind me, Satan." The word translated "Satan" means "accuser," "slanderer," or "adversary." For these reasons the name is applied to the devil, but in this place it likely means only that Peter was an adversary—he was putting himself in the way of the plans of Jesus. In opposing what Jesus said must come to pass in Jerusalem, he was a stumbling

block, a hindrance, to Jesus. "For thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." Peter's mind still ran along worldly lines. He thought the Messiah would triumph over his enemies without the suffering of death, and establish a great world empire. He minded the things of men—had in mind a kingdom like men have. In spite of that rebuke some today have the idea Peter had about the kingdom.

24, 25. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it.

24, 25. "If any man would come after me." Hence, there must be first a willingness—a desire to follow Christ. "Let him deny himself." From Mark we learn that Jesus was talking to the multitude as well as to his disciples. To deny one's self means more than to give up one's life of ease and comfort and self-indulgence. He must give up his own ways, his own notion of how to live, and make a complete surrender of himself to the Lord. Men like to have their own way about things, and herein is perhaps the hardest part of self-denial. "And take up his cross." It is said that the condemned man had to carry his own cross to the place of execution, suffering the taunts and jeers of the people along the way. The most hardened criminal must have felt the sting of it. So the cross is a symbol, not only of death, but of shame and reproach. The world persecutes the Christian and scoffs at him—that cross he must bear; he must not bear it grudgingly and rebelliously, nor even in despair, as did the condemned criminal, but voluntarily, willingly, even though it leads to death. "And follow me." Jesus left us an example to follow. (1 Pet. 2:21.) And we must follow him in his teaching also. "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked." (1 John 2:6.) In suffering for us, Jesus left us an example. He is the master, the leader; we must follow where he leads. If we draw back in order to save our life here, we will lose eternal life in the world to come. We find eternal life by losing this life for the sake of Jesus.

Matthew 17

LESSON LINKS

The announcement of his coming suffering and death naturally had a depressing effect on the Lord's disciples. It may be that he made the following statement to relieve somewhat the feeling of depression: "Verily I say unto you, There are some of them that stand here, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." He would assure them that his death would not interfere with the coming of his kingdom, and that it would come during the lifetime of some who were standing there. The language clearly implies that some of those present would die before the coming of Christ in his kingdom. Jesus was indefinite as to the time he would come in his kingdom, but he could not have referred to some date yet in the future, for all those then present have long since died. Nor could he have referred, as some claim, to the transfiguration, then only six days in the future. We have no record that any present died during those six days. Besides in his transfiguration he did not come in his kingdom. He did not come—he was already present; nor was there any sign of his kingdom. Not all the comings of the Lord refer to a real personal coming. When the Lord brings about some great event, it is said that he comes at such times. Besides, where Matthew has "see the Son of man coming in his kingdom," Mark has "see the kingdom of God come with power." Both phrases mean the same thing. The kingdom of God came with power on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus. On that occasion he was exalted at God's right hand and made both Lord and Christ.

1, 2. And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart: and he was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as the light.

1, 2. "And after six days"—six days after the events of our last lesson. Luke says it was about eight days. Luke counted the day of the events of the last lesson and the day of the

transfiguration; Matthew and Mark counted the six intervening days. There is therefore no lack of harmony between the writers. "Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John"—the same three whom he took with him into the room when he raised the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:35-43), and whom he later selected to be near him as he prayed in the garden of Gethsemane. (Matt. 26:36, 37.) Jesus was not showing mere favoritism in selecting these three on special occasions; he had his reasons for doing so. Perhaps these three were prepared for lessons and experiences for which the others were not prepared; and it might be that he could depend more fully on them to maintain the necessary secrecy till the proper time to divulge what they had seen and heard. And in every group of men there are some who are better fitted for leadership than are the others. After events showed these three to be such men. Jesus took these three up into a high mountain apart by themselves. On some tableland on the slopes of Mount Hermon they would have all the privacy necessary to the occasion. Jesus wanted no one to break in on the privacy of that occasion, nor any curious eyes to see the glory of the scene. It was not to be a public show. Luke tells us that they went up into this mountain to pray. It was evidently during the night that Jesus prayed and was transfigured, for Luke mentions their coming down from the mountain the next day. Jesus prayed much; and on special occasions he spent hours in prayer. The depression that came upon his disciples in consequence of his announcing his coming suffering and death must have been, humanly speaking, disappointing to Jesus; for he had taught them patiently and done many mighty works before them, and brought them up into this region away from the turmoil and confusion created by his enemies that he might quietly so teach them as that they would be fully able to enter into his plans and purposes. They had confessed their faith in him, and yet had opposed his plans. It was disappointing. The shadow of the cross now growing darker would add to his feeling of depression and gloom. Along these lines he must have prayed, for the answer he received was such as to hearten him beyond words

to express. And while he was praying he was transfigured before them. The change that took place is described in different words by the three writers who mention the occurrence. Matthew's description: "... and his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as the light." Mark: "... and his garments became glistening, exceeding white, so as no fuller on earth can whiten them." Luke: "... the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became white and dazzling." This was a foreview of what Jesus would be in his glorified state. How awe-inspiring must have been the sight to these three witnesses as they beheld his glorified appearance. Men cannot remain composed and calm in the presence of such a heavenly demonstration. It has always been so. So awful was the scene on Mount Sinai that Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake." (Heb. 12:21.) Though John had been intimately associated with Jesus in his journeys and had seen his glorified appearance on the mount of transfiguration, yet when Jesus appeared to him on the isle of Patmos he was so overcome that he fell at the feet of Jesus as one dead.

3, 4. And behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with him. And Peter answered, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, I will make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.

3, 4. "And behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with him." Luke makes this fuller report: "And behold, there talked with him two men, who were Moses and Elijah; who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." Moses, the great law giver and leader of Israel, had long ago died, and was buried in a valley in the land of Moab. Elijah, the great prophet of Israel, had been carried to heaven without death. Now these two men stand with Jesus on the mount as the representatives of the law and the prophets. And in their talk with Jesus about his approaching death, they would not seek to turn him from his purpose as Peter had done, but would encourage him. Their appearance was real, not a mere appari-

tion as some contend. Jesus was there in his own person. Certainly he did not carry on a conversation with imaginary persons. People of unbalanced minds do have hallucinations during which they talk to imaginary people, but no thinking person will say that Jesus was suffering from such aberrations of the mind. And the scene was real to Peter, James, and John; for Luke says, "When they were fully awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him." So real and glorious was it to Peter that he said, "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, I will make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." Tabernacles, or booths, such as the Hebrews made at the feast of tabernacles, were made of boughs of trees. Peter would make three tabernacles, thus paying equal honor to Moses, Elijah and the Lord. "For he knew not what to answer; for they became sore afraid." (Mark.) In his confusion Peter knew not what to say, and so he should have said nothing. Neither Moses nor Elijah had need for a tabernacle, for they had not come to make their abode on the earth. Jesus had no need for a tabernacle in an isolated place on a lonely mountain. Having been encouraged and refreshed by his communion with these two great men, he was ready to return to the world of men in the valley, that he might with renewed courage take up his work of ministering to the needs of ignorant and suffering humanity. That Peter wanted to pay equal honors to Moses, Elijah, and his Lord shows how far he fell short of a proper appreciation of his Lord and Master.

5-9. While he was yet speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one, save Jesus only. And as they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen from the dead.

5-9. While Peter was talking, a bright cloud overshadowed them. It appears that Moses and Elijah disappeared in this

cloud; and as they disappeared, a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." The appearance of Moses and Elijah on that mount was impressive; but their disappearance as the voice said, "Hear ye him," was even more so. This must have been especially impressive to Peter, for only a few days previous to this, instead of giving heed to what Jesus said, he had rebuked him for saying it. As Moses, the great lawgiver to Israel, and the reformer-prophet Elijah had both disappeared and only Jesus remained to them the voice, "Hear ye him," was strikingly significant to them, as it should be even to us this day. Jesus is now our king, our lawgiver, the head of the church; to him, and to him alone we owe our allegiance. And we must give heed to what he says. When his disciples heard the voice, "they fell on their face, and were sore afraid." Perhaps their memory of their antagonism to what Jesus said six days before that added to their fear. It seems that professed Christians would now be afraid to try to evade, or to belittle, what Jesus has said. How careful we should be to cultivate a disposition to hear readily anything Jesus has said. But Jesus comforted his disciples by touching them, and saying, "Arise, and be not afraid." On the way down from the mountain, Jesus said, "Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen from the dead." The word vision might apply to an imaginary thing, an apparition, or to what was actually seen. It applies to the latter here, for Mark reports Jesus as charging them, "that they tell no man what things they had seen, save when the Son of man should have risen again from the dead." In after years Peter remembered the scene as very real. (2 Pet. 1:17, 18.)

Some Reflections on the Transfiguration

The record of the transfiguration is a plain historic account by three credible witnesses. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all say that Moses and Elijah appeared on the scene, and talked with Jesus; and Luke gives the subject of that conversation. Materialists, blinded by a false theory, deny that Moses and Elijah

were there in person. It does not look well for one to deny a plain historic statement.

The disciples had not realized that Jesus the Christ would supersede Moses. They, with other Jews, thought the Messiah would energize the Jewish nation, and make it a universal world empire. It does not seem that they realized the significance of the voice which said, "This is my beloved Son; hear ye him." Nor has the full meaning of that statement dawned on many professed Christians of today.

Jesus charged them to tell no man what they had seen till after his resurrection. To tell it might excite the jealousy of the other disciples, or it might sound so unreasonable as to discredit the word of the three. Even now it is best not to tell the unreasonable things you have seen; for many people believing only what is common with their own experiences, will rate you as a spinner of yarns.

Materialists claim that a person does not have a spirit that survives the death of the body, and that there is therefore no personal existence between death and the resurrection. Now, the Bible clearly states that Moses died and was buried, and also that he appeared with Elijah on the mountain and talked with Jesus. To offset this plain evidence that a man does exist between death and the resurrection, materialists put a wrong construction on the word vision in Matthew's report. Vision sometimes means "a sight divinely granted in an ecstasy or in sleep," but its first meaning is, "that which is seen, a sight, spectacle." That the word in Matthew 17:9 applies to things actually seen and not to things appearing in a dream seems, for the following considerations, not to admit of a doubt:

1. Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell emphatically the changes that occurred in the appearance of Jesus.

2. They say that Moses and Elijah were present and talked with Jesus about his coming death. These things are stated as facts, not dreams. Materialists deny the reality of these things, and would therefore have us believe that Jesus carried on a conversation with men that existed only in his imagination, as if he were mentally unbalanced.

3. The apostles were not asleep—they were not dreaming. Luke says plainly, "When they were fully awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him." To doubt that statement as a statement of fact is to doubt the inspired record.

4. While Matthew reports Jesus as saying, "Tell the vision to no man," Mark says, "He charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen." And Luke adds, "And they held their peace, and told no man in those days any of the things which they had seen."

5. Peter speaks very definitely about the reality of that mountain experience: "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." (2 Pet. 1:16-18.)

14-16. And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a man, kneeling to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is epileptic, and suffereth grievously; for oft-times he falleth into the fire, and oft-times into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.

14-16. Mark says, "And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great multitude about them, and scribes questioning with them . . . And he asked them, What question ye with them?" A certain father told the story. He had a son, an epileptic, possessed of a dumb spirit; "and wheresoever it taketh him, it dasheth him down: and he foameth, and grindeth his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast it out; and they were not able." This son had been thus afflicted from childhood. According to Mark the father said, "But if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us. And Jesus said unto him, If thou canst! All things are possible to him that believeth." If the man had known who Jesus was he would never have said, "If thou canst do anything." Previous to this time Jesus had given his disciples

power to cast out demons and to heal the sick. (Matt. 10:1-23.) But their faith had failed in this case. And no doubt the scribes were gloating- over their failure. Their doing so would be in keeping with the spirit of intense party religion.

17, 18. And Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I bear with you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked him; and the demon went out of him: and the boy was cured from that hour.

17, 18. "And Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I bear with you?" It was a severe rebuke, but deserved. Their faith had reached the heights where they confessed him to be the Christ, the Son of the living God; but when he announced that he would suffer many things in Jerusalem, and be killed, they, assuming to be wiser than he, rebuked him for such a statement. It is true that Peter did the talking, but the statement of Jesus shows that all felt as did Peter. It was the nine who were left behind that had failed to cast out the demon. They had cast out demons, but their faith was too weak to cast this one out. "Bring him hither to me." With a word Jesus cast the demon out, "and the boy was cured from that hour."

Mark 9

33-35. And they came to Capernaum: and when he was in the house he asked them, What were ye reasoning on the way? But they held their peace: for they had disputed one with another on the way, who was the greatest. And he sat down, and called the twelve; and he saith unto them, If any man would be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all.

33-35. Jesus and his disciples are back in Capernaum after their journey up into the regions of Caesarea Philippi. After all that Jesus had taught them, and after he had refused to allow the Jews to make him king, the disciples still looked for a temporal kingdom in which there would be places of honor

and power for those who were faithful to him. They had that all planned out, but they could not agree among themselves as to who would have the highest places of honor. That was one part of the program that they could not agree on. They were much like politicians of today. It is a sad fact that such ambitions for places of honor are sometimes found in the church even in these days. 'There is an appearance of discrepancy here between Matthew and Mark. Matthew represents the disciples as beginning the conversation by asking who would be the greatest, while Mark introduces it by saying that Jesus asked them, 'What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way.' We take both reports as true, and each as elliptical. As Matthew states, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' (Matt. 18:1.) They asked this with an air of innocent inquiry, giving no intimation of the dispute in which they had engaged. Jesus begins his reply by asking them, 'What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?' showing that he knew the cause and the occasion of their inquiry. Confused and conscience-smitten, 'they held their peace.' "—McGarvey. There is a difference between being counted the greatest and being the greatest. A Christian has his heart set on the wrong thing when he wants to be counted great in the eyes of men. To the Pharisees who loved to be considered great, Jesus said, "Ye are they that justify yourselves in the sight of men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God." (Luke 16:15.) To seek the glory of men utterly unfits one for being a true believer in Christ. "How can ye believe, who receive glory one of another, and the glory that cometh from the only God ye seek not?" (John 5:44.) "If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ." (Gal. 1:10.) But in reality the greatest servant is the greatest person. The disciples had not yet learned that lesson. "And he sat down, and called the twelve; and he saith unto them, If any man would be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all." Humility, and willingness to serve where ever one can be of most use, no matter how lowly the service may be, is real

greatness. The self-centered, the personal-advantage seeker, has no place in God's kingdom.

36, 37. And he took a little child, and set him in the midst of them; and taking him in his arms, he said unto them. Whosoever shall receive one of such little children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever receiveth me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

36, 37. Jesus would give these ambitious disciples of his an object lesson. He would give them an example of what they at heart should be. "And he took a little child, and set him in the midst of them." Matthew says he called to him a little child. The child was old enough to come at his bidding. Luke says he set the child by his side. He then put his arms around the child. According to Matthew Jesus first said, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same shall be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 18:3, 4.) We are not to be like children in everything. Paul says, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child: now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things." (1 Cor. 13:11.) "Brethren, be not children in mind: yet in malice be ye babes, but in minds be ye men." (1 Cor. 14:20.) Children are free from worldly ambition. This is the point Jesus was emphasizing, for that was the lesson the apostles needed at that time. To be great in the sight of God one must be humble. The apostles' ambition for places of honor unfitted them for the position they desired. Not only is humility essential to useful service in the kingdom of heaven, it is an essential qualification for entrance into the kingdom. We must therefore become free from worldly ambition—free from ambition that seeks the best place at the expense of some one else; "in honor preferring one another," "doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself." (Phil. 2:3.) When several brethren are engaged in a mad scramble for the same place, as frequently occurs these days, it shows how far, how very far, we

have fallen short of the ideal set before us by our Lord and Master. In verse thirty-seven, Jesus turns his speech from the little child to the one who becomes as a little child—"one of such little children." That this is the correct idea is shown by Matthew who represents Jesus as speaking of "one of these little ones that believe on me." This language therefore shows that he was not talking about our receiving babes in the name of Christ, but such believers as become humble and unworldly like little children. To receive the humblest believer in Christ is to receive Christ. "And whosoever receiveth me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me." The proud heart that will not receive the lowliest of disciples of Christ, by that refusal rejects Christ. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me." (Matt. 25:40.) "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me." (Matt. 25:45.) Yet the average Christian shows a preference for the person who makes a pretense of being important. That was true even in the days of the apostles. (See James 2:1-4.)

38-41. John said unto him, Teacher, we saw one casting out demons in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followed not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man who shall do a mighty work in my name, and be able quickly to speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is for us. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink, because ye are Christ's, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

38-41. The apostles would not feel very comfortable over the rebuke Jesus had given them. Their learning that he knew of their dispute would be mortifying. It seems that John sought to relieve the situation somewhat by diverting attention to another person. It would also relieve their feelings somewhat, if they could get Jesus to join them in criticizing some one who was not present. That is human nature. John and some of the others had met up with a man who had not pleased them. "Teacher, we saw one casting out demons in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followed not us." This man was not of another religion. He was performing his works in the name of Christ. The fact that he could cast out demons should have

been proof to John and the others that God was with him. They should have concluded, that, inasmuch as God was pleased with him, they should bid him Godspeed; but they bade him cease his casting out demons, because he would not follow them. That is, he would not join the group of personal followers of Christ, and go along with them in their journeys. And John reported that as an offense. He thought the man should be stopped. But instead of gaining any relief for their own feelings by directing criticism toward one not present, John's effort brought upon them another rebuke. "Forbid him not." The man was a follower of Christ, even if he did not choose to be a member of the group that companied with Jesus. He could not do mighty works in the name of Christ and speak lightly of him. He respected the authority of Christ, else he could have done nothing in his name. At some time Jesus had, unknown to the other disciples, given this man power to cast out demons. He certainly could not have cast them out had not such powers been given him. The man was not against Jesus nor his disciples. So far as the record shows, his teachings and his work were exactly like that performed by the twelve when Jesus sent them out on their first mission. He was therefore on their side. The apostles therefore should not have made any attempt to discourage him. He was evidently a true disciple of Christ, and doing what he could in the name of Christ to relieve the suffering. The incident had nothing to do with the question as to whether a Christian should encourage those who are seeking to build up parties in religion, and who belittle the authority of Christ by teaching their own doctrines, and by speaking lightly of some of the commands of Christ. The Bible is clear on what should be our attitude toward those who are not true to the Lord and his teaching. Especially are we to guard against those who build up parties in religion. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned; and turn away from them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly; and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent." (Rom. 16:17.)

No one should place a construction of Jesus' reply to John, that would contradict Paul's language to the Roman brethren. In forbidding the man to cast out demons because he would not go with them, John and the others were acting without authority.

Matthew 18

LESSON LINKS

The church was first conceived in the mind of God: "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Eph. 3:10, 11.) As it originated in the eternal purpose of God, it is neither the result of an afterthought, nor is it a makeshift to tide over with till the thing planned can be inaugurated. The church itself is that which was planned. To make known the manifold wisdom of God through the church includes more than preaching the gospel; that is only one part of the way God's wisdom is made known through the church. The wisdom of the inventor and builder of a machine is seen in the practical operation of his machine—is seen in its doing efficiently the work it was designed to do. It is true that a bunglesome operator may make poor use of a fine machine, or some enemy may injure it so that it cannot do good work; but such things are no reflection on the inventor and maker of the machine. God knew exactly what the human family needed, and his wisdom enabled him to give us a perfect machine to accomplish his purpose. But that machine falls into the hands of bunglesome operators, and therefore it does not do its best work; sometimes designing men wreck it. Herein is the folly of man seen. But the church is perfect, and perfectly adapted to the work God designed for it. The church grew out of God's eternal purpose, and is the

product of his love, wisdom, and power. It is impossible to think that anything better could have been made; and one who reveres God—his goodness, power, and wisdom—will not even think that something better could have been put into operation. In giving himself up for the church, Christ designed that it be "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." In view of all these things, let us speak of the church with respect—even reverence.

15-17. And if thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established. And if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the church: and if he refuse to hear the church also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican.

15-17. "If thy brother sin against thee." Of course, when one brother sins against another, he also sins against God; but some sins against God are not personal wrongs against a fellow Christian. The directions here concern sins against a brother, and not sins in general. Jesus here points out what the offended brother should do in case of a personal offense against him. If the offending brother does not repent, he is lost. The offended brother should go to him alone, and show him his fault; he should do this to save the sinning brother. Wisdom should be exercised in the manner and the place of approach; the effort may be made in such a way as to be a real insult. But if you do your best to show the offender his fault, and he refuses to hear you, then take one or two others, and go to him again. The one or two may be able to convince the offender of his wrongs; if not they will be available as witnesses against the offender. "And if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the church." McGarvey says: "Only when both of the preceding steps shall have been taken and found ineffectual, is the sin to be reported to the church. Then, as implied in the words, 'if he shall neglect to hear the church,' the church is to speak. But the church can speak only through her spokesmen, her officials appointed for the purpose; consequently the actions of the church's discipli-

nary officers is here implied. This rule of procedure is given only for cases of personal offence, where one individual has sinned against another. We are to learn from other portions of the New Testament how to deal with offences of other kinds." "If he refuse to hear the church also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican." Cease to think of him as being in fellowship with you. This, of course, implies that he is to be cut off from the fellowship of the church.

LESSON LINKS

The present lesson grew out of some teaching Jesus had just delivered to his disciples. The student should read the first twenty verses of this chapter.

21. Then came Peter, and said to him, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times?

21. In the lesson concerning what an offended brother is to do when he is sinned against, it is clearly implied that, if the offended brother can induce the other to make amends, he is to forgive the offender. Peter so understood the matter; hence the question: "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times?" Peter seems to have thought that there should be a limit to the number of times this forgiveness should be given. It is stated that the Jewish rabbins held that forgiveness must be extended to one who confessed his fault, but this was limited to three repetitions of the offence. Peter had an idea that the Savior's rule would insist on still greater forbearance.

22. Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven.

22. Seventy times seven is four hundred ninety. It is not likely that one person would sin so many times against a brother. The language shows that the forgiveness is to be repeated times without limit. Luke reports Jesus as saying, "Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he sin against thee seven times

in the day, and seven times turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." (Luke 17:3, 4.) Some sins are strictly between a man and his maker; we cannot forgive such sins—only God can do that. We can forgive personal offences, if the offender repents. There can be no forgiveness without repentance. To forgive is to regard the person as free from guilt, and that cannot be done so long as the person is at heart guilty. God does not forgive the sinner unless he repents; and he does not require us to try to be better and more merciful than he is. But verses 15-17 show us that we are to seek to bring the offender to repentance. In so doing we are imitating God, for he seeks to bring all sinners to repentance, so that he can forgive them. We may overlook many things; but when the offence is of such a nature that we cannot ignore it, there can be no forgiveness without repentance. And if the offending party cannot be induced to repent, "let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican."

23-25. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, who would make a reckoning with his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, that owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not wherewith to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

23-25. In the parable the king is an absolute monarch; he has power to do what he will with his servants. He had a day of reckoning with his servants. These servants must have been the men he had placed in charge of the various provinces of the government; for a mere household servant would not become indebted to his lord to the extent of many millions of dollars. Among these servants was one that had to be brought before the king; he did not come willingly, for he owed the king a sum equal to many millions of dollars. If this servant had charge of a division of the kingdom, he might collect and squander taxes to that amount. But it was gone now—he had nothing with which to pay. The parable represents the relation of the sinner to God. God is an absolute monarch; the debtor of the parable represents the helplessness of the sinner—he has nothing with which to satisfy the demands of divine justice. The king's

command that the debtor and his family be sold and payment to be made is in harmony with the custom of the times. Even now a man's family must frequently suffer for his sins.

26, 27. The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And the lord of that servant, being moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

26, 27. The debtor servant's case seemed to be hopeless. He felt helpless and humble. According to the customs of that time and country, he fell down before the king to make his plea for mercy. He knew that the king could do with him as he pleased. It was not a time for him to speak idly. He must have really felt that he could in time pay back all he owed the king, though it is not likely that he could have done so. His earnest plea touched the heart of the king. "And the lord of the servant, being moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt." If the Lord were not full of compassion toward the helpless sinner, if he did not extend mercy to the condemned sinner, there would be no hope for any of us; but "the Lord is full of pity, and merciful." (James 5:11.)

28-30. But that servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, who owed him a hundred shillings: and he laid hold on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay what thou owest. So his fellow-servant fell down and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay that which was due.

28-30. Many people are prone to be exacting of others, even after they have needed and obtained mercy. The servant of this parable is a fair example of this human weakness. A fellow servant owed him an amount equal to seventeen dollars. He hunted up this fellow servant and took him by the throat—throttled him—saying, "Pay what thou owest." This fellow servant made the same plea which he himself had made to the king, but he who had obtained so much mercy now showed no mercy. It seems that one who knew so well what it was to need mercy would have gladly showed mercy, but he was cold-hearted and exacting. He cast the debtor into prison, "till he

should pay that which was due." And that act looked like spite work, for what chance did the man have in prison to earn money with which to pay a debt? It is evident that it gave this unmerciful man more satisfaction to punish a fellow servant than to collect a debt.

31-34. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were exceedingly sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord called him unto him, and saith to him, Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou besoughtest me: shouldest not thou also have had mercy on thy fellow-servant, even as I had mercy on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due.

31-34. Though men are not always as fair and square in their dealings with others as they should be, they dislike to see a grasping scoundrel oppress another man. When the other servants of the king saw what this man had done, "they were exceedingly sorry." Doubtless they all knew that the king had showed him great mercy in forgiving him of a vast debt. They were so stirred up about the matter that they told the king what had been done. The wrath of the king was stirred up. He called his servant to him, and called him a wicked servant. He then gave expression to a sentiment, or principle, that should influence all men in their dealings with their fellow men: "Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou besoughtest me: shouldest not thou also have had mercy on thy fellow-servant, even as I had mercy on thee?" This servant was acting in his legal rights, and yet he was wicked in so doing—having received great mercy, he was not willing to show mercy to others. And as he had sown, so would he reap. "And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due." This amounted to a life sentence, for in the hands of the tormentors he would never be able to pay. The student should not lose sight of the fact that Jesus gave this lesson to show us how necessary it is that we forgive any penitent brother who has sinned against us.

35. So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.

35. In this instance Jesus makes his own application of the parable. On this verse and the lesson of the parable, McGarvey has this to say: "The comparison has reference only to the last act of the king, that of delivering the unforgiving servant to the tormentors. The heavenly Father will so deliver all his disciples who do not from their hearts forgive their offending brethren. This is the chief lesson of the parable; but in order to reach this lesson the Savior had depicted to his hearers, by the conduct of the king and the unforgiving servant, God's forbearance toward us and our severity toward one another. Our sins against God, for which we can make no reparation, and which are freely forgiven us, are like the ten thousand talents, while sins committed against us, which we are so unwilling to forgive, are like the fifteen dollars. This is a truthful representation of human habits, and at the same time a cutting satire on Peter's idea of forgiveness."

We are not to infer, from the fact that the king retracted the forgiveness first granted, that God will do so with us. Our sins, once forgiven, are remembered no more. (Heb. 8:12.) This, then, is not the significant part of the parable, but it is introduced because it is what a heathen king under such circumstances would be likely to do, and Jesus paints the picture true to life. It is nevertheless true that if a man once delivered from sin turn back to it again, his condition is made worse than if his former sins had not been forgiven. (2 Pet. 20-22.) The man who has been forgiven becomes a sinner again when he refuses to forgive another. "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matt. 6:15.) "For judgment is without mercy to him that hath showed no mercy: mercy glorieth against judgment." (James 2:13.) "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." (Matt. 5:7.)

Some Reflections

Much is said about the duty of forgiveness, and rightly so; but there is much to be said about the person who needs forgiveness. Since it is your duty to forgive a brother, it is his

duty to make it as easy as possible for you to forgive him.

Few people are willing, or know how to make an apology, or how to ask to be forgiven. They know they have done a brother wrong, but are too stubborn to acknowledge it and to ask for forgiveness. And frequently a supposed apology is more of an effort at self-justification than an apology.

And sometimes when a person makes an humble apology, and does all he can to right a wrong, the offended person professes to forgive, but does it in such a way as to show that he does not really forgive. Such pretended forgiveness is an insult to God and man. Were it not so serious, a pretended apology followed by a pretended forgiveness would be comical.

It is not well to cultivate a sensitive spirit. Try to look on the favorable side of what the other person says or does. Perhaps the other person had no thought of injuring you or hurting your feelings. To put the worst construction on everything other people do and say is to be at the boiling point all the time. A big hearted person does not see evil in everything other people say and do.

Luke 9

LESSON LINKS

"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, and sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he were going to Jerusalem." (Luke 9:51-53.) If these verses are in their chronological order, then he made another short visit to Galilee. (Luke 13:22; 17:11.) Just why he departed from his usual custom, and sent messengers ahead to prepare for lodging in Samaria, a country not friendly to the

Jews, we are not told. The messengers he sent were evidently James and John. Note—B. W. Johnson: "When the days were well-nigh come." The time of his suffering was not far away. He was about to leave Galilee. "He stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." Knowing what he should suffer there. Just when this was we are not told.

53-56. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he were going to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we bid fire to come down from heaven, and consume them? But he turned, and rebuked them. And they went to another village.

53-56. The village to which these disciples first went would not receive Jesus, "because his face was as though he were going to Jerusalem." This so enraged James and John that they said to Jesus, "Lord, wilt thou that we bid fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?" But James and John were too harsh in their judgment upon these Samaritans. The Samaritans did not know that Jesus was the Messiah; to them he was a Jew on his way up to Jerusalem to worship. There was so much religious antagonism between the Samaritans and the Jews that the fact that he was on his way to Jerusalem to one of the feasts of the Jews stirred them up against him all the more. On account of this antagonism, the Galilean Jews, in going to Jerusalem to the feasts, passed down the east side of the Jordan. The Jews regarded themselves as superior to the Samaritans. For an inferior group of people to refuse to receive the Lord was more than James and John could tolerate. Religious prejudice, if allowed to grow into fanaticism, causes bitter and unmerciful persecutions. The sort of fanaticism manifested by James and John caused, in later years, many devout people to be tortured to death. And it was all done professedly in the name of him who rebuked James and John for manifesting such a spirit. Jesus went with his disciples to another village. The town which would not receive Jesus thus had cheated themselves out of the best thing that had ever come their way. But even so, they were not so blameworthy as people today who will not receive Jesus, for they did not know

that he was the Messiah.

57, 58. And as they went on the way, a certain man said unto him, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

57, 58. "As they went on the way, a certain man said unto him, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." He meant of course to attach himself to the company that traveled with Jesus. Jesus did not deny him, but gave him to understand that he had no earthly home in which to offer him lodging. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." He was poor, yet possessed all things. The same thing is true of the poor Christian who is faithful. Paul spoke of himself "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." (2 Cor. 6:10.) What was true of Paul may be true of any faithful child of God.

59, 60. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But he said unto him. Leave the dead to bury their own dead: but go thou and publish abroad the kingdom of God.

59, 60. This man to whom the Lord said, "Follow me," replied, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." From Matthew 8:21, 22, we learn that this man was a disciple. He was therefore already a follower of the teaching of Jesus; hence, Jesus asked him to join them in their travels. He asked that he be allowed first to bury his father. Jesus then made what seems to many to be a strange demand: "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but go thou and publish abroad the kingdom of God." Concerning this request and the answer Jesus gave, Johnson remarks: "There are two views: (1) That his father was already dead, and that he wished only to attend the funeral and properly observe the last rites. If this view is correct, the Savior meant to teach that the duty to the Lord is higher than any earthly duty, and when one has to yield to the other it must be the lower one. (2) The view is also held that the disciple asked that he might be permitted to remain at home

until his father's death and burial, and then follow Christ. This is the more probable view." But McGarvey takes the view that the father was then dead. Concerning this man, his request, and the reply of Jesus, McGarvey has this to say: "This man was doubtless one of the twelve, and it has been conjectured, with a good degree of probability, that he was James or John, Zebedee being the father who was to be buried. Compare 20:20, where Salome is called 'the mother of Zebedee's children,' instead of Zebedee's wife, implying that Zebedee was no longer living. In the answer of Jesus there is a play on the term dead. It was a man physically dead who was to be buried; but those who were to bury him were dead in another sense, in a sense in which the disciple was not dead; that is, they were dead to Jesus. Under ordinary circumstances it is proper for a disciple not only to assist in paying respect to the dead, but to be foremost in it; but the call on this disciple came in direct conflict with the command of Jesus. The case is an extreme one, and on this account the lesson it teaches has greater emphasis. It should be noted, as partly illustrative of the case, that to assist at a funeral made a man unclean, and that not less than seven days were requisite for his purification. This would require a considerable delay on the part of the disciple. (See Num. 19:11-22.)"

61, 62. 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.

61, 62. This man, and the one just mentioned, each had something he wanted to do first. They were not seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. They would follow the Lord, but first something else. "I will follow thee, Lord; but first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house." This figure is drawn from agriculture. If a man lays off a straight row, he must keep his eye on some object straight ahead. He is not fit to plow a row for planting who persists in looking back. It is possible that these people at this man's

house would not favor his leaving all to go with Jesus; they might even be unbelievers in Jesus. In either case they would seek to persuade him to stay at home. It would be better for him not to return to those who might persuade him to remain at home. "In thousands of instances it has been shown that the convert who goes to confer with unbelieving relatives before being baptized, who go home for a final farewell before the step, are likely to be persuaded not to take it, so missionaries tell us."—B. W. Johnson.

John 8

LESSON LINKS

In chapter six Jesus affirmed that he was the bread come down from heaven. Also he said, "For I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." His repeated assertion that he came down from heaven was very puzzling to the Jews. "And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how doth he now say, I am come down out of heaven?" To this Jesus replied, "Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me." People are drawn to Christ, and yet they do the coming. The Father draws them through the power of teaching. Between the incidents of John 6 and this, two things occurred that to us would be discouraging. Because some of the disciples did not like some things Jesus said, they went back, and walked no more with him. Then his brothers showed disbelief in him, and scoffed at his claims. "Now the feast of the Jews, the feast of tabernacles, was at hand. His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart

hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may behold thy works which thou doest. For no man doeth anything in secret, and himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou doest these things, manifest thyself to the world. For even his brethren did not believe on him." For his own brethren thus to scoff at his own claims would seem to be discouraging. He said to them, "The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that its works are evil." After his brethren had gone to the feast, Jesus himself went up, "not publicly, but as it were in secret." "But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught."

12. Again therefore Jesus spake unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

12. Jesus was teaching in the temple. Apparently the scribes and Pharisees interrupted his speech by bringing before him the woman charged with adultery. When that case was disposed of, as related in verses 3-11, he resumed his speech with this startling statement: "I am the light of the world." As the sun is the source of light for our material world, so Christ is the light for our moral and spiritual world. Christ came to banish the darkness of sin and ignorance. But some, preferring darkness, reject his light. "Men loved darkness rather than light; for their works were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reproved. But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God." (John 3:19-21.) Jesus calls us out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9), and says to us "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." To follow Christ is to follow his example and his teaching. The only light we have from him comes to us through his gospel, and the gospel gives light only to those who learn it. Thick darkness enshrouds those who are ignorant of the gospel. We cannot have fellowship with Christ, or with his followers, if we walk in darkness. "If we say we have fellow-

ship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1:6, 7.) "Come ye, and let us walk in the light of Jehovah." (Isa. 2:5.) People today are groping in darkness, longing for the light, and know not where to find it. Jesus came into the world to give light to all men. (John 1:9.)

25-27. They said therefore unto him, Who art thou? Jesus said unto them. Even that which I have also spoken unto you from the beginning. I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you: howbeit he that sent me is true; and the things which I heard from him, these speak I unto the world. They perceived not that he spake to them of the Father.

25-27. The student should not fail to read verses 13-24. In these verses the controversy with the Jews continued. In them Jesus continued to assert his deity. "I am he that beareth witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me. They said therefore unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye know neither me nor my Father; if ye knew me, ye would know my Father also." "And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." Again and again Jesus asserts that God sent him; he did not come of himself. They had asked him, "Where is thy Father?" Now they ask him, "Who art thou?" They had not believed what he had said about himself; there was nothing to be gained by telling them again; so he said to them, "Even that which I have spoken unto you from the beginning." These men were not asking for information to be used for any good purpose. To give such men information is like casting pearls before swine. But there was no weakness in the manner in which Jesus spoke; he spoke with authority, and offered no apologies for what he said. "I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you: howbeit he that sent me is true; and things which I heard from him, these speak I unto the world." He assured them that all the things he said unto them were

true, for he spoke to them only the things he had heard from the Father. "For I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life eternal; the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said to me, so I speak." (John 12:49, 50.) In this assertion of his Sonship, Jesus lays down a principle that should be adopted by everyone who claims to be his follower—speak only the things that come from above.

28-30. Jesus therefore said. When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself, but as the Father taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me; he hath not left me alone; for I do always the things that are pleasing to him. As he spake these things, many believed on him.

28-30. "When ye have lifted up the Son of man" that is, when you have lifted up the Son of man on the cross. John 3:14 also refers to the crucifixion: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." Again: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself." We know that this refers to his crucifixion, for John immediately adds, "But this he said, signifying by what manner of death he should die." The multitude also understood him to refer to his coming crucifixion, for they said, "We have heard out of the law that the Christ abideth forever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up?" It is sad that, even now⁷, in sermon and song, people are exhorted to lift up Christ! Plenty of people crucify the Son of God afresh without being exhorted to do so. When they had crucified him, some of them would accept him as the Messiah; this they did from Pentecost onward. Jesus did nothing of himself; he did the Father's will, not his own. "For I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." (John 6:38.) "As the Father taught me, I speak these things." Hence in both word and deed Jesus did his Father's will. And herein he set every Christian an example, but how few professed Christians care enough about the example he set to even try to imitate him! Because the Father

had sent him, and because he always did the things that were pleasing to the Father, Jesus had the assurance that the Father was with him. The boldness and assurance with which he spoke caused many to believe on him.

31, 32. Jesus therefore said to those Jews that had believed him, If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

31, 32. By the term Jews John generally, if not always, means the officers. While the majority of the officers were bitter enemies of Christ, some of them believed on him. Whether any of the Sanhedrin but Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea believed on him we are not told. To those who believed on him, Jesus said, "If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples." To be truly a disciple of Christ requires more than just to believe; it requires that the believer abide in the word of Christ. And to abide in his word is to continue to learn and to do what he says, and not to go beyond its limits. "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9.) To these Jews Jesus points out the way to be free.

People long for freedom, but know little of what it is; neither do they know how to obtain it. An illustration or two may help us to see what real freedom is. A machine runs free when every part performs as the designer and maker intended that it should. A living thing is free when it moves unhampered in the element in which God intended it to live. A fish in the water, not in a net or otherwise confined, is free; for that is where God intended it to live. Out of its element it is not free. Contrary to speculative theology, man's natural element is righteousness. That is the element in which he was intended to live, and in which he was originally placed. He is not free anywhere else, any more than a fish is free on dry land. By sin man brings himself into bondage. "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin." (John 8:34.) While living in sin, men are under the most

servile slavery, from which there is only one way of escape. "But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness." (Rom. 6:17,18.) Obedience to the truth is the Lord's way of making us free from the bondage of sin. "If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (Verse 36.) But Jesus forces freedom on no one.

33-36. They answered unto him, We are Abraham's seed, and have never yet been in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin. And the bondservant abideth not in the house for ever: the son abideth for ever. If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

33-36. The Jews depended on their fleshly descent from Abraham. "We are Abraham's seed," said they; and with them that settled their standing with God. They counted too much on this relationship. Besides, they did not know, and would not know, that a new order was about to begin, in which descent from Abraham would count for nothing. John the Baptist had intimated this when he said, "Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." (Matt. 3:8, 9.) In view of the past history of the Jews, and their condition at the time of our lesson, it is hard to see just what they meant when they said they had never been in bondage to any man. It is true that generation were not slaves, though they were under a sort of bondage to Rome. But Jesus implied that they were then in bondage; this they resented. "How sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" But they had in mind slavery to a human master. Jesus was referring to an entirely different kind of slavery, a slavery that ruins and damns men. "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin." And this bondage to sin leads to death; hence it is also bondage unto

death. "Know ye not, that to whom ye present yourselves as servants unto obedience, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom. 6:16.) In giving his blood as the ransom price for our redemption from sin, Jesus made it possible for us to free ourselves from the reign of sin, the bondage of sin. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof." (Rom. 6:12.) This shows that in Christ a man can gain the mastery over sin. Every man is responsible for his own sins. A bond servant has no standing in the home he serves, but a child born in the home is an heir. A child of God is an heir of God, a joint heir with Christ. But Jesus can make the bond servant of sin free—free from the bondage to sin; such a one is then free indeed.

56-59. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad. The Jews therefore said unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was born, I am. They took up stones therefore to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple.

56-59. In the intervening verses the controversy with the Jews continued, and it grew rather warm and personal. In verses 37-39 Jesus makes a distinction between their being the seed of Abraham and their being the children of Abraham. "I know that ye are Abraham's seed . . . If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham." These Jews were Abraham's seed after the flesh, but in a higher sense they were not the children of Abraham. They were not at all like Abraham in character—they did not do the works of Abraham. Neither were they the children of God, though they said God was their Father. Jesus said to them, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do." Jesus did not hesitate to attack the character of his opponents when the occasion demanded it. They claimed God as their Father; Jesus said they had not known him. "But I know him; and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be like unto you, a liar." That was plain language. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad." "My day"

evidently refers to the time of Christ, including the gospel age. Here some of the commentators seem to stumble. If, as they say, Abraham saw Christ appearing to him as an angel, that does not explain how Abraham saw "my day." Either of two similar explanations are possible. Based on the promise made to Abraham, he saw Christ's day by the eye of faith; or, he saw it in a vision. But the Jews understood Jesus literally—that he was claiming to have been alive as a man during the life of Abraham. So they said, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" This gives us no idea how old Christ was; the Jews did not know his age, and granted him all the years that he as a man could possibly claim. They were merely saying that he was not old enough to have seen Abraham. He replied, "Before Abraham was born, I am." He was here affirming his deity, and that all time was present to him. With deity all time is an eternal now. The Jews understood him to be affirming his deity. To them this was blasphemy, for they regarded him as only a man. They therefore prepared to stone him, but Jesus slipped away from them.

John 9

1-3. And as he passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Rabbi, who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus answered, Neither did this man sin, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

1-3. To those present it seemed mere chance that brought Jesus into contact with the man who had been born blind, but evidently Jesus knew where the blind man was and what he himself would do. From verse eight we learn that the blind man was a beggar. It is impossible for those who have good eyes to realize how dark the world is to one who has never seen anything; neither can such a one imagine how things appear to those who can see.

The Disciples Question.—"Rabbi, who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?" They seemed to share the idea that all human sufferings come upon people because of their own sins or the sins of their parents. In many cases that is true; but the sufferings of infants, of Jesus, of the martyrs, and of irresponsible people prove that is not always true. When Adam and Eve sinned, they were driven out of the garden and away from the tree of life, and suffering has been the common lot of humanity ever since. But the disciples asked a peculiar question. One wonders how they thought the man might have sinned before he was born so as to be born blind as a result of that sin. There was, and yet is, the doctrine of the transmigration of spirits—the notion that when a man dies his spirit enters into another person at birth, and that, if the former had sinned, afflictions as punishment were visited upon the latter. The doctrine was prominent in India and Egypt. Their question does not prove that the disciples held to that doctrine; but they likely had heard of it, and desired to learn whether it were true. If that was not in their mind, they asked a loose and thoughtless question; for they certainly knew that an unborn child had not sinned so as to cause himself to be born blind. Jesus made no comment on the peculiarity of their question; but simply stated that this man's blindness had not been caused by his own sins or the sins of his parents. Jesus did not mean that his parents had never sinned, but that their sins had not caused their son's blindness. This blindness, like the ailments of many others, gave opportunity for the works of God to be made manifest. All these various cures and healings proved the benevolence of the mission of Christ and the presence of God within him.

4. 5. **We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. When I am in the world, I am the light of the world.**

4, 5. "We must work the works of him that sent me." The we includes you and me. It is not enough that we work; we must do the works of God. God's works are the works he authorizes.

God had sent Jesus to accomplish certain works. His enemies were seeking an occasion against him. The Pharisees, who forbade any healings on the Sabbath, were watching him; and if Jesus gave sight to this blind man, he would break their traditions, for that day was the Sabbath. (Verse 14.) God had sent him to do a work, and he must do it while it was called day. Day here represents life; darkness represents death. The earth life of Jesus was rapidly drawing to its end; before the end came, he must finish the work God had given him to do. This should remind us that we, too, must be busy in the Lord's work while life's short day lasts; for our work will cease when the night of death closes in on us.

"I am the light of the world." Many times this truth is set forth in the book of John. Light dispels darkness, and enables people to see how to move about. In darkness we grope our way, bump into things, and stumble over lesser objects, and may fall into the ditch or pit. The moral and spiritual life is like that. We experience many hurts, and bump into many disagreeable things, when we fail to walk in the way lighted up by Jesus, the light of the world. To those who have not this light, or refuse to walk in it, life's way is dark, and the end is even darker. Our moral and spiritual sight is usually so dimmed by ignorance, selfishness, prejudice, and other sins that we see but dimly even when we make some effort to walk in the light.

6, 7. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and anointed his eyes with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went away therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

6, 7. Every one present knew that the clay which Jesus put on the blind man's eyes had in it no power to restore sight, and yet that seemingly useless act would serve to attract attention. Sight was to be given to the blind man, not merely for his sake, but that the works of God might be made manifest. It was to prove that God was with Jesus. Anointing the eyes with clay would start talk, and focus attention on Jesus and the blind

man. The purpose of the anointing must have been a mystery to the blind man; for if Jesus told him why he was doing it, the record does not tell. Neither does it appear that Jesus told him why he was being sent to wash in the pool of Siloam. The whole performance would be as mysterious to the people as to the blind man. It was a test of the man's willingness to render unquestioning obedience. To go and wash without any promise of results was a severe test, but obediently the blind man made his way to the pool and washed, and came away seeing. He who had never seen anything now saw clearly. That a man born blind should be suddenly enabled to see was such an unheard-of thing that the miracle was bound to attract attention.

8-11. The neighbors therefore, and they that saw him aforetime, that he was a beggar, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Others said, It is he: others said, No, but he is like him. He said, I am he. They said therefore unto him. How then were thine eyes opened? He answered, The man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to Siloam, and wash: so I went away and washed, and I received sight.

8-11. When the blind man, now able to see, returned from Siloam, his neighbors and those who knew him began questioning among themselves. Some were in doubt as to whether he was the blind beggar; others were positive that it was he; others thought he was someone who was like the beggar. The blind man said, "I am he." But that brought forward another question: "How then were thine eyes opened?" In his great joy at receiving his sight, the beggar had not calmed down sufficiently to think clearly about the matter. He knew that "the man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to Siloam, and wash: so I went away and washed, and I received sight." It is interesting to note how this man's faith advanced along as he had time to think. At first he referred to Jesus as "the man that is called Jesus." When his controversy with the Jewish officials began, he said of Jesus, "He is a prophet." But even so, he did not know whether or not he was a sinner. (Verse 25.) Farther on in the controversy he said, "We know that God heareth not sinners." (Verse 31.) But a moment later he said, "If this man were not from God, he could

do nothing." After this controversy was over and Jesus had again met the man, and identified himself to the man as the Son of God, he said, "Lord, I believe." But he would not have known who Jesus was if Jesus had not told him. The miracle prepared him to listen favorably; the words of Jesus produced the faith.

18-23. The Jews therefore did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and had received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight, and asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see? His parents answered and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now seeth, we know not; or who opened his eyes, we know not: ask him; he is of age; he shall speak for himself. These things said his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man should confess him to be Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him.

18-23. The Pharisees here mentioned were those in authority in Jerusalem. Here was something occurring outside of their knowledge, and therefore without their authority; they therefore felt that they must thoroughly investigate the matter. They could get nothing satisfactory out of the man whose eyes had been opened, for he knew not where his benefactor was. He had said, "He is a prophet." But these authorities did not believe what the man had told them. They therefore called his parents before their court of inquiry to see what they could learn from them. "Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see?" "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind." They were not as candid witnesses as they should have been, for they were afraid that full testimony would jeopardize their standing. "But how he now seeth, we know not; or who opened his eyes, we know not." They would put the entire burden of testifying on their son: "Ask him; he is of age; he shall speak for himself." They knew that the Jews had agreed to put out of the synagogue any who confessed that Jesus was the Christ. The term synagogue originally applied to a group of Jews who had banded themselves together for study and mutual edification; later it applied also to the house in which the group met. In this place the synagogue was the

congregation of worshipers. Any man therefore that confessed Jesus to be the Christ would be excommunicated. These parents did not want this to happen to them; "Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him." To be turned out of the synagogue was to be classed as a sinner. These parents were determined to save themselves from such humiliation, even if such did happen to their son.

24-27. So they called a second time the man that was blind, and said unto him. (Give glory to God: we know that this man is a sinner. He therefore answered, Whether he is a sinner. I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. They said therefore unto him. What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes? He answered them, I told you even now, and ye did not hear; wherefore would ye hear it again? would ye also become his disciples?

24-27. Having failed to obtain satisfactory answers from the parents, the authorities again called the man before them for further questioning. And this was not to their credit, for they had no good purpose in so doing. They did not want anything to be done, not even the giving of sight to a man who had been born blind, without their authority. Besides, their tradition about the Sabbath had been violated. They were prosecutors, instead of being an impartial court of inquiry. Before any other questioning they pronounced judgment. "Give glory to God: we know that this man is a sinner." In his answer the man seems to have answered from their standpoint, rather than expressing any doubt as to whether or not the man who healed him was a sinner. He had already pronounced him a prophet, and continued to defend him against the charge that he was a sinner. One thing he knew; he had been born blind, but now could see. Had the authorities not been blinded by their own conceits, they would have known that a sinner could not have worked such a miracle of mercy. After pronouncing Jesus a sinner, they again inquired what his benefactor had done to him, and how he had opened his eyes. The reply showed that the man had become somewhat exasperated at their not believing what he had already said. He knew, too, that they had no good purpose in questioning him. "I told you even now, and ye did not hear," that is, they did

not believe what he had said. Why would they believe, should he tell them again? Then he put a little irony into a question he asked them, "Would ye also become his disciples? Are you really seeking to find out the truth, so that you may become his disciples?" Of course he knew that they had no such purpose.

28-30. And they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God hath spoken unto Moses: but as for this man, we know not whence he is. The man answered and said unto them, Why, herein is the marvel, that ye know not whence he is, and yet he opened mine eyes.

28-30. And here is another strange thing. A court of inquiry reviled a man whom they had called before them as a witness. His question, "Would ye also become his disciples?" had stirred them to anger; they resented both his attitude and his question. Sneeringly they said to their witness, "Thou art his disciple." They did not know how greatly they were cheating themselves, nor how much they were exalting their witness above themselves. "Thou art his disciple"—what greater position could he have occupied? They professed to be the disciples of Moses, but were they? They did not give heed to all that Moses said. On another occasion Jesus said to these Jews, "Think not that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, on whom ye have set your hope. For if ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (John 5:45-47.) Moses had said, "Jehovah thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; according to all that thou desiredst of Jehovah thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of Jehovah my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And Jehovah said unto me, They have well said that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my

name, I will require it of him." (Deut. 18:15-19.) When Jehovah raised up this prophet, the Jews did not believe him. They said, "As for this man, we know not whence he is." They could have known whence he was, had they given honest consideration to the works he was doing. "For the works which the Father hath given me to accomplish, the very works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." (John 5:36.) Nicodemus, one of the members of the Sanhedrin, had the right idea. He said to Jesus, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him." (John 3:1,2.) The man before the court had a clearer idea as to what constituted real evidence than did his judges. "The man answered and said unto them, Why, herein is the marvel, that ye know not whence he is, and yet he opened mine eyes." These men were determined to reject all evidence that Jesus was the Christ. Later, when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, "The chief priests therefore and the Pharisees gathered a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many signs.... So from that day forth they took counsel that they might put him to death." They also took counsel to put Lazarus to death, "because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus."

31-34. We know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and do his will, him he heareth. Since the world began it was never heard that any one opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing. They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.

31-34. The man made a statement of an accepted doctrine among the Jews; but his statement had no reference to what is now usually referred to as an alien sinner. He knew the man who opened his eyes was a Jew, and so did the court. A sinner among the Jews was a religious outcast, and therefore a social outcast. It should be known also that the man born blind was not an inspired man, any more than was the court when they said, "We know that this man is a sinner." But it is an injustice to the man's language to make it apply to an alien sinner. It is true that, if a servant of God turns away his ear from hearing

the Lord, he need not pray while disobedience is in his heart. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination." (Prov. 28:9.) But if an alien earnestly seeks to know and do the will of God, God is pleased with his prayers, as in the case of Cornelius. Even so, he must obey the gospel in order to be saved. "But if any man be a worshipper of God, and do his will, him he heareth." It seems that the witness had turned to be judge. Since the world began no one had ever opened the eyes of one born blind. It is strange that this fact had no weight with these blind persecutors, but there is no way to make a man believe when he is determined not to believe. These Jews should have known that no man by his own powers could do such mighty works as Jesus had been doing; and they should also have known that no man by the power of the devil would perform such miracles of mercy and benevolence as those Jesus had performed. But their own stubbornness and self-importance would not allow them to believe anything that did not fit into their own ideas of things. It is pitiful, and also disgusting, to see a man such a slave to his own feeling of importance. But these judges knew they could not meet the arguments of their witness; and so they did as evil men always do—they resorted to abuse and persecution. They wanted to say something ugly to him, though they likely did not know the exact meaning of their statement when they said, "Thou wast altogether born in sins." They did not propose to be taught by such as he, so far above him did they consider themselves. "And they cast him out." This likely means that they ousted him from synagogue membership. (See verse 22.)

35-38. Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and finding him, he said, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, And who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him? Jesus said unto him. Thou hast both seen him, and he it is that speaketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

35-38. The man whose eyes had been opened did not yet know who had done him such a favor. After the Jews had cast him out, Jesus found him and said, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" But he did not know who it was that he might

believe on him. Jesus identified himself to the man as the Son of God. "And he said, Lord, I believe." Though he saw the Lord, he did not know who he was till the Lord told him; and so his faith came by hearing. Faith comes in no other way; it can come in no other way. "How shall they believe in him whom they have not heard?" "So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." Where did people get the idea that faith is lost in sight? Jesus said to Thomas, "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed." And consider also the man of our lesson. Accept no proverb, or saying, because it is time-honored. Many of them are false.

John 10

LESSON LINKS

Jesus taught much by parables, though he did not always speak in parables. The following quotation from the Bible Encyclopedia and Scriptural Dictionary may prove both interesting and helpful:

"The parables uttered by our Savior claim pre-eminence over all others on account of their number, variety, appositeness, and beauty. Indeed it is impossible to conceive of a mode of instruction better fitted to engage the attention, interest the feelings, and impress the conscience, than that which our Lord adopted. Among its advantages may be mentioned the following:

"(1). *Secure attention*. It secured the attention of multitudes who would not have listened to truth conveyed in the form of abstract propositions.

"(2). *Familiar Method*. This mode of teaching was one with which the Jews were familiar, and for which they entertained a preference.

"(3). *Tactful*. Some truths which, if openly stated, would

have been opposed by a barrier of prejudice, were in this way insinuated, as it were, into men's minds, and secured their assent unawares.

"(4). *Hidden Truth*. The parabolic style was well adapted to conceal Christ's meaning from those who, through obstinacy and perverseness, were indisposed to receive it. This is the meaning of Isaiah in the passage quoted in Matthew 13:13. Not that the truth was ever hidden from those who sincerely sought to know it; but it was wrapped in just enough obscurity to veil it from those who 'had pleasure in unrighteousness,' and who would 'not come to the light lest their deeds should be reprov'd.' In accordance with strict justice, such were 'given up to strong delusions, that they might believe a lie.' *With the upright man thou wilt show thyself upright; with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward.*"

1. Verily, verily, I say unto you, 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.

1. In studying a parable there is danger that we may try to make it mean more than Jesus intended it to mean. Any figure of speech may be pressed too far. A parable is a comparison, an illustration, and no comparison or illustration can be made to fit in every detail. We should seek to see what lesson Jesus was intending to teach, and not try to go beyond that. In Palestine many sheep were grazed in the open country or the fields. For protection at night against animals, thieves, and robbers they were kept in a sheepfold, an uncovered inclosure in the open country, large enough to accommodate all the sheep near enough to be led into it as night approached. At the gate an armed porter stood guard to keep out all animals and all persons who had no business inside. His responsibility was great; a coward would have been worthless. He had to remain wide-awake and alert, lest robbers pounce upon him unawares, or sneak thieves or animals succeed in getting in over the walls. Thieves had no credentials to prove they had a right to any sheep inside the fold, and therefore they could not enter

in by the door. If they got any sheep, they had to climb up some other way. These thieves and robbers do not represent those who through false pretense gain fellowship in churches. Such people come apparently in the regular way, under pretense of being followers of Christ. Thieves and robbers did not come claiming to be sheep, but to take sheep from their owners. The Pharisees were the thieves and robbers, for they had just tried to take from Jesus the man whose eyes he had opened. They would have gladly taken all his followers from him, if they could have done so. There are such characters today. Any man who seeks to gain followers for his own selfish ends and purposes is a thief and a robber, for he steals men's souls, and robs them of salvation here and hereafter, by stealing them away from following the Lord.

2-6. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of 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. When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.

2-6. The shepherd entered by the door, for it was the porter's duty to open to him. The sheep knew the voice of their own shepherd, and readily answered his call, and would answer the call of no one else. Every other person was a stranger to the sheep. The shepherd had names for all his sheep, and called them by name. In that country the shepherd led his sheep. In this country the sheep are generally driven before the shepherd. Then the sheep knew the voice of the shepherd; they would not follow a stranger, even when he put on the clothing of their shepherd. They went by voice and not by appearance. The sheepfold suggests protection and security. To try to make the fold represent the church involves one in a lot of difficulties. For one thing, the sheepfold generally had within it several flocks of sheep, and each flock had its own shepherd. And it cannot be, as some think, that John the Baptist was the porter. It is certain that John the Baptist does not stand guard

at the door of the church. It is more likely that the sheepfold and the porter are mentioned to complete the picture, for it is plain that the point of emphasis is the relation of the shepherd and his sheep; the predominant idea is the shepherd's care for his sheep. We shall be led into various errors if we expect each point in a parable, or in any other figure, to have the exact counterpart in the church, or in any phase of Christianity. In this parable the followers of Christ are spoken of as sheep; but certainly the followers of Christ are not like sheep in all particulars! Jesus is our shepherd; but he does not resort to the same methods shepherds then employed. It is interesting to note how carefully the shepherds of that time looked after their sheep, and also how obediently and trustfully the sheep followed their shepherd. It illustrates the close relationship that exists between Jesus and his true followers. He is the true shepherd; he knows his own, and they follow his guidance. Our shepherd does not drive his sheep; he leads them; they hear his voice, and follow him. Any real disciple of Christ knows better than to try to go his own way; he knows that it is not in man to direct his steps. Neither will he follow the voice of the stranger; to the sheep anyone but the shepherd is a stranger. If Jesus is really your shepherd, if you really belong to him, then any other leader is to you a stranger, and you will not follow him. But this requires that we acquaint ourselves with Jesus and his teaching, so much so that when we hear any false teaching we will know that it is not true, even though we have in mind no certain passage of scripture. It is too often true that some church members are ready to accept wrong ideas from the preacher whom they greatly admire, but a true disciple follows no man. He knows whether the voice he hears is the voice of a stranger or the voice of his shepherd. But too many members are not sufficiently acquainted with the Lord to know whether they are hearing his voice or the voice of a stranger. In Palestine a man put on the shepherd's clothing to see if he could fool the sheep; but the familiar voice was lacking, and they would not follow him. Appearance did not deceive them; it is a pity that some church members are not as

wise as the simple sheep, but allow appearance to deceive them. The Christian walks by faith, and not by appearance, he recognizes no leader, save the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Jews did not understand—They understood not what things they were which he spake unto them." They could easily understand the words he used and the facts he presented. The whole business of the shepherd and his sheep was familiar to them. Hence, the literal import of his words was plain enough; but they had no idea as to what his little parable meant. As they did not grasp his meaning, they could not use what he said to make trouble for him.

7-9. Jesus therefore said unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and go out, and shall find pasture.

7-9. "Jesus therefore said unto them again," that is, he said what follows because they did not understand his parable of the shepherd and the sheep. "I am the door of the sheep." It should not be thought a strange thing that Jesus is both the door of the sheep and the shepherd of the sheep, for his relations to us are as many-sided as our needs. Various descriptive names and titles are applied to these various relations. In verse nine he says, "I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." Through him and through him alone may we enter into God's favor and protection, and thus into salvation from sin. The truth that in Christ alone may we enter into salvation is stated in various words in many passages of the New Testament. To these same persecuting Jews to whom Jesus was talking, Peter later said, "And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved." (Acts 4:12.) Jesus himself said, "No one cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6.) "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." (Rom. 5:1, 2.) It is through Christ that we have peace

with God—through him we have access to the favor of God. The expression, "shall go in and go out, and shall find pasture," does not mean that one must go out of Christ to find pasture, or spiritual food, for there are no blessings out of Christ. An important truth is so worded to keep the picture true to Oriental life, and it illustrates the abundance of spiritual food that our good shepherd provides for his followers.

Verse eight presents a difficulty. It cannot be that Jesus meant that all the people, nor even all the prophets, who lived before he came into the world were thieves and robbers. Nor does it seem that he referred to false Christs; for if any had appeared before Jesus came into the world we have no account of them. What then did he mean? The word before, both in the Greek and in the English, sometimes has the sense of superiority or pre-eminence. The Jews who constantly antagonized Jesus put themselves forward before him; they assumed to be his superiors. They thrust themselves before him in every possible way, and on all occasions, when he was seeking to render real service to the people. Jesus must have referred to the leaders then living, to those who selfishly put themselves forward as the shepherds of Israel, for he used the present tense—"are thieves and robbers." While none of these Jewish rulers claimed to be the Messiah, they did put themselves forward as the true leaders and guides, the real shepherds of Israel, but they cared not for the sheep. Of them Jesus said, "Yea, they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with their finger." (Matt. 23:4.) They were not true shepherds for their interest in the people was a selfish interest. As such they were thieves and robbers, for they conducted affairs for their own profit. Any religious leader now who looks to his own interests instead of the good of the people is a thief and a robber. But the true servant of God, who is rooted and grounded in the faith, is never led astray by these thieves and robbers who parade themselves as leaders and guides.

10-15. The thief cometh not, but that he may steal, and kill, and destroy: I

came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep. He that is a hireling, and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, beholdeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth, and the wolf snatcheth them, and scattereth them: he fleeth because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know mine own, and mine own know me, even as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

10-15. The thief seeks to appropriate other people's property to his own use. He comes to steal, to kill, and to destroy. The religious thieves, such thieves as Jesus was talking about, must show great interest in the people in order to succeed. The more completely the religious thief gains the confidence and good will of the people, the more completely he can rob them of their cash for himself and their souls for his master the devil. Jesus the good shepherd came to give his own life that he might give life to others. All religious leaders must imitate him in unselfish devotion to the good of others; otherwise they are mere thieves, seeking their own profit. In verses 2-5 Jesus gives us the characteristics of the good shepherd; now he tells us who the good shepherd is. "I am the good shepherd." He is the door into God's favor and the shepherd over God's people. The thief takes the life of the sheep; the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. The good shepherd would defend his sheep even unto death. The hireling was not much better than the thief. He would not steal the sheep and kill them; but when danger came, being interested only in his wages, he would leave the sheep to the wolf, rather than to endanger his own life. But if a man were paid wages to care for a flock, he would not be considered a mere hireling so long as he recognized his responsibility and did what he could for the welfare and protection of the flock. But the hireling "careth not for the sheep." The good shepherd knows his own sheep, and they know him. They know him by his voice. Jesus our shepherd speaks to us through his revealed will, as recorded in the New Testament. In it his voice is heard, and in nothing else. The true disciple knows his teaching, and recognizes his authority, and therefore will not follow a stranger. But ignorance on the part of the

people is the greatest asset the false teacher has; it is his capital and the source of his profit. Through Isaiah the Lord said to his people of old, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." (Isa. 1:3.) The Lord was not here speaking of ignorant heathens, but of his own people Israel.

16. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd.

16. The other sheep were those who among the Gentiles would become his followers under the preaching of the gospel. God sometimes speaks of things that are not as though they were. (Rom. 4:17.) He so speaks because of the future certainty of the things spoken of. The honest-hearted Gentiles were his in prospect; they would become his in reality when the gospel call should be extended to them. In a similar way God spoke of the people in Corinth. He encouraged Paul to speak and hold not his peace; "for," said he, "I have much people in this city." (Acts 18:9, 10.)

22, 23. And it was the feast of the dedication at Jerusalem: it was winter; and Jesus was walking in the temple in Solomons porch.

27-30. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who hath given them unto me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one.

27-30. Read verses 17-26. Jesus would voluntarily lay down his life for the salvation of man. There again arose a dispute among the authorities about Jesus. The Jews, who wanted desperately to have him say something that they could use against him, said to him, "How long dost thou hold us in suspense? If thou art the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believe not: the works that I do in my Father's name, these bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep." In the sense of this parable of the shepherd and the sheep, a sheep is not necessarily the same

as a child of God, or a Christian. A sheep in the sense here used is one who hears and recognizes the voice and authority of Jesus, even though he has not completed his obedience. "My sheep hear my voice,... and follow me." The weary and heavy laden must come to Jesus and learn of him in order to find rest from the burden of sin. He gives his sheep eternal life, but this does not mean that a child of God is here and now in actual possession of eternal life. A child of God is an heir of God—an heir of heaven and all it holds for him, but he does not actually have these things in full enjoyment so long as he lives here. Eternal life is the Christian's by inheritance; later he will come into full possession of that inheritance. No one can snatch a child of God away from him, but that child himself can go away. God is able to make your eternal salvation sure, but he does not force you to remain true to him. If you want to quit him, serve the devil, and be lost, you can do so.

John 11

LESSON LINKS

The Jews were so enraged at Jesus because of his speech in the temple during the Feast of Dedication that "they sought to take him." Jesus evaded them. Because of the growing hostility of the authorities, Jesus "went away again beyond the Jordan into the place where John was at the first baptizing; and there he abode." (John 10:40.) We are not told how long he remained in this place, but "many believed on him there." While there, gloomy words came to him from his friends in Bethany. While Jesus was in this place beyond Jordan, Martha and Mary sent a message to him, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." Evidently these sisters thought this simple announcement would bring Jesus to their aid, but he had other plans; so "he abode at that time two days in the place where he

was. Then, knowing that Lazarus had died, he saith to the disciples, Let us go into Judaea again. The disciples say unto him, Rabbi, the Jews were but now seeking to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?" When the disciples saw that Jesus was determined to go to Bethany, Thomas, believing that Jesus would certainly be killed if he went to Bethany, said to the other apostles, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." Thomas was so devoted to his Lord that he was willing to die also, if his Lord was killed; and he believed he would be killed on this trip. When Jesus reached Bethany, Lazarus had been in the tomb four days. It seems certain that Martha, Mary, and Lazarus were well-known and highly respected in Jerusalem, for many of the Jews, those in authority, had come out from Jerusalem to comfort and console Martha and Mary. When Jesus arrived, he tarried at the outskirts of the village.

20-22. Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary still sat in the house. Martha therefore said unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. And even now I know that, whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give thee.

20-22. It seems that Martha was older than Mary and Lazarus; at least, she took the lead in matters of which we have any record. When she heard that Jesus was coming, she went out of the village to meet him; "but Mary still sat in the house." Martha felt sure Jesus did not start on his journey to them so soon as he received their message, else he would have reached them earlier. There seems to be a tinge of chiding in what she said to Jesus: "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." It had not occurred to her that he could have healed Lazarus without being present. She had faith in the power of Jesus, but not as high a degree as did the centurion, who, when Jesus proposed to go to his home and heal his servant, said, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed." (Matt. 8:5-10.) There is an expression of both faith and hope in the words she immediately added: "And even now I know that, whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give thee." She had

not yet grasped the idea that Jesus had power within himself to bring Lazarus back from the dead.

23-27. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, 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 cometh into the world.

23-27. "Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again." She did not get the idea that Jesus would raise him up at that time. She would have got some idea of the resurrection from Daniel 12:2. It is also very likely that Jesus had taught her concerning the resurrection at the last day. "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life." In so saying Jesus used a figure of speech in which the cause is put for the effect. Jesus is the one who raises the dead—he causes the resurrection. In a similar sense he is the life—he is the source, the cause, of all life, both physical and spiritual. Life inheres in him, and our life is derived from him. "He that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live." There is therefore a sense in which a man lives, though he dies. "And whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die. Believest thou this?" This statement was made about the believer; nothing here is said about the unbeliever. But the unbeliever's resurrection is definitely assured in other passages. "The hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." We know that the body dies, yet the believer never dies. "Believest thou this?" A materialist does not believe it. He argues against it with all his might. He believes that when a man dies there is not any sense in which he lives. But to that question thousands can answer with Martha, "Yea, Lord." She made this confession: "I have believed that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, even he that cometh into the world." She therefore believed that he was the one whom Moses and the prophets had said should come. And so in this conversation two

fundamental truths are stated in what seems to be an incidental way, namely, that the spirit of the true believer never dies, and that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the one foretold by Moses and the prophets. In order to be saved, this fundamental truth must be believed. "Except ye believe I am he, ye shall die in your sins." "He that disbelieveth shall be condemned." "No one cometh unto the Father, but by me."

28-33. And when she had said this, she went away, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Teacher is here, and calleth thee. And she, when she heard it, arose quickly, and went unto him. (Now Jesus was not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha met him). The Jews then who were with her in the house, and were consoling her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up quickly and went out, followed her, supposing that she was going unto the tomb to weep there. Mary therefore, when she came where Jesus was, and saw him, fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping who came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled.

28-33. If Mary knew that Jesus was near by, it is strange that she did not go out to meet him without an invitation. Jesus would not neglect her; so he would have Mary called to him. Martha "went away, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Teacher is here, and calleth thee." From this statement it appears that Mary had not known that Jesus had come. Besides, when she learned that he had come, she arose promptly, and went to him. Jesus was still outside the village. "The Jews then who were with her in the house, and were consoling her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up quickly and went out, followed her, supposing that she was going unto the tomb to weep there." When she came to Jesus, she fell at his feet in an attitude of worship; she also wept. It is not said that Martha did either. The marginal reading says the word translated means *wailing*. It may be that Martha was as emotional as Mary, but better able to control her emotions. The silent sufferer may suffer the most, for weeping and wailing are a sort of outlet for pent-up feelings. At times it is good to weep without restraint—good for the body and the soul. In her weeping Mary made the same statement Martha made: "Lord,

if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." It is likely that they had repeated to each other frequently during the four days since Lazarus died that he would not have died had the Lord been present, and had wondered why the Lord did not come when they sent for him. The Jews also who followed were wailing, as the marginal reading shows. People then did not control their emotions, as people unnaturally do now. But if these Jews were professional mourners, their wailing was mere pretense. Because of all this wailing, Jesus "groaned in spirit, and was troubled." For "groaned in spirit" the marginal reading has "was moved with indignation in the spirit." The marginal reading seems better, for "groaned in spirit" does not convey any clear meaning. There was cause for indignation on the part of Jesus; for these Jews who were wailing, as if in deep sorrow at the death of Lazarus, would gladly kill Jesus. He knew also that these same Jews, the ruling class in Jerusalem, for so is John's use of the term Jews, would soon be plotting to put Lazarus to death so as to destroy a living witness of the power of Jesus over death. (See John 12:9-11.) Such hypocritical pretense stirred Jesus to indignation. He was also troubled because of the sorrowing of his friends, and because of the evil hearts of the Jews.

34, 35. And said, Where have ye laid him? They say unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept.

34, 35. Of course Jesus knew where the body of Lazarus was; but to stop so much wailing by getting the people interested in doing something, or, at least, getting them to think of something else, he said, "Where have ye laid him? They say unto him, Lord, come and see." Of course it was the friends of Jesus who made that answer, for his enemies would not have been likely to address him as Lord. Then follows the shortest verse in the Bible, "Jesus wept." He wept silently, for so the word in the original indicates; he did not indulge in wailing, as did the Jews. But this is about the only verse in the Bible that some church members can repeat, and all they see in it is the bare fact that Jesus wept; the significance of that weeping

escapes them. The sufferings and sorrows of others touched the heart of Jesus. Sin, with its consequent suffering, also caused Jesus to weep. About a week before his crucifixion, as he was making what is usually referred to as his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, in the midst of that great demonstration, he wept over it. He wept because of the incurable wickedness of the people and because of the unparalleled sufferings that were to come upon them because of their wickedness. And now at the tomb of Lazarus he weeps with those who weep. He is not ashamed to weep; weeping, when there is a cause for weeping, is not a cause for shame. We are exhorted to weep with those who weep. (Rom. 12:15.) The Lord expects us to weep at the loss of loved ones, but he exhorts us not to weep as those who have no hope. Jesus was not weeping because there was no hope.

36, 37. The Jews therefore said, Behold how he loved him! But some of them said, Could not this man, who opened the eyes of him that was blind, have caused that this man also should not die?

36, 37. From the fact that these officers from Jerusalem had come out to Bethany to be with Martha and Mary in their sorrow, we gather that this family was well known and in good financial circumstances. With the exception of a few like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, these officers were bitter enemies of Jesus. But recently they had sought to kill him. (See John 10:31-39; 11:7, 8, 16.) Now he had an opportunity to demonstrate in their presence his power over death in a way they could not help but see. These Jews began to talk among themselves. Some said, "Behold how he loved him!" They knew that Jesus was no professional mourner, but that his grief was real. Others said, "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of him that was blind, have caused that this man also should not die?" They knew that he had opened the eyes of a blind man, for they had had quite a discussion with the man as to how his eyes were opened. The form of their question shows that they expected an affirmative answer. They were puzzled—why was he now weeping over what he could have prevented? They

thought he was weeping for Lazarus; whereas, he was weeping because of the sorrow of Martha and Mary and because of the hardness of heart of some of these Jews. There was no reason for his weeping for Lazarus, for he was soon to raise him up, but these Jews did not know that.

38-44. Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus saith, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time the body decayeth; for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou believedst, thou shouldest see the glory of God? So they took away the stone. 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. And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. He that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

38-44. As Jesus approached the tomb, he again groaned in himself, or, was moved with indignation in himself. He knew that the greater part of these Jews would not believe him, no matter what proof he gave, but would soon again be plotting his death, and also that of Lazarus. Such wickedness and hypocrisy moved the Son of God to indignation. But he would give them this one more proof of his power, and he would have them take some part in what he was about to do. "Take ye away the stone." Jesus could have moved the stone with a word, but it is God's plan to have people do what they can. Jesus would have even his enemies to have a part in what he was about to do. Practical Martha protested, "Lord, by this time the body decayeth." The Greek is more emphatic; ". . . he stinketh." There would be odors from the corpse. Perhaps this is the very thing Jesus wanted these Jews to discover—he wanted them to know the condition of the body, so that the certainty and the greatness of the miracle would be manifested to them. He would make it impossible for them to claim fraud, or to deny the greatness of the miracle, so that further opposition to him on their part would show the perversity of heart that nothing could change. To Martha Jesus said, "Said I not unto thee, that,

if thou believedst, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" But the unbelieving Jews would not see in this miracle the glory of God; it would only stir them to greater hatred, and cause them to be more determined to put Jesus to death, so perverse were they. (See verses 47-53.) But to the one who weighed the evidence, and therefore believed, the raising of Lazarus would be a glorious manifestation of God's power. Jesus had the stone rolled away before he prayed. He would give these Jews time to know that death and decay were in that tomb; and he would have their thoughts raised to a high degree of expectancy. It was a dramatic moment. Then with eyes uplifted toward heaven, he prayed to his Father, first thanking the Father that during the past he had heard his prayers. He knew that the Father always heard him; but he had spoken to the Father at this time so that the multitude might hear, and know that God had sent him and was working through him. Jesus would have the people know that Lazarus came from the tomb at his bidding; so he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." And Lazarus came forth, "bound hand and foot with grave-clothes." This decaying body had suddenly become full of health and vitality. Such a sign of God's presence with Jesus was convincing proof to any but the wholly perverse that he was what he claimed to be. Many did believe, but others, though recognizing his powers to work miracles, were still determined to put him to death. (Read verses 45-57.)

Luke 10

LESSON LINKS

Authorities differ about places. Robinson, in his *Harmony of the Gospels*, gives Capernaum as the place of the sending of the seventy, and Jerusalem as the probable place of their report to Jesus. Pittenger, in his *Interwoven Gospels*, gives Jerusalem as

probably the place of sending" the seventy and their return. *The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia and Scriptural Dictionary* gives Jerusalem as the place. Jesus appointed seventy disciples and sent them on a mission similar to that on which he had previously sent the twelve. They were commanded, as the twelve had been commanded, to say, "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." It is well to take notice of what these seventy were to preach. It has been argued that, though John the Baptist, and also Jesus in his early ministry, preached that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, the Jews rejected the kingdom, and the offer was withdrawn, and never preached as at hand any more after Matthew 10; yet these seventy near the close of the public ministry of Christ are commanded to say, "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." In view of the theory referred to, this is an important passage to keep in mind.

Raising Lazarus from the dead caused so many to believe on Jesus that official Jerusalem was greatly stirred. They decided that something had to be done, else all men would believe on Jesus. The Sanhedrin immediately met and decreed the death of Jesus. "Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews, but departed thence into the country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there he tarried with the disciples." It seems certain that he went from this place into Galilee, for Matthew represents him as leaving Galilee when he started on his last journey to Jerusalem. (Matt. 19:1.) And Luke represents him as passing along the borders of Galilee and Samaria. (Luke 17:11.) Mark 10:1 says, "And he arose from thence, and cometh into the borders of Judaea and beyond the Jordan: and multitudes come together unto him again; and, as he was wont, he taught them again." He must have spent many days on this journey, for Matthew, Mark, and Luke recorded much that was said and done on this journey. From John we learn that while Jesus and his disciples tarried in Ephraim, "the passover of the Jews was at hand." (John 11:54, 55.) From Matthew 19:1, "And it came to pass . . . he departed from Galilee, and came into the borders of Judaea

beyond the Jordan." From Mark 10:1, "And he arose from thence, and cometh into the borders of Judaea and beyond the Jordan." So it would seem that Jesus left Ephraim and paid a short visit to Galilee to make plans for this last Passover journey to be a teaching journey.

"All that we can be certain of as to when the seventy were appointed is that it was *after* the events Luke has already related. (Luke ch. 9.) There are reasons for thinking it was near the close of our Lord's ministry. It is usually located in the country east of the Jordan when the Lord began his last journey to Jerusalem."—B. W. Johnson.

1. Now after these things the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself was about to come.

1. "The Lord appointed seventy others." This refers to the twelve apostles whom he had formerly sent on a like mission. He sent these "two and two" as he did the twelve. They were going out into a work altogether new to them. Perhaps the requirements to have two or three witnesses in judicial trials had become a sort of fixed principle with Jews in dealing with one another, and two would therefore have more weight than only one in what they might say about Jesus and the coming kingdom. They were to preach the kingdom as near. And also two would be a source of strength and comfort to each other. He must have named the cities and places they were to visit, else they would not have known "whither he himself was about to come." These men could cover a lot of territory in a short time. However it is possible that each pair was to confine their labors to the first place that received them. These 70 were sent out on a limited commission.

2, 3. And he said unto them, The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest. Go your ways; behold, I send you forth as lambs in the midst of wolves.

2, 3. Let us not conclude that because there are many people in a community the harvest is plenteous in that community.

There might be hundreds of acres of wheat, but no harvest, because the wheat was not ready for the reapers. The harvest is plenteous only when there are ripened fields of grain; and so it is in spiritual affairs. The instructions that Jesus gave the seventy show that some places would have nothing to do with them—the harvest was not plenteous in such places. People who fight against the gospel are not ripe for the harvest—there is no harvest among such people. At the time Jesus uttered this language the laborers were indeed few, for he had only a small group of followers. "But the laborers are few." And how few they were. First the twelve and now the seventy—only eighty-two. What was true then might not always be true, for there might come a time when there would be many laborers. It is not right, therefore, to quote this verse as applicable at all times and in all places. The fact is, in our limited knowledge we never know beforehand that the harvest is plenteous in any untried fields. As we do not know as much about fields as Jesus did, why apply this language to all places? Jesus did not refer to all places in that language. The Lord knows where a field is ripe for harvest; we can therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into the ripened fields. Even then do we expect him to call and send them as he did the seventy?

To these seventy laborers whom the Lord was sending into the harvest Jesus said, "Go your ways; behold, I send you forth as lambs in the midst of wolves." These were not real wolves, but men of ferocious disposition. Such figures of speech are common in the Bible. Some, failing to recognize the frequent use of such figures of speech, have given fanciful interpretations to such passages as Isaiah 11:6-9; 35:9.

4. Carry no purse, no wallet, no shoes; and salute no man on the way.

4. In making a journey people usually carry some money and other necessities along with them. These disciples would have done so, had not the Lord demanded that they go empty-handed. They were to carry no money, not even an empty purse, nor a wallet in which to carry some food or other supp-

lies. As they would walk, it is not supposed that a pair of shoes as they then had would last very long; yet they were not to take with them an extra pair of shoes. In giving similar instructions to the twelve on their first mission, Jesus added, "The laborer is worthy of his food." The people who were benefited by their miracles and teaching would see to it that their needs were met. This they should have been glad to do, for food and clothing would be but a small return for the healing of their ailments, and the preaching. The announcement they were to make concerning the kingdom would be of more value to the people that believed them than anything they could do for the preachers. "Salute no man on the way." Time was short; they had no time for useless formalities.

5-8. And into whatsoever house ye shall enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if a son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon him: but if not, it shall turn to you again. And in that same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the laborer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house. And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you.

5-8. "Peace be to this house"; that was a prayer, and also a pledge that the visitors were on a peaceful mission; for a man cannot pray earnestly for peace unless he himself is a man of peace. It was also a very impressive form of salutation. "Son of peace" is a man of peace, a peaceful man. If he was a man of peace, the peace for which they prayed would rest upon him. If he was not a man of peace, the peace for which they prayed would return upon themselves; by carrying out the Lord's will they would promote their own peace with the Lord. And while they were in the city or place they were to remain "in that same house." They were not to stay in different places every night. A preacher may destroy the effectiveness of his preaching by lodging in a home of suspicious characters. People have a way, and rightly so, of rating a person by the company he keeps and the homes in which he likes to stay. No church should want its preacher or any elder to put in his time going alone from house to house; some men have got themselves into serious trouble by that sort of indiscriminate visiting alone. They were to eat

such things as were set before them. The cooking might not be up to the best standards, but a Christian gentleman will not show by word or deed any displeasure at what willing hands have done for him. They were not paying for the food; why then should they show any displeasure at what was granted them freely? And as if remaining in the same house was very important, Jesus repeats the injunction: "Go not from house to house."

Some Reflections

Customs have changed, but human nature is now as it was then. A preacher is human—at least he should be. He has his likes and dislikes, but he should not allow these propensities to make himself disagreeable in homes that furnish him food and lodging. He should be content with such food as the family is used to having. A reporter of meetings sometimes tells where he made his home during a meeting, and adds, "They certainly know how to treat a preacher"—as if a preacher were some rare bird that needs special food and treatment.

9. And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

9. "And heal the sick that are therein." Their power to work miracles would therefore serve a two-fold purpose. In healing the sick where they made their home, they would repay the family for their hospitality; and the miracles would also prove that God had sent them. Possibly another end would be served—the power to work miracles would give these inexperienced preachers added courage and confidence. "And say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." The kingdom of God was near at hand—not long till his kingdom would be ushered in and Jesus would be announced as the King. And this shows that the kingdom under consideration had not begun.

10-16. But into whatsoever city ye shall enter, and they receive you not, go out into the streets thereof and say, Even the dust from your city, that cleaveth

to our feet, we wipe off against you: nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh. I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city. 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, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? thou shalt be brought down unto Hades. He that heareth you heareth me; and he that rejecteth you rejecteth me; and he that rejecteth me rejecteth him that sent me.

10-16. "But into whatsoever city ye shall enter, and they receive you not." Some cities would be hostile; in such there would be no sons of peace to receive them. It is one of the mysteries even now that some places give little or no attention to the gospel and others receive it readily. What should be done about such places? They were to go out into the streets, and declare—"Even the dust of your city, that cleaveth to our feet, we wipe off against you." It was a symbol of utter separation from everything in that city—they would show that they would not so much as carry away any of its dust. "Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh." And such people would be entirely unprepared for it; their hardness and rebellion would shut them out of the great blessings of the kingdom which God would graciously give to those who were ready to receive them. By their own conduct they were deciding their own destiny; and so do people always do. Woes were pronounced on such cities—it would be more tolerable for Sodom in the judgment than for such cities as would not receive these disciples. Then he pronounces woes upon the cities and towns—Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum—wherein he himself had done so many mighty works.

17. And the seventy returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the demons are subject unto us in thy name.

17. "And the seventy returned with joy." It would be interesting to read their experiences on that missionary journey, but not one word do we find written about their trip. The gospel record keeps one theme before us. And that is the claims of Jesus.

When anyone is sent to do a certain work, he should, when he finishes the work assigned him, make as full a report as possible to those who sent him. Jesus had sent the seventy to do a certain work; now they return with joy. The thing that seemed to give them the most joy was that the demons were subject to them in the name of Christ. But in the reply Jesus made, he gave them a much greater cause for rejoicing: "Nevertheless in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." Could there be any greater cause for rejoicing on the part of anyone than to know that his name was written in the book of life?

21. In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit, and said, 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: yea, Father; for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight.

21. Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit, and stated the grounds for this rejoicing in his thanks to the Father. If God had made no revelation to man, and yet had left matters so that the wise could discover the way of life, the ones who found the way would have been puffed up with pride over their discovery; it would also have given grounds for every fanatic to claim that he and he alone had discovered the way. But the way of life had to be revealed; even so, it is not really revealed to them that think they do not need any revelation, and will therefore pay no attention to the things revealed. Babes in this verse are not infants, but those with a childlike trust. It is revealed to those who realize their need of revelation. So long as a person feels so wise that he thinks he does not need any revelation from God his case is hopeless. "But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word." (Is. 66:2.)

22-24. All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth who the Son is, save the Father; and who the Father is, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him. And turning to the disciples, he said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I say unto you, that many prophets and kings desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and

heard them not.

22-24. All of God's plans and purposes concerning things on the earth centered in Jesus the Christ—all had been delivered unto him. Not actually at that time, but prospectively; they became absolutely his when he ascended on high and was crowned King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The disciples had only a faint conception of his relation to the Father and of his coming majesty and glory; and even now who can comprehend him? To a limited degree we may know the Son, but only the Father knows him fully. And we may know the Father in a limited degree by the works of nature, if we are thoughtful; but even so our ideas would be hazy and defective. The Son knows him and reveals him to whom he wills to do so. This is not a mysterious statement which the Lord makes; neither does it show any partiality. The preceding section shows to whom revelations are made. Nothing is revealed to a person who will not accept what is said, no matter how many Bibles there might be. The Bible is really not a revelation to those who will not read it; or, if they read it, will not believe it. It is a revelation to those who love it and read it, and who earnestly strive to make it a rule of life. A lot of people have eyes, but they will not see; they have ears, but will not hear. To his disciples Jesus said, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see." In Matthew 13:16 Jesus said, "But blessed are your eyes, for they see." Yes, people can shut themselves out from the best things of life by refusing to see and hear. These humble disciples were hearing and seeing things which great men of the past ages had desired to see, and saw them not. "For I say unto you, that many prophets and kings desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not." The time for such revelation had not come when these prophets and kings lived. And think of the untold millions living then and have since lived that refused to hear the gospel and refused to see any good in it. A man must have an ear to hear before he can hear, and an eye to see before he can see. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

One of the traits of David that made him a man after God's own heart was the love he had for God's word and God's ways. Something of this trait in David may be seen by reading Psalm 119. Paul gave up everything he had formerly prized for the gospel. "Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." (Phil. 3:8.)

LESSON LINKS

During the personal ministry of Jesus, it seems that about every possible duty and relation to God and our fellow-man was brought forward and discussed. Many of these lessons were brought out in his discussions with his critics and opposers. His debates were educational; he never sought to cloud the issue in order to get the best of his opponent. One could not think of Jesus as being a mere juggler of words. His points were stated with such clearness and force that they rarely needed any arguments to sustain them, generally leaving his opponents with nothing to say.

25. And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and made trial of him, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

25. The lawyers mentioned in the gospels were not attorneys, such as we now have, but men skilled in the law of Moses. The man who is called a lawyer in Matthew 22:35 is called a scribe in Mark 12:28. Hence, as scribes were skilled in the law, they were called lawyers; both being applied to the same class of men. Such a one would have to be skilled in the tradition of the elders as well as in the law of Moses. To be skilled in the tradition of the elders required a great deal of memory work, for the traditions had not at this time been reduced to writing. The Pharisees had tried every way to trap Jesus in his talk, and had failed. The Sadducees tried, and failed. It seems that the Pharisees had now decided to test his knowledge of the law. They evidently thought that, as he had not studied in their schools under their great teachers, he certainly could not be a

match for one of their skilled men. They hoped to be able to discredit him before the people by showing his lack of the knowledge of the law. Hence, "a certain lawyer stood up and made trial of him" to find out what he knew. "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" A Sadducee would not have asked that question, for they did not believe in any life after death. They were materialists, believing in neither angels, nor spirits, nor the resurrection. Not so much stress was placed on eternal life in the law and the prophets as in the New Testament. But this lawyer believed in such a state; so did all the Pharisees. It will be noticed, too, that he believed he had to do something in order to inherit eternal life. He was well enough informed to know that, no matter what he had to do, eternal life was an inheritance. No amount of service that he could render would make it any less an inheritance. Even in the affairs of this world inheritances are sometimes conditional, but they are none the less inheritances.

26-28. And he said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live.

26-28. Jesus would have the lawyer answer his own question. "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" In this question Jesus really affirms what this lawyer surely knew, namely, that inheritance must be according to the law. This is true in nature, in the affairs of men, and in the kingdom of God. Laws among men may change, as they have done in God's dealings with men, but it still remains true that inheritance is according to law. A rich young man once came to Jesus, and said, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Jesus did not tell either this young man or the lawyer that there was nothing either could do, but gave both to understand that they must do certain things—must comply with the law. To the young man he said, "If thou wouldest enter into life, keep the commandments." (Matt. 19:16, 17.)

Jesus had asked, "What is written in the law?" The lawyer

replied by quoting from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." Mind and heart are sometimes used interchangeably, but where there is a distinction made, as here, the mind is the intellectual faculty. With it we think, reason, weigh propositions, and form judgments. And the heart would then be the emotional faculty. With it we love, hate, admire, rejoice, and so on. Hence our intellectual powers and our emotions are to be fully devoted to the service of God. To love God is to obey his commandments, to devote ourselves to his service. No man loves God who is disobedient to him, or is indifferent about his service. "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." (John 14:15.) "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." (John 14:21.) "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." (1 John 5:3.) When a man wants to be religious, but wants to have his own way about it, he does not love God. Let no man deceive himself, for he is not his own judge. Self-love is inherent; it is a part of our God-given nature; it leads a person to look out for his own life. Jesus does not require impossibilities, and it does not seem possible for anyone to love his neighbor in the same degree as he loves himself. He can love in the same manner. He can have regard for his neighbor's comfort and convenience; he can help his neighbor in need. To love the neighbor as one loves himself leads to an effort to do good to the neighbor; it will keep a man from seeking any advantage of his neighbor. He will not try to get the best of him in a trade. Such love makes a man a useful citizen, a helpful neighbor. Such love leads a person to be merciful and forbearing. If a man loves God, he will seek to please God; if he loves his neighbor, he will seek to please him in everything that is right. It is natural for us to want to please the ones we love. And Jesus said, "Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live." That is, he would inherit eternal life, for that was the matter of inquiry, if he would obey the commandments he had just mentioned. The lawyer therefore had not been mistaken in

thinking that he had to do something in order to inherit eternal life. But that same truth is abundantly taught in the gospel. In speaking of Jesus the Christ the writer of the letter to the Hebrews said, "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." (Heb. 5:8, 9.)

29. But he, desiring to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?

29. It is a common failing of humanity to try to justify self, and yet an effort to justify self serves only to make matters worse. Self-justification never heals a wound, nor rights a wrong. To try to justify self in the sight of God is foolish, for no one can deceive God. The word from which we have neighbor has in it the idea of nearness. It has that meaning in its first uses in the Bible. (See Ex. 3:22; 11:2.) Later it seems to have been applied by the Hebrews only to Hebrews. Naturally the lawyer had this idea, and felt that he had always been fair and just in his treatment of a fellow Jew. If the term "neighbor" was to be applied only to a Jew in good standing then he felt that he had fulfilled the law in that particular. And yet he had his doubts, and he asked, "And who is my neighbor?" Likely he thought Jesus would give an answer in harmony with the Jewish idea as to who a neighbor was.

30-32. Jesus made answer and said, A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers, who both stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance a certain priest was going down that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And in like manner a Levite also, when he came to the place, and saw him, passed by on the other side.

30-32. It is said that many robbers infested the hills of Judea, who assaulted and robbed people passing along the highways. Jesus tells of one certain occurrence. This man was evidently traveling alone, "going down from Jerusalem to Jericho." The robbers fell upon him, took what he had, even to his clothing, and almost killed him. The priests were supposed

to be good men, and leaders in worship and service. But one, passing along the way, paid this wounded man no attention; a Levite did the same thing. Both of them saw him, and perhaps muttered, "Poor fellow." They were not responsible for his condition; why bother? Likely they both felt that the country was going to the bad, when a man could not travel the highway in safety. It does not seem that it occurred to them that they were acting very little better than the robbers. They did not have enough sympathy for a sufferer to put themselves to any trouble and expense to give him any assistance. They were too busy serving the Lord to waste time in looking after a helpless man! And so are some people today!

33-35. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion, and came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine; and he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow he took out two shillings, and gave them to the host, and said, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, I, when I come back again, will repay thee.

33-35. There was so much antagonism between Jews and Samaritans that they were practically enemies; yet a certain Samaritan came along and found this wounded Jew. He could not have had any warm affection for a Jew. He knew that this Jew if well would have nothing to do with him—would not so much as receive a favor from a Samaritan. But when the Samaritan saw the suffering and helpless Jew, "he was moved with compassion, and came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine." The wine would be used for cleansing the wounds, and the oil for dressing them. Though they knew nothing about germs and disinfectants, they doubtless had learned by experience that wine was good for wounds. Having done what he could in rendering first aid, "he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him." He remained with the wounded man overnight, taking care of him as best he could. And still he did not feel that he had discharged his full obligations. The man was not able to leave the inn, and the robbers had left him without anything with which to pay for his further lodging. "And on the morrow he

took out two shillings, and gave them to the host, and said, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, I, when I come back again, will repay thee." He was loving his neighbor as himself. To love your neighbor as yourself is to put into practice the Golden Rule. This was not a supposed case, but one which the lawyer himself knew about. Had it been a supposed case, or had the lawyer not known of such a case, he would have said, or thought, "Ah, but no Samaritan would do such a thing as that."

36, 37. Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. And Jesus said unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

36, 37. The lawyer had asked "Who is my neighbor?" After Jesus relates the foregoing incident, he asked the lawyer, "Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers?" There was but one answer the lawyer could make, excepting that he could have shortened his answer by saying, "The Samaritan." But it seems that he could not bring himself to call the name of Samaritan in connection with a good deed; so he said, "He that showed mercy on him." "Go, and do thou likewise." Hence, a man's neighbor is the one who is near enough that services can be rendered him in time of need.

38-42. Now as they went on their way, he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving: and she came up to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. But the Lord answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

38-42. "Now as they went on their way, he entered into a certain village." This village was Bethany, for that was the home of these friends of Jesus. (John 11:1.) Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, is not mentioned in connection with this visit; it is likely that he was not at home. Matthew,

Mark, and Luke do not give as much prominence to this family as does John. Perhaps these friends of Jesus were still alive when Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrote; to give these friends of Jesus prominence while they lived and while the Jews remained in Jerusalem, and were so hostile to the followers of Christ, might have made it hard on them. It is generally understood that John wrote much later—long after the Jews were driven or carried out of Jerusalem. On this visit the apostles, and perhaps other disciples were with Jesus. "A certain woman named Martha received him into her house." A group gathered about Jesus to hear his teaching. "And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet, and heard his word." Then the pupils sat at the feet of the teacher. Hence to sit at one's feet came to mean, to be his disciple. So it is said that Saul was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. (Acts 22:3.) While Mary and the others were sitting at the feet of Jesus and hearing his word, "Martha was cumbered about much serving." As head of the family she felt the responsibility of making everything pleasant for her guests. She was busy getting a good meal for her guests; and, as usual with good women when they have to prepare for several guests, she was overdoing the matter. But what woman would not have done so if Jesus was one of the guests? We have all seen good women so taken up with providing material comforts for their guests that they have no time to enjoy their company. She was cumbered—distracted, for the Greek word signifies. Mary was not helping her, and she became impatient about it. "And she came up to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone?" She must have been a high-strung, nervous woman, speaking sometimes without due thought, for that was not a very courteous way to speak to an honored guest, and especially while he was busily engaged in teaching. It seems that she was accusing the Lord of keeping Mary away from her household duties. Had she not worried herself into such a state of nerves, she would hardly have issued this order to the Lord: "Bid her therefore that she help me." Martha was a good woman, but she took her duties as hostess too seriously.

"But the Lord answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things." In this rebuke there is tenderness in the repetition of the name. It seems that Jesus meant that she was preparing too many things for the table. Jesus did not come there for a feast. "But one thing is needful." Some think Jesus meant that she needed to prepare but one thing. The circumstances lend color to that idea. Martha was distracted about too many material things. Jesus refused to do what Martha ordered him to do. "Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." If people live, they must eat; and if they eat, food must be prepared. Somebody must do the preparing, but too many people make the preparing and eating of food the main thing. People may allow even the necessary things of life to so engage their attention and energy that the word of God is crowded out; like Martha, they are so absorbed in everyday affairs that they have no time to listen to the Lord.

NOTE—Verses 38-42: B. W. Johnson says—"This incident is not related in order of time."

Mark 10

LESSON LINKS

When God created man, he said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him." Not a helpmeet, as some spell it, but a help meet for him—a help suitable for him. Apparently it is no better for the woman to be alone than it is for the man to be alone. The best development of character for both man and woman comes through the companion-ship of marriage, and through the responsibility of bringing up children. It is nature, and we cannot get away from nature. God intended for one man to have one wife. And neither is happy unless the sacredness of their union is kept

inviolate. The welfare of the family, the community, and the nation depends on the purity of the people. A nation cannot long endure when no regard is had for the sacredness of the marriage ties. If the home life is corrupted, the nation falls of its own weight. The religion of Christ is a good thing for the people of a nation, for it stresses the sacredness of the marriage ties. A civil contract may be entered into between the husband and wife, but marriage itself is more than a civil contract. It is a union of a man and a woman under the solemn laws of God, as well as of man. There is a growing tendency to treat the marriage vows lightly, which is not good for the nation. To treat the marriage vows lightly is to leave God out of consideration. Not only are many married people loose in their morals, but divorces are increasing at an alarming rate. Our legislators cannot legislate for the church, but they should recognize the fact that God's marriage laws are wiser than anything man can originate, and that they are therefore better for the nation.

2-5. And there came unto him Pharisees, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? trying him. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. But Jesus said unto them, For your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment.

2-5. "And there came unto him Pharisees." They would not leave Jesus alone. They would not believe in him, but they could not be indifferent to him. As they would not be his disciples, they must be his enemies. Jesus challenges men to action now as then. Infidels cannot dismiss him with a wave of the hand, and pass on with indifference. We may wonder at men's unbelief, but not at the hostility of the unbeliever. "He that is not with me is against me." There is no neutral ground. The Pharisees were shrewd and resourceful, but had never fully satisfied themselves in their discussions with Jesus. Now they have thought up something else. "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? trying him." Matthew's report has, "for every cause." That is, can a man put away his wife if she, for any cause, does not please him? On this point the two great

religious schools of thought among the Jews of that time, the schools of Shammai and Hillel, differed radically. The controversy raged over what Moses meant by "unseemly thing" in Deuteronomy 24:1: "When a man taketh a wife, and marrieth her, then it shall be, if she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some unseemly thing in her, that he shall write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house." Shammai held that "unseemly thing" referred to adultery; Hillel held that it meant anything with which the husband might be displeased, even to overcooking or oversaving his food. Evidently these Pharisees thought Jesus would have to answer their question in a way that one or the other of these schools would be against him. At least we know that the Pharisees were not seeking information, but "trying him." Jesus was not interested in what Shammai and Hillel taught, but he sought an expression from his questioners. "What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away." They evaded the point as to the grounds on which divorce might be granted under the law; but the reply Jesus made shows that the law of Moses allowed divorce on more grounds than one. "For your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment." This liberal divorce law should not have filled the Jews with pride; it was really a fearful indictment of them—liberal because of the hardness of their hearts. On account of their brutality Moses had allowed them to divorce a helpless woman to keep them from continually abusing a wife who had lost their favor, and perhaps keep them from secretly putting her to death. It was given in mercy for the women. The law was as high a standard as they would live up to. To be inforced, a law must be in the moral reach of those for whom it is made. Disregarding this absolutely essential principle of legislation, infidels have sought to discredit the morals of the law of Moses.

6-9. But from the beginning of the creation, Male and female made he them. 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.

6-9. "But from the beginning of the creation, Male and female made he them." It has been pointed out that the sense here would have been plainer and more accurately expressed had the translators given it as follows: "A male and a female made he them." It is a fact that he did make a male and a female. The marriage relation is based on the fact that God made a male and a female. God had a high and holy purpose in so doing, and when a male and a female cooperate with God in carrying out his designs, they are engaged in a high and holy mission. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife." This language does not mean that a married person must give up all thought of his parents, but that the marriage relation is closer and more intimate than the relation of child to parents. "And shall cleave to his wife." He is not to enter into some kind of a contract with a woman to live together so long as the arrangement may be convenient, but to cleave to her, glue himself to her, for so is the force of the Greek. It enjoins upon both parties to the marriage the duty of making an earnest effort to live together in peace. Too many people shut their eyes to the faults of the other before marriage, and then hunt for faults after marriage. In their most intimate union as husband and wife the two become one flesh, and in their child their two natures are joined in one. God ordained marriage, and his seal is placed upon the marriage vow; and that seal can be broken only in the way, or ways, God has pointed out. Out of the marriage vow grows the home. To make a home is the instinctive desire of every normal person.

10-12. And in the house the disciples asked him again of this matter. And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her: and if she herself shall put away her husband, and marry another, she committeth adultery.

10-12. Perhaps the disciples felt that Jesus had left no grounds for divorce. But Jesus had only been laying down the general principles and purposes of the marriage relation. God

had intended that the man and woman should become one, and that their marriage vows should be sacredly kept; but as sometimes happens that one of the contracting parties runs off with another, what then is to be done? Jesus answers: "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." (Matt. 19:9.) If this cause for divorce does not exist, then "whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her: and if she herself shall put away her husband, and marry another, she committeth adultery." Another possible grounds for divorce is given in 1 Corinthians 7:15: "Yet if the unbelieving departeth, let him depart: the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases." If the believer in such cases is not entirely released from the marriage bonds, if they still hold him in check and govern his actions, he is still under bondage. Paul's language is emphatic. A general law is first laid down, and the exceptions, if there are any, are given; that is true in all systems of laws.

13-16. And they were bringing unto him little children, that he should touch them: and the disciples rebuked them. 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. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein. And he took them in his arms, and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.

13-16. No other persons would be so likely to bring the children to Jesus as their own parents. It is said that parents sometimes brought their children to the head man of the synagogue that he might bless them. It was natural therefore for these parents to bring their children to the Great Teacher, that he might, as Matthew reports, lay his hands on them and pray. The great task for parents today is to bring their children to Jesus in a moral and spiritual sense. But the disciples rebuked these parents. They evidently thought Jesus would not want to be bothered with these parents and children. How little they knew their Master! When Jesus saw their interference, "he

was moved with indignation." Children in the home and the love and care of parents for their children meant much to Jesus. It angered him for his own disciples to rudely drive parents and children from him. "Suffer the little children to come unto me." The children were brought, and yet they came. It happens now that the people who are brought to Christ must themselves do the coming. It is singular that any one should seize on this incident as proof for infant sprinkling, for not a hint of such a practice is given. Had Jesus and his apostles been in the habit of sprinkling infants, the disciples would have been exhorting the parents to bring their children, instead of seeking to send them away. It is strange that these advocates of infant sprinkling will hunt so persistently for scripture to prove that it is not necessary to baptize adults, and then hunt as persistently for scripture to prove that infants ought to be baptized.

"For to such belongeth the kingdom of heaven." In Matthew 18:1-4 Jesus teaches that we must become as little children, or we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven; and that "who-soever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." If a person is humble, he trusts God.

LESSON LINKS

Jesus is now on his way to Jerusalem. To avoid going through Samaria to Jerusalem, the Jews of Galilee went down through Perea on the east side of the Jordan, and recrossed the Jordan east of Jericho. In going this way Jesus would have opportunity to teach the crowds that were on their way to Jerusalem. When he stopped at a house he again encountered the Pharisees. They had asked him if it was lawful for a man to put away his wife.

17. 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?

17. As Jesus was leaving the house where he had stopped, "going forth into the way," or road, "there ran one to him." From Matthew we learn that he was a young man, and from Luke that he was a ruler. Notice that the record says that he ran. Perhaps he had just learned that Jesus was in the community, and came to present his question. Seeing Jesus already starting on his journey, he ran to overtake him. That he ran to Jesus shows great interest and intense purpose. Being a man of wealth and of fine character, he would, of course, have a standing in that community that meant much to him. And he knew that he would be misunderstood and criticized for going to Jesus with an earnest desire for information, when all other leaders were against Jesus. But that did not deter him—he ran openly and unafraid to Jesus. At first glance we see much to admire in this rich young ruler. He kneeled before Jesus, showing that he regarded Jesus as his superior. His kneeling also showed his respect for Jesus as a teacher. "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" The only source of information he had concerning eternal life was what we now term the Old Testament, and eternal life is not very prominently set forth in that portion of the scriptures. Yet we are not to infer that the Old Testament worthies were ignorant of a life after death. They looked for a city whose builder and maker is God, and they desired a heavenly country. (Heb. 11:10, 16.) And Job said, "And after my skin, even this body, is destroyed, then without my flesh I shall see God." (Job 19:26.) Leeser's translation has, "... freed from my body I shall see God." And Daniel says that some shall awake to eternal life. (Dan. 12:2.) Our young man knew of eternal life, and desired very much to inherit it. The young ruler knew that eternal life was an inheritance, that nothing he could do would merit it, or bring it to him as a debt God owed him for service, but he knew also that he had to do something in order to become an heir to eternal life. Jesus did not contradict that idea, but told him plainly what to do. One of the most hurtful theories ever taught is the doctrine that a person can do nothing to inherit eternal life. It is plainly

declared that Jesus, through suffering, "became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation." (Heb. 5:8, 9.)

18, 19. And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good save one, even God. 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.

18,19. The young man addressed Jesus as "Good Teacher." "And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good save one, even God." No human being is absolutely good; only God is that. Jesus was therefore reminding the young man that in calling him good he was really recognizing his Deity. He was God manifest in the flesh. Then Jesus proceeds more directly to answer his question. "Thou knowest the commandments." Or as Matthew reports Jesus as saying, "IT thou wouldest enter into life, keep the commandments." That was what he had to do to inherit eternal life. According to Matthew he asked which commandment he must keep.. Jesus replied, "Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor thy father and mother." The command, "Do not defraud," is not one of the ten commandments, unless Jesus meant it as a condensing of the tenth. Matthew's report contains one which is not in the ten commandments, namely, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Jesus mentions the commands that have to do with man's relation to man, on the grounds, perhaps, that the average religious person is more likely to neglect these than the others.

20, 21. And he said unto him, Teacher, all these things have I observed from my youth. And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said unto him, 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.

20, 21. "Teacher, all these things have I observed from my youth." He had been carefully taught, and had kept himself under excellent discipline. We have no reason to doubt his sincerity and truthfulness. He had been upright in his relations with others. "And Jesus looking upon him loved him." He loved him in a special and personal way, not as he loved all

men. He loved him for what he saw in him. That was a wonderful tribute to the young man. But how much did the young man love Jesus? The young man himself would not know till he was put to the test. If his love would stand the test, if he loved Jesus more than all things else, and if he desired heavenly treasures more than he desired earthly treasures Jesus would bless him in the highest degree. Notwithstanding his faithful observance of the law of Moses, the young man felt that there was still something he lacked; otherwise he would not have come to the Great Teacher for information. "One thing thou lackest." His real love for the Lord had not yet been put to the test. "Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." Instead of thinking so much about what Jesus required, he should have thought more about what he offered. His riches, though great, were small in comparison with the inexhaustible riches of eternal life. "And come, follow me." Jesus wanted such an excellent young man in the company of his personal followers. His energy, integrity, and ability would have gone far had he, like Paul, been willing to say, "Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. 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, that I may gain Christ." (Phil. 3:7, 8.) But had the young man gained no distinction by giving up all and following Christ, he would have done much good to his fellow man, and would have gained the riches of the eternal world.

22. But his countenance fell at the saying, and he went away sorrowful: for he was one that had great possessions.

22. "His countenance fell at the saying, and he went away sorrowful." He had come to the parting of ways, and he took the wrong road. He would not pay the price; riches were dearer to him than eternal life, though he very much desired eternal life. "He went away sorrowful." He was not equal to the test. Men have been tested by other things than money. God tested Abraham when he commanded him to offer up Isaac.

When God saw that Abraham would not falter, he stayed his hand. It might have been so in this case, had the young man promptly agreed to sell all he had and give to the poor. On that point it is useless to speculate.

23-27. And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished exceedingly, saying unto him, Then who can be saved? Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for all things are possible with God.

23-27. No doubt Jesus was sorrowful, as was the young man. "And Jesus looked round about" him. He would scan the faces of his disciples to see how the incident affected them. The young man was intellectual, energetic, clean in life, a businessman, and very much interested—a very promising prospect; yet Jesus had driven him away, so it would seem to the average disciple. "What a calamity!" some of today would say, and they would feel that Jesus lacked tact, and that he could not interest the young folks. Would those disciples feel the same way about it? On a former occasion some of the disciples had objected to his demands, and had quit him. (John 6:20-68.) To emphasize the danger of riches, Jesus said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" It was an amazing statement, for few people ever lived that did not at some time wish to be rich. In reply to their amazement, Jesus addressed his disciples as "children." "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" This gives the key to the whole matter. Trusting in his riches was the young man's trouble. It is certain that riches had not robbed him of his interest in religion, nor made a bad man of him; and yet they had not fully satisfied the longing of his soul. His conduct is rather puzzling. When offered that which would satisfy his longings, he rejected it, and held on to that which had never satisfied! After all, he trusted his riches more than he did the Lord. "It is easier for a camel to go

through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." This proverb presented no difficulties to the people to whom Jesus was speaking, but it has been a source of much trouble to the commentators. All sorts of absurd explanations have been given. It will help you to understand it if you will imagine yourself as one of his hearers, and used to their methods of speech. They were used to exaggerated proverbs; all the orientals were. Jesus used them. Consider this: "Ye blind guides, that strain out the gnat, and swallow the camel!" (Matt. 23:24.) To understand the Lord we must consider the meaning he attached to riches. In that conversation, the rich man was the man who trusted in his riches. So long as one trusts in his riches, he cannot be saved. A very poor man may belong to this class. The wage earner may trust in his pay check, however meager it may be. The disciples understood that the language of Jesus applied to all, for they asked, "Then who can be saved?" They thought the language would cut everybody off, whether they be rich or poor, for it seemed that about everybody trusted in riches. If so, then who can be saved? "With men it is impossible, but not with God: for all things are possible with God." No man has ever been able to originate a moral philosophy, nor a system of social service, nor a religion, that will wean men away from loving and trusting riches, and cause them to trust unreservedly in God. Only God can do that. Through the unselfish service of his Son, both in his life and in his death, God can and does lead men to love and trust him instead of riches. We come to trust one who suffered so much for us. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself. But this he said, signifying by what manner of death he should die." (John 12:32, 33.) Jesus was speaking of his death on the cross. That death would cause men to become unselfish, and draw them to Christ.

28-31. Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or lands, for my sake, and for the gospel's sake, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with

persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.

28-31. Peter and the other apostles had left all to follow Christ. Matthew reports Peter as saying, "What then shall we have?" Jesus replied that those who had left all for his sake and the gospel's sake would receive a hundredfold now in this present time, and in the world to come eternal life. This great sacrifice must be made for his sake and for the gospel's sake; no reward is promised for a sacrifice made for any other reason. And the reward promised is for this life, as well as for the life to come. In its connection with this lesson, it is hard to see *the* force of the proverb of verse thirty-one. In Matthew's account the parable of the man hiring laborers for his vineyard is given to show its application, in that the first that were employed were the last to be paid; but even so, the student may find it difficult to see how that will work out in the world to come. But no matter; we will understand it then. In the meantime we can trust God instead of riches.

Luke 11

1. And it came to pass, as he was praying in a certain, place, that when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples.

1. John the Baptist had taught his disciples to pray, though we are not informed as to the nature of the prayers John taught them. People do need to be taught how to pray, and What to pray for. It is likely that the disciple wanted to know how to pray, and not merely what he ought to pray; for the request shows that he felt the need of praying. He did not know how to pray nor what to pray for. In the sixth chapter of Matthew Jesus gives some teaching on how to pray, and how not to pray. A secret, or persona!, prayer should not be prayed in a public

place. A secret prayer should be prayed in secret. No prayer is heard for its multitude of words, though some public prayers are overburdened with words. A public prayer is supposed to be the prayer of an assembly of worshipers. One man is designated to lead. Naturally he would be supposed to pray for those things that concerned the whole assembly of worshipers. The worshipers follow the prayer, and at the close sign the petition, so to speak, with their amens. It is then the united petition of the worshipers. This makes it necessary for the leader to speak so that the entire congregation can understand what he says, else how can they say amen? In public prayers there is a temptation to the leader to make a nice speech, so as to impress the church with his ability in prayer! Leaders who do such things need to be taught to pray to the Lord, and not to make speeches to the worshipers.

2-4. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Father, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we ourselves also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And bring us not into temptation.

2-4. On account of conditions and circumstances prayers, to be appropriate to the occasion, must vary. It seems, therefore, that Jesus was giving them a model by which to formulate their prayers. In fact, in Matthew 6:9, Jesus says, "After this manner therefore pray ye." He then gave them practically the same words as are found in this section of our lesson. Where Luke has "Father" Matthew has, "Our Father who art in heaven." Search the Bible through and you will not find in any of the recorded prayers the endearing terms so often heard in prayers of today. God is addressed with reverence and awe, but never as "our dear, loving, heavenly Father." Why not go by the Bible in this respect as well as in others? The Lord teaches us to pray, and how to pray, but many do not heed the teaching. Even our songs of praise, many of them, are too maudlin to be scriptural in style of expression. There is dignity in saying, "Father," or, "Our Father who art in heaven." This term recognizes him as more than God to us, more than

the Creator. The term "Father" is applied to him because he sustains a relation to us similar to that of our fathers. There is a close relationship between father and child. The father has an interest in his children, and yearns for their welfare and happiness. He hears their cries and grieves over their troubles and sorrows. Within his power, he gives them what he thinks is best for them to have, and withholds from them what he thinks would be to their hurt. And as God is our Father, he seeks our highest good, and grants to his faithful children their rightful desires. If not, in what sense is he a Father?

"Hallowed be thy name." To hallow is to make sacred, or to hold as sacred. To hallow the name of God is to revere it, to esteem it above all other names. This is a petition, therefore, that God's name be revered throughout the whole earth. Those who revere his name will not speak it lightly; they will not use it as a byword, nor in foolish jesting, nor swear falsely by that name. Perjury is, therefore, a double sin; it is lying and taking the name of God in vain. Let the name of God be held and spoken in reverence, as becomes children of God.

"Thy kingdom come." The kingdom foretold by the prophets had not then been established. Its near approach had been preached by John the Baptist, and was so preached by Jesus himself. It was, therefore, appropriate for the disciples to pray for it to come. Since it has come, why should anyone pray for it to come? Would it not sound queer for one to pray for the church to come? It would be just as appropriate as to pray for the kingdom to come. If a man is a Christian, he is in the kingdom; it would not be sensible, therefore, for such a one to pray for the kingdom to come. We may pray for God's kingdom to be increased—for more and more people to be brought into it, and for those in it to be better citizens of that kingdom.

"Give us day by day our daily bread." The marginal reading has, "Greek, our bread for the coming day." This is a petition for the necessities of life—food, clothing, and shelter. Of course, Jesus did not mean to encourage his followers to look for these things to be handed to them without any effort on their part. God has appointed that men must work for the

things they need; and yet there are many forces that may help or destroy our efforts—forces that God alone can control. Man can cultivate the soil and plant the seed, but he can have no control over the weather conditions that make growth possible. We pray for those things that are clearly beyond our power to produce. Laws in the physical world may be invariable, but that does not hinder our using them, or operating by them, in answering the petitions of our children or the call for help from anyone. God can do infinitely more than we can; let us not try to make him helpless under the operation of his own laws.

"And forgive us our sins." This petition sets forth clearly the idea that the followers of Christ can commit sin; if that were not so, there would be no use to teach them to pray for the forgiveness of sins. To those who would claim that they do not sin, John says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 John 1:8.) Were it not for the mercy and grace of God, we would all be doomed for all eternity. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9.) Therefore, the one who does not think he has any sins to confess deceives himself, and has no promise that his sins will be forgiven. But how many can say what Jesus taught them to say? "For we ourselves also forgive every one that is indebted to us." Sin is here spoken of as a debt to God. Obedience is his due; sin is a failure to give him his due. When therefore we sin, we have not paid him what is due him.

"And bring us not into temptation." Do not put us to the test; do not bring us into conditions that will try us. The petition is a recognition of our weakness; we might not stand the trial. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it." (1 Cor. 10:13.) But in our ignorance we might not find the way of escape, or in our weakness might not take advantage of the way of escape.

5-8. And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say to him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine is come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him; and he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee? I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will arise and give him as many as he needeth.

5-8. The illustration Jesus gave seems a little strange to us, for the customs of today are not as they were then. The man had securely shut the door; besides he did not want to disturb the children. It is easy for parents to sympathize with him on that point. He preferred that his friend would go on, and not cause him to disturb his children; but his friend was persistent, he would disturb them anyway. So, because of his friend's persistence, he arose and gave him as many loaves as he wanted. And Jesus gave that illustration to encourage his disciples to be persistent in their praying. The same point is emphasized in the parable of the unjust judge and the importunate widow. (Luke 18:1-8.) The widow felt that her cause was just; yet knowing the judge to be selfish and unjust, she persisted in her pleas till she obtained justice. Jesus spoke this parable to them "to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint." That is, they should persist in their praying and not give up.

9, 10. And I say unto you. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

9, 10. There are limits to all such promises. If we turn our ear away from hearing the law, God will not hear us. If what we ask for is not what we ought to have, God will not grant our request. We know not how to pray as we ought. (Rom. 8:26.) We, like children, desire many things that are not best for us to have; but God is a wise Father. There are some things that God has definitely promised; we know that it is according to his will to grant such things. In making our petitions for other things, it is appropriate to say, "if it be thy will."

11-13. And of which of you that is a father shall his son ask a loaf, and he give him a stone? or a fish, and he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

11-13. When children ask for things they need, no father will give them hurtful or useless things. Jesus uses this illustration to show that our father in heaven is more willing to give good things to his children than are earthly fathers. Where Luke has "the Holy Spirit," Matthew has "good things." As Luke records it, the Holy Spirit is to be given to those that pray for the Holy Spirit. As the ordinary gift of the Holy Spirit is promised to all that obey the Lord, it does not seem that it is this for which we are to pray; for a disciple to pray such a prayer would be to pray for what he already has. While the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit was given according to his own will, yet it was proper and right for the disciples to desire such gifts. (1 Cor. 12:11; 14:1.) As it was right to desire such gifts, it would be lawful to pray for them. As such gifts have ceased to be given, it would not now be proper to pray for them.

LESSON LINKS

From the record it seems that the first criticism the leaders of the Jews made of Jesus was that he ate with sinners and publicans; but as time went on and Jesus became more and more prominent before the people, they became more severe in criticizing and denouncing him. It is interesting to read the records and notice the various grounds on which they criticized him, and the number of times they tried to entrap him in his talk. After they began to notice him, they never let up on their opposition to him. Perhaps they were not conscious of all the things that so enraged them. (1) He had not been educated in their great schools in Jerusalem, and therefore had not been authorized to teach by those who gave such authorization. (2) He attracted many more hearers than all of them combined could attract, and that filled them with envy. (3) He had no

regard for their traditions which they held to be even more sacred than the written law of Moses. (4) He criticized them severely, and that infuriated them. They wanted no reformer to come along and accuse them of being great sinners, when they felt themselves so superior to him. At the time of our lesson they had about reached the point where they were ready to resort to any means to rid their country of him.

On the occasion of our lesson, when Jesus cast out a demon, "some of them said, By Beelzebub the prince of demons casteth he out demons." Jesus showed them the folly of such a charge, for it was equal to saying that Satan was making war against himself. In the course of his reply Jesus informed them that he had overcome the devil, had taken from him his armor, and divided his spoils. Matthew reports Jesus as asking, "How can one enter into the house of the strong man, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man?" (Matt. 12:29.) It is easy to draw a conclusion from that, for Jesus was actually spoiling Satan's goods.

37, 38. Now as he spake, a Pharisee asketh him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first bathed himself before dinner.

37, 38. When we take into consideration the growing hostility of the Pharisees toward Jesus, and their schemes to get him to incriminate himself in his talk, we can feel sure that this Pharisee did not ask Jesus to dine with him as an act of true hospitality, nor as a gesture of good will. Jesus, utterly disregarding the tradition of the elders, sat down to dinner without first having bathed himself. "When the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first bathed himself before dinner." "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, 4.) If they had been out in a crowd they feared that they might have touched some unclean person, and thereby become defiled. Jesus had just come in from the throngs of people; hence, the astonishment of

this Pharisee that he did not bathe before he ate. From the reply Jesus made, this Pharisee must have been rather severe in his criticism of Jesus. The average Pharisee was so righteous in his own estimation that he was very harsh toward those who did not measure up to his traditional standards.

39-41. And the Lord said unto him, Now ye the Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the platter; but your inward part is full of extortion and wickedness. Ye foolish ones, did not he that made the outside make the inside also? But give for alms those things which are within; and behold, all things are clean unto you.

39-41. The Pharisee depended much on forms and ceremonies, especially those things which the law of Moses said nothing about. They were very prompt and exacting in keeping their body clean, but entertained all sorts of evil thoughts and purposes in their hearts. It is well to keep the body clean, but to bathe as a religious ceremony when no bath is needed is to put more attention on the body than on the heart. For such practices Jesus said to them, "Ye foolish ones." They were not foolish in the sense that they had no intelligence, but in the sense that men are foolish when they lead sinful lives. They were foolish because they kept the outside clean, but inside they were full of extortion and wickedness. He that made the outside made the inside also; the outside perishes, but the inside endures forever. They would keep up a fair outward appearance that they might the more successfully extort from the less suspecting. Some people will never learn that the outward appearance is not a true index to what is in the heart. When the devil comes they expect him to look like he is so often pictured, not believing what Paul said, that he is able to transform himself into an angel of light. Jesus admonishes these hardhearted self-righteous Pharisees to give alms of the things that are within. The best and most valuable thing any person has is a good heart, a good inner man. A good heart means a good understanding, good motives, and good purposes. Many people need teaching and encouragement, and a man with a good heart is able to give that—the best alms any man can give. And if he has a good heart, he will give what

material assistance he can. It all comes from within.

42-44. But woe unto you Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and every herb, and pass over justice and the love of God: but these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Woe unto you Pharisees! for ye love the chief seats in the synagogues, and the salutations in the marketplaces. Woe unto you! for ye are as the tombs which appear not, and the men that walk over them know it not.

42-44. The Pharisees had been drawing pictures of themselves, and found themselves very satisfactory to themselves. And when that Pharisee stood up in the temple to pray, he exhibited to the Lord a picture of himself drawn by himself. That beautiful picture must have made the publican feel more sinful, but it did not fool the Lord. These Pharisees had exhibited pictures of their own drawing before the people, till the people rated them as full of righteousness; but Jesus saw beneath the outer surface, and found them full of all sorts of corruption. They were faithful in tithing the small things—garden truck, but passed over justice and the love of God. It was right for them to pay tithes, but why pay tithes while neglecting weightier matters? So far as gaining any favor with the Lord was concerned, they were merely throwing away tithes so long as they neither dealt justly nor loved God. Some people do such little service, and what they do render is done in such a heartless way, that what they do is a distinct loss to them. And the Pharisees loved prominence, and they let no opportunity pass to keep themselves prominently before the people. They had an inordinate desire to be looked up to, and to be saluted in public places. And that unholy desire sometimes gets into members of the church. Diotrophes loved to have the pre-eminence, and became so puffed up with a feeling of importance that he would not even recognize the apostle John. But how could such prominence-seekers be like tombs that have been so leveled off that no one knows that he is walking over the putrid matter that was beneath his feet? They were so skilled in hiding the corruption of their hearts that no one suspected what was there. Too many people are fooled by outside appearance.

45. And one of the lawyers answering saith unto him, Teacher, in saying this thou reproachest us also.

45. "Thou reproachest us also," said a lawyer. Jesus had not singled out the lawyers in what he said, but this lawyer saw that the language of Jesus described the lawyers also. If Jesus had not directly addressed his remarks to the Pharisees, these lawyers would have thought that he was talking about them; as it was, they recognized that his description of the Pharisees fitted them also. Certain types of humanity are found in all parts of the world. Frequently when a preacher shows the faults of a certain type, having no one especially in mind, someone in the audience comes around after dismissal, and says, "Who has been telling you about me?" Usually it does no good to say, "No one"; for such a one does not realize that he or she is only one specimen of a type.

46-48, 52. And he said. 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. Woe unto you! for ye build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. So ye are witnesses and consent unto the works of your fathers: for they killed them, and ye build their tombs.

Woe unto you lawyers! for ye took away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.

46-48, 52. It was tragical that the best informed men, as well as those claiming to be the most righteous, were so wrong in heart and practice. The tradition of the elders was very exacting: the lawyers would be experts in this field. The tradition of the elders had not been committed to writing at that time, but was handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. These lawyers would busy themselves to see that the common people observed all things required in the tradition of the elders; they would not make the burdens lighter, nor help the people bear them. By such tyranny they supposed that they were showing their superiority; such is the folly of tyrants. And though these lawyers builded tombs for the prophets their fathers killed, they acknowledged themselves to be the sons of the murderers of the prophets: and their efforts to destroy Jesus, another of Gods prophets, showed that

they were no better than their fathers; in fact, by their conduct they were endorsing what their fathers did.

"Ye took away the key of knowledge." Compare verse 52 with Matthew 23:13. By their traditions and their materialistic interpretation of the prophecies and promises of the Old Testament, these leaders would keep themselves and others from entering the kingdom. They had taken away the key of knowledge by their materialistic conception of the kingdom, and some are even now in a like condition. With their ideas of the kingdom, they had no key to the correct knowledge of the kingdom. The Jews were not contented with acquainting themselves with the promises and prophecies of their scriptures, but they figured out a scheme of things, a regular program that they felt sure the Lord would follow. They thought they knew exactly what the Messiah would do and what his kingdom would be. For that reason the leaders could not understand that the promises and prophecies were being fulfilled right before their eyes. When the Lord did not follow their program, they rejected him. Their own planning had taken from them the key to the right understanding of God's plan.

53, 54. And when he was come out from thence, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press upon him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things; laying wait for him, to catch something out of his mouth.

53, 54. Even before the events of this lesson, many leaders of the Jews had wanted to put Jesus to death, but the fame of Jesus had become so great that they feared the people. When they tried to humiliate him before the people by argument, he gained more favor with the people by putting to rout his antagonists. But it seems that they now hoped to do one of two things; either to get him to say something that would turn the people against him, or to say something that they could use as a basis for the charge of treason against the Roman government. They, of course, would be satisfied with either result. And the speech he had just made made them even more furious, so that they "began to press upon him vehemently, and to provoke him

to speak of many things; laying wait for him, to catch something out of his mouth." For the moment they were too angry and excited to think about anything that Luke considered worth reporting. Being noisy, as a bunch of Jews are when they are excited or angry, they likely all tried to talk at once. On some other occasions they were very deliberate in planning what they would do and say, but not now—they took no time to plan anything.

Luke 12

13,14. And one out of the multitude said unto him, Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me. But he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?

13, 14. Amongst the Jews the oldest son received twice as much of the inheritance as did either of the other children, and it is said that sometimes the oldest son tried to manage so as to get the whole inheritance into his hands. That might have been the trouble in this case, and a younger brother wanted his share. At least, one brother felt he was being cheated out of his part of the inheritance. It is shameful that children will sometimes fuss among themselves about the property left to them by their parents. It is hardly likely that this man thought Jesus had any official authority to adjust disputes over property, but more likely he thought the moral force of the word of so great a teacher would cause his brother to make a just settlement. He was mistaken in the mission and the work of Jesus. Jesus was then a teacher; he did not come to be a judge in legal disputes. So Jesus said to the man, "Man, who made me a fudge or a divider over you?" He came to save souls not to divide property; and to, lift men above petty quarrels about material things, and to prepare them for greater riches than an earthly inheritance.

15. And he said unto them, Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

15. Having told the man he had no legal authority to settle disputes about property, he now addresses all who were present: "Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness." A man is far gone when he will rob his own brother. Had there been no covetousness, there would not have been this fuss between two brothers. There have been many family rows over property. Love in a family is too sweet and delightful to be destroyed by property; it does not seem that anyone could enjoy property that he had alienated his family in gaining. How can one live at peace with himself, if he has allowed greed to break up family unity? What is life when love, where it should bloom and fruit most luxuriantly, has withered and died? Life does not consist in the abundance of the things one possesses. Men can have much of this world's goods, and live a dreary life, and die a miserable death, and be lost in the world to come. How foolish to trust in material possessions; for what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? "But godliness with contentment is great gain; for we brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out; but having food and covering we shall be therewith content. 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 and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Tim. 6:6-10.) And thus does covetousness, which is idolatry (Col. 3:5), lead men to destruction.

16-19. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he reasoned within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have not where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry.

16-19. A parable is not fiction; it is some description of an

actual occurrence or material thing given to illustrate a spiritual truth; but what Jesus said about this rich fool is not really a parable. Jesus had warned his hearers against covetousness, and then told what happened to a certain rich man. If people would get over the idea that a parable is a piece of fiction, it would clear thinking on parables. When Jesus said, "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully," he was stating what had actually occurred. He could have named the man. In all ages there have been men like this rich man. They have much goods, and think only of their own comfort. This man had fertile lands; his harvests were great. Then it seems that he had an unusually good harvest; such a great harvest that his barns would not hold it. He had to do some thinking and planning; for the moment his riches were a burden to him. He mused in his own heart; he took counsel with himself, and, like many another fool, left God out of consideration—left God out of his plans. He would tear down his old barns, and build others large enough to take care of all his goods, so he thought. He would then say to himself, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry." He was depending on material things to satisfy the needs of his soul; he felt secure in his wealth. For some time now we have heard much about social security, economic security, etc. A regular monthly or weekly income gives security against what? But is there such security? After all, there is not much security in wealth or in a regular income. The rich man felt proud of the security which he fancied his wealth would give him; but he did not enjoy the many years of security which he planned. There is no real security in material things.

20, 21. **But God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.**

20, 21. In his plans and works a man may not consider God, but he cannot leave God out; he will have the final disposal of all things. Ignoring God does not destroy him. It is neither

right nor safe to make wealth the god in whom we trust; but a man does not have to be rich to make riches his god. Even a poor man may long for the day to come when he can do as this rich man did. When a man becomes so full of greed as was this rich man, or is filled with ambition to become as was this rich man, he is of no practical benefit to the world. He is a sort of make-believe man, around whom property has accumulated. When he is dead, the world has lost nothing of value, for his property remains in the world; the things he valued most he leaves behind. To all who trust in riches—to every covetous man, God will sooner or later say, "Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?" And whose they shall be will determine what use will be made of them. That is one thing that bothered Solomon: "And I hated all my labor wherein I labored under the sun, seeing that I must leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he will be a wise man or a fool? yet will he have rule over all my labor wherein I have labored, and wherein I have showed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity." (Eccles. 2:18, 19.) And it so happened that the man who had rule over all that Solomon had built was a fool, a fool in that he wrecked the kingdom. Any man is a fool if he trusts in riches for happiness and security. Solomon himself trusted too much in worldly glory and material prosperity. Toward the close of his life he found that worldly glory and prosperity did not bring happiness and security. The things he had so gloried in turned out to be so disappointing to him that life soured on him, so much so that he said, "So I hated life, because the work that was wrought under the sun was grievous unto me; for all is vanity and a striving after wind." (Eccles. 2:17.) A man may lay up great riches, but when he dies, "whose shall they be?" In the eyes of the world a man may be very wise, and yet God may call him a fool. "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in

heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also." (Matt. 6:19-21.)

22-25. And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. For the life is more than the food, and the body than the raiment. Consider the ravens, that they sow not, neither reap; which have no store-chamber nor barn; and God feedeth them: of how much more value are ye than the birds! And which of you by being anxious can add a cubit unto the measure of his life?

22-25. Jesus draws a lesson from the rich man's folly and fate. To do our duty, to work for an honest living is required of all of us. When we do our duty, we should then serenely trust God for results. Anxiety and worry do no one any good, but really unfit him for the best work. It is true that God feeds the ravens, but they must gather their own food. The ravens and other birds live the life God made them to live; they depart not from their appointed lot in life. Of course, we cannot live as do ravens, but in one way we can, like they, live the life God intended us to live. If we do that, we need not be anxious about what we shall eat or wear. Anxiety does not increase one's income, but may destroy one's health and soul. "And that which fell among the thorns, these are they that have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection." (Luke 8:14.) Anxiety does not increase one's income, does not lengthen one's life, but is a painful emotion. Jesus refers to riches as deceitful. (Matt. 13:22.)

35-38. Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning; and be ye yourselves like unto men looking for their lord, when he shall return from the marriage feast; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may straightway open unto him. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and shall come and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, and if in the third, and find them so, blessed are those servants.

35-38. People in those days wore loose garments. They used a girdle, or belt, to bind their garments about them when they were walking, or serving. In preparing and serving meals

servants girded up their clothing about their loins. Having their loins already girded up indicated readiness to serve. If their master was away, and they had their loins girded and their lamps burning, they showed alertness and readiness to serve him the moment he entered the house. He would not have to call for lights—they had them ready. He would not have to call for them to get ready to serve him—they were ready when he came. Jesus aimed this at his disciples. Like all parables, it cannot be made to fit at every point. The essential idea is that the followers of Christ should always keep themselves ready for any service. Good servants are the Lord's "minute men"—ready any minute to do his bidding. They are to be "like unto men looking for their Lord." Of course, the Lord did not mean that his servants should, or even could, get everything ready, and then stand around watching and waiting for him to come. The servants that he will find watching are the servants *who* are actively engaged in doing his will. "Blessed are those servants whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching." When servants are in charge of a house, there are other things for them to watch out for besides their lord's return. They must keep a close watch to see that everything goes on right and in readiness for their lord's return. For every servant to be busy in the discharge of his duty was the best preparation the servants could make. "And if he shall come in the second watch, and if in the third, and find them so, blessed are those servants."

39, 40. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what hour the thief was coming, he would have watched, and not have left his house to be broken through. Be ye also ready: for man hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh.

39, 40. The thief does not advertise the time of his coming, or even that he is coming at all. He does not want people to expect his coming. His success depends greatly on his not being expected. If a thief were expected, it would be foolish not to guard against him; a sensible man would be ready for his coming. Jesus uses this illustration to impress on his disciples that they should always be ready. This emphasizing readiness

shows that watchfulness really means readiness. Whether the Lord comes soon or late is none of our business; our business is to make ready: "for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh." It will be well for people to meditate on what will then be the difference between those who are ready and those who are not ready; study this point, not in the light of what you think should be, but in the light of what God says will be. He will decide that point, and not you; and he will decide it in harmony with his will, and not according to your notions.

41-44. And Peter said, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even unto all? And the Lord said, Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall set over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will set him over all that he hath.

41-44. It is not hard for us to decide what it takes to constitute a faithful servant in the affairs of this life. Anyone who works for another serves him. We have no slaves as they did in those days; but the man who hires himself to work for another has sold his services for a stipulated time at a named price. It is the hired servant's duty to work faithfully at the task assigned to him; he must work according to the plans and purposes of the man who hires him. He never thinks of adopting the idea that one way is just as good as another, just so he is honest; for he knows that he could not be honest with his employer in following such a notion. From this, let us learn what it is to be an honest, faithful servant of God. Peter asked the Lord a peculiar question: "Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even unto all?" The Lord requires faithful service on the part of all. He did not give a direct reply to Peter's question, but replied by asking him a question. "Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord shall set over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season?" From the parable of the unrighteous steward, it seems that the steward sometimes had charge of his master's business—a sort of general manager. (Luke 16:1-13.) He certainly had charge in the household affairs; a part of his duty was to look after the food supply. We can easily see what was required in a steward, and

how faithful a good steward would act. "Here, moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." (1 Cor. 4:2.) "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing." From the parable of the unrighteous steward we learn that all servants of God are stewards. They have certain powers and property committed to them to be used in the service of the Lord. The property we have in our care is the Lord's; we are to use it in the interest of his cause. And so with any God-given power we have. Paul had been intrusted with the gospel to be preached to the Gentiles. "Let a man so account of us, as of ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." (1 Cor. 4:1.) And even though had he not been willing to discharge his duties as a steward, the obligation still rested upon him. "For if I do this of mine own will, I have a reward: but if not of mine own will, I have a stewardship intrusted to me." (1 Cor. 9:17.) All Christians, in a general sense, are stewards of the gospel—it is their duty to teach it to others. "For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God." (Heb. 5:12.) We are to be good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1 Pet. 4:7-11.) By being faithful stewards, we make for ourselves friends who will receive us into eternal tabernacles. (Luke 16:9.) Unless we regard the following statement as added to complete the parable, it is somewhat confusing: "Of a truth I say unto you, that he will set him over all that he hath." The man had one steward, and from the parable it seems that his responsibility included only household affairs. If he proved faithful in that capacity, he would set him over all his affairs—make him general manager. It does not seem possible that the Lord has picked out any one Christian to whom that would apply. It does show that the faithful steward will be richly rewarded. But if there is any one Christian today that imagines he will some day be appointed general manager over all the Lord's business, he is deluding himself.

45, 46. But if that servant shall say in his heart. My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to

eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour when he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint his portion with the unfaithful.

45, 46. A faithful servant would have discharged his duty whether his lord came early or late; the fact that his lord delayed his coming would not have caused him to be unfaithful. But delay in his lord's coming gave the unfaithful servant a chance to show what was in him. This servant had charge of his lord's affairs, and therefore had servants under his authority. He was a bully and a drunkard. There was no righteousness and honesty in him; so he said to himself, "My lord delayeth his coming." He therefore began to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to fill himself with food and strong drink. Of course, he thought he would have time for all this and then to straighten up before his lord returned; for he would not want to be so doing when his lord returned. But the whole parable shows that he was fundamentally wrong in his attitude toward his lord and his fellow servants. "The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour when he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint his portion with the unfaithful"—"the hypocrites," according to Matthew. This parable, therefore, shows that a servant may so conduct himself as to be finally lost. "There shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth." (Matt. 24:51.) This is expressive of the extreme anguish which the unfaithful and hypocritical servant shall suffer.

47, 48. And that servant, who knew his lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more.

47, 48. The servant who made a mistake while honestly seeking to do his lord's will is different from the one who deliberately does as he pleases regardless of his lord's will; and so also a sin of ignorance is not as bad as a deliberate setting aside of authority. A man may sin through weakness while recognizing the proper authority. After a law has been

enacted and published, there is no excuse for ignorance. A man who could know the Lord's will, but fails to do so, cannot claim immunity from punishment on the claim that he sinned ignorantly. A failure to know the Lord's will is itself a sin. The following quotation is from Clarke's commentary: "The subject of the forty-seventh and forty-eighth verses has been greatly misunderstood, and has been used in a very dangerous manner. Many have thought that their ignorance of divine things would be sufficient excuse for their crimes; and that they might have but few stripes, they voluntarily continued in ignorance. But such persons should know that God will judge them for the knowledge they might have received, but refused to acquire. No criminal is excused, because he has been ignorant of the law of his country, and so transgressed them; when it can be proved that those very laws have been published throughout the land. Much knowledge however is a dangerous thing, if it be not improved; as this will greatly aggravate the condemnation of its possessor. Nor will it avail a person, in the land of light and information to be ignorant, as he shall be judged for what he might have known, and, perhaps in this case, the punishment of this voluntarily ignorant man will be even greater than the more enlightened; because his crimes are aggravated by this consideration, that he refused to have the light that he might neither be obliged to walk in the light, nor account for the possession of it. So we find that the plea of ignorance is a men' refuge of lies, and none can plead it who has the book of God within his reach, and lives in a country blessed with the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Some Reflections

Ignorance saves no one; if it did, the more ignorant a person is the more sure he would be of his salvation. On the contrary, ignorance causes many to be lost. "Jehovah hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor goodness, nor knowledge of God in the land." "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." (Hos. 4:1, 6.) Every servant

of God is commanded to add knowledge to his faith. The man who does not seek to know God's will does not love God.

Luke 13

LESSON LINKS

In verses 49-59 of chapter 12 Jesus makes some striking statements. "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and what do I desire, if it is already kindled? . . . Think ye that I am come to give peace in the earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: for there shall be from henceforth five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. They shall be divided, father against son, and son against father; mother against daughter, and daughter against mother; mother in law against her daughter in law, and daughter in law against her mother in law." In Matthew's report we have this: "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace but a sword." (10:34.) In harmony with these statements of Jesus, Paul said to Timothy, "Fight the good fight of faith." (1 Tim. 6:12.) Of himself he said, "I have fought the good fight." (2 Tim. 4:7.) And yet Jesus is the Prince of Peace; "and he came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were nigh." (Eph. 2:17.) He came to make peace between God and man; there would then be peace between all that were at peace with God. But sin must be fought; evil must be opposed; false doctrine must be exposed. There must be division between the good and the bad, and sinners will be against the righteous. If there were no sin, there would be perfect peace on the earth; there would be no division, no strife; there would be nothing against which good people would need to wage war.

1-3 Now there were some present at that very season who told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered and said unto them, Think ye that these Galilaeans were sinners

above all the Galilaeans, because they have suffered these things? I tell you, Nay: But, except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish.

1-3. Nothing is known of this slaying of some Galileans by Pilate save what is here told. As it was reported to Jesus as news, it must have been a then recent occurrence. The Jews of Galilee are said to have been the most turbulent of all the Jews, though the Jews were restless under the Roman yoke. There was therefore always danger of disturbances when the Jews gathered in Jerusalem for their annual feasts. These Galileans must have been raising a considerable disturbance, for it is not likely that Pilate would have killed peaceable worshipers. It is likely that they were making a demonstration against the Roman government. They were slain in the part of the temple in which animals for sacrifice were killed. For some of the Jews to be killed by the Romans and for the temple to be thus desecrated would be a horrible thing in the eyes of the Jews. And those who reported the matter to Jesus must have thought he would do something about it, for many were expecting him to declare himself their king and take vengeance on their enemies.

"Think ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans?" The Galileans were sinners, but not worse than other Galileans. The Jewish nation as a whole had become so corrupt that it could not continue much longer. Repentance was the only chance for the nation. "Except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish." There is significance in the phrase, "in like manner." Their perishing would be in a manner similar to that of the Galileans; they would die by violent means. Between thirty-five and forty years later the words of the Lord were strikingly fulfilled when the Romans overran the land of the Jews.

4. 5. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and killed them, think ye that they were offenders above all the men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

4, 5. The falling of the tower of Siloam, crushing eighteen men, is not elsewhere mentioned. Siloam is just outside and

south of Jerusalem. As Jesus mentioned the falling of the tower of Siloam, its fall must have been still fresh in the minds of his hearers. Were these eighteen men that were killed by the falling of this tower worse offenders than other men? It would seem that the people whom Pilate killed and those whom the falling wall killed thought that such things befell them because they were worse than other men. Jerusalem had many thousands of inhabitants that were as bad as those upon whom the tower fell. Unless they repented, they would perish in a similar way—"in like manner." Verse 5 is a repetition of the sentiments of verse 3.

Of course, repentance is necessary to save people from future punishment—the eternal punishment; but that punishment is not what Jesus was here talking about. That perishing will not be like that suffered by those mentioned in our text. They perished by violent means; unless the Jews repented, they would in like manner perish. If the reader wishes to see how this prediction was literally fulfilled, he will find a full account of it in Josephus' account of the overthrow of the Jewish nation and the destruction of Jerusalem. It was a fearful warning that Jesus here delivered to the Jews. This warning was later repeated in greater detail, as the reader may see by referring to Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21.

10. And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath day.

10. The word *synagogue* is derived from a Greek word that denotes *an assembly, a congregation*. It differs little, if any, from the Greek word from which we have *church*. Synagogues and synagogue worship were not required in the law of Moses. "The precise age of the introduction of synagogues among the Israelites it does not appear easy to determine. In all probability, however, they had their origin about the period of the exile; and there were then peculiar circumstances which called for their establishment. Deprived of the solemnities of their national worship, yet still retaining their religious convictions, and keenly feeling the loss they had endured, earnestly, too, longing and praying for a restoration of their for-

feited privileges, the captive Israelites could not help meeting together for the purpose of mutual sympathy, counsel, and aid, or prayer and other devout exercises."—Bible Encyclopedia. In the days of Christ and his apostles every town and city in Palestine had its synagogue or synagogues. By that time the term synagogue was applied mostly to the house, and not to the assembly. At least once the term is applied to the assembly. (Acts 13:43.)

It was an established custom with Jesus to attend these synagogue services. (Luke 4:16.) Where the synagogue was that is mentioned in the tenth verse of our lesson we are not informed. It was on a Sabbath day that the incidents of this lesson occurred.

11-18. And behold, a woman that had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years; and she was bowed together, and could in no wise lift herself up. And when Jesus saw her, he called her, and said to her. Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands upon her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

11-13. "And behold, a woman that had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years; and she was bowed together, and could in no wise lift herself up." None of the other writers mentions this incident. The woman was in a desperate condition. She had been thus afflicted so long that she must have long ago given up all hope of ever recovering from her affliction. Many people now, who are much less afflicted, give up all efforts to be at the place of worship; some become soured on everything. This woman must have been a rare character, worthy of the blessing about to be bestowed upon her. It seems that in the midst of his teaching Jesus saw her. "And when Jesus saw her, he called her, and said to her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity." He also laid his hands on her, and she was immediately healed of her infirmity. As Jesus performed miracles to prove that God was with him and that he was therefore sent of God, he arranged this healing in such a way all in the synagogue could witness the healing. The people, knowing the woman, knew that her healing was real. Had she been a stranger in their midst, they might have thought that Jesus

had arranged for her to be present and to pretend to be thus afflicted, and that the whole affair was a fraud. All could see that a real miracle had been performed.

11. And the ruler of the synagogue, being moved with indignation because Jesus had healed on the sabbath, answered and 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.

14. The ruler of the synagogue knew that a real miracle had been performed; but instead of rejoicing that such a blessing had come to this suffering woman, he was moved with indignation—Jesus had broken a tradition of the elders by healing her on the Sabbath day. Jesus had not violated the law of Moses, for it did not prohibit acts of mercy nor the practicing of the healing art on the Sabbath. In the tradition of the elders many refinements had been added to the law, one of which was that no effort was to be made to cure the sick nor to relieve human suffering on the Sabbath. Jesus kept the law, but ignored their traditions. The ruler of the synagogue regarded what Jesus did as work; so he said, "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."

15-17. But the Lord answered him, and said, 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? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound, lo, these eighteen years, to have been loosed from this bond on the day of the sabbath? And as he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame: and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

15-17. The Lord's reply to the ruler of the synagogue was a severe rebuke. "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?" They would not allow an animal to suffer for drink—the tradition of the elders allowed them to relieve the suffering of animals, but not of people. There is something wrong with a religion that makes its devotees indifferent to human suffering. They would loose their animals from the stall and lead them to water on the Sabbath to prevent their

suffering. "And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound, lo, these eighteen years, to have been loosed from this bond on the day of the Sabbath?" There is a play on words here; they loosed their animals to take them to water, Jesus loosed this daughter of Abraham from Satan's bond. Jesus mentioned the fact that the woman was a daughter of Abraham to make it more apparent to the ruler and all the worshipers that he did right in releasing her from her infirmity. His speech put his adversaries to shame; even the indignant ruler of the synagogue was silenced. The people rejoiced at what was done; in their estimation Jesus had done a glorious thing. It does seem that the ruler of the synagogue, since he saw that a real miracle of healing had been performed, would have recognized that God's hand was in the matter, and would therefore approve what was done; but these leaders of the Jews were usually so full of prejudice and feeling of their own importance that they would not accept any evidence or testimony that did not agree with their own narrow notions.

Some Reflections

To apply Luke 13:3, 5 to the perishing of the impenitent in the world to come is not handling aright the word of the Lord. He was speaking of the perishing that would come upon the Jews in the destruction of their nation. Other passages show the need of repentance to save from eternal punishment.

Jesus was moved with compassion at the sight of human suffering. To him, sickness, deformity, and all other bodily ailments were real, and not mere delusions of the mortal mind.

The statement, "Except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish," has so often been quoted as applying to the alien sinner and the final doom of the wicked, that the plain application of the passage has been greatly obscured. Jesus was not talking to alien sinners, but to Jews, who were already in covenant relationship with God, and who therefore were not aliens; neither was he talking about punishment in the next

world. To illustrate why such a calamity would befall the Jews, Jesus spoke the parable of the barren fig tree. (Luke 13:6-9.) The owner of the vineyard asked that the fig tree be cut down, because it bore no fruit. The keeper of the vineyard asked that tree be spared till he had done all he could to cause it to produce fruit; "and if it bear fruit thenceforth, well; but if not, thou shalt cut it down." About forty years of cultivation under the gospel produced no good fruit; the tree was then cut down by the Romans. The Jews did not repent, and they perished, as the Lord had said they would.

22. And he went on his way through **cities** and villages, teaching, and journeying on unto Jerusalem.

22. Jesus and his disciples were traveling down through Perea. The Feast of the Passover was drawing near; many Galileans would be thronging the highway on their way to Jerusalem, for the Galileans did not follow the most direct route through Samaria to Jerusalem. "And he went on his way through cities and villages, teaching, and journeying on unto Jerusalem."

23, 24. And one said unto him, Lord, are they few that are saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in by the narrow door: for many, **I** say unto you, **shall** seek to enter in, and **shall not** be able.

23,24. People? frequently ask questions the answer to which could not be of the least benefit to them. "Lord,. are they few that are saved?" If the querist had been interested in his own fate, he would have asked about his own salvation. Whether few or many were saved had nothing to do with his own salvation. Jesus did not give a direct answer to his question without first telling him what to do. "Strive to enter in by the narrow door." *Strive* is a strong word; and the Greek word is, if any different, stronger than the English. To *strive* is to put forth all; our *strive*. Many "shall *seek* to enter in, and shall not be able." Yet Jesus says in Matt. 7:7, "Seek, and ye shall find." If we seek *according* to God's directions, we shall find; but many seek to

enter in by their own ways, or by the ways laid down by man; these are they who fail to enter. O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." (Jer. 10:23.) People who undertake to follow their own ways, or the ways of man, wander off blindly into darkness, despair, and death. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death." "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes; but he that is wise hearkeneth unto counsel." (Prov. 12:15.) And only those who hearken to the counsel of God are safe. Does this seem narrow? If so, remember that Jesus said, "Strive to enter in by the narrow door." "Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter thereby." (Matt. 7:13.)

25-27. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, open to us; and he shall answer and say to you, I know you not whence ye are; then shall ye begin to say, We did eat and drink in thy presence, and thou didst teach in our streets; and he shall say, I tell you, I know not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.

25-27. There will come a time when even this narrow door will be shut; all opportunities are then gone. People who follow their own ways in this world are not serving God, even though many think they are doing valuable service. So sure are some people of their right to heaven that they will attempt to argue the question with the judge of all the earth. They forge the Lord's name to their own doctrines and requirements, and then claim that they are operating by his name; they will so contend at the last day: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by 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." (Matt. 7:22, 23.) And so it is plain that people can follow man's ways, and be so deceived as to feel sure that they are doing great things in the service; yet in the eyes of the great judge they are workers of iniquity. God's thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are our ways God's way.

28-30. There will 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. And they shall come from the east and west, and from the north and south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And behold, there are last who shall be first, and there are first who shall be last.

28-30. "The weeping and the gnashing of teeth"—these terms are expressive of great anguish and suffering. The kingdom of God here referred to appears to be the eternal kingdom—the kingdom in heaven. We cannot see how Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets can now be in the kingdom, or the church. Besides, there were no weeping and gnashing of teeth on the part of these rebellious Jews for being out of the church. But when all accounts are in, and the last opportunity past, it will be an awful thing for a man to realize that he is cast out for all eternity. The last opportunity gone, and—lost, lost! And yet these Jews had been given the first opportunity to enter by that narrow door.

Verse 30 is a proverbial expression, the force of which it is somewhat difficult to comprehend. But it is a fact that the blessings of the gospel were first offered to the Jews; they had also been first as God's chosen people. To be last is another way of expressing what is said of them in verse 28; for it cannot be that Jesus was outlining two different futures for the same people.

31, 32. In that very hour there came certain Pharisees, saying to him. Get thee out, and go hence: for Herod would fain kill thee. And he said unto them. (Jo 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.

31, 32. Herod had killed John the Baptist much against his own feelings; that murder weighed heavily upon him, so much so that when he heard of the mighty works of Jesus he said, "John, whom I beheaded, he is risen." (Mark 6:16.) This gives us an insight into the feelings of Herod. The Pharisees were enemies of Jesus, and would like to get rid of him. Jesus was now in Herod's territory, and that worried Herod. It seems therefore certain that Herod sent these Pharisees to act as if

they were merely giving Jesus a friendly warning to leave the country. In this very thing we see both the cowardice and the cunning of Herod. Now a fox is both cunning and cowardly. Jesus therefore used an appropriate term, and also let them know that he understood matters thoroughly, when he said to them, "Go and say to that fox." Also in what he said he gave both them and Herod to understand that he had his own course mapped out, and that their scheme to intimidate him would not change his course in the least. He would go on performing his works of mercy till he ended his course. For "am perfected," the marginal reading has, "Or, *end my course* " Everything would go through according to the divine plan, and no cunning scheming on the part of the Pharisees and Herod would cause the least variation. It was their unbelief in him that made them think they could change his plans, and it is unbelief in him now that causes people to think that he did fail in his plans, and therefore changed them, and put off the execution of them to some indefinite future. And yet many misguided professed Christians today think Jesus did fail in his plans, and deferred their execution till his second coming.

33-35. Nevertheless I must goon my way to-day and to-morrow and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. 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! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

33-35. Jerusalem was the center of all things Jewish. With the Jews there was no distinction between the religious, social, and political affairs—they all merged into one system; and the Sanhedrin was the head of it all. Their function was to enforce the law of Moses, but they had built up a system of traditions to which they were so wedded that they made void the law by their traditions. This made them antagonistic to every true prophet of God, for a true prophet of God had no regard for their traditions. Any man who disregarded their traditions fell under their condemnation. "It cannot be that a prophet

perish out of Jerusalem." Hence their religion was a perverted and corrupted religion; and that sort of religion is always bitterly opposed to the right. A corrupted religion is a persecuting religion.

Jesus saw Jerusalem as it was—full of corruption, bigotry, and fanaticism; and he saw its coming doom. The suffering stored up for its people filled him with sorrow. In the light of what happened to that once glorious city, the lamentation of Jesus over its coming doom touches one's heart. "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!" He had given them every opportunity to be saved, but they would not be saved. They were responsible for whatever fate befell them. No matter how rich the provisions may be that God makes for the uplifting and the saving of any person or people, the final decision must be made by those whom God would save. If they will not be saved, then God does not save. "Ye would not"—"ye will not," and so they perish. "Your house is left unto you." The word *desolate* was supplied by the translators to give what they conceived to be the sense of the passage, but it does not really help. It had been the Lord's house; they had so perverted its services and worship that it was no longer his—it was theirs, and he was leaving it to them. "Ye shall not see me, until ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." This does not mean that they would see him with their natural eyes as we see objects about us. On another occasion Jesus said to the wicked high priest, "Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." (Matt. 26:64.) Jesus was simply picturing things as they would be.

Some Reflections

"Strive to enter in by the narrow door." Truth is narrow, no matter where it is found. Two times two is four, whether you

like it or not; and a man does not show broad-mindedness by saying it could be some other way. It is hazardous to try to be broader-minded than the truth. A really broad-minded person accepts all truth; to accept only such truth as pleases us is to be narrow-minded, no matter how much we might boast about of being of a broad mind.

The way is open now for all to be saved. The door does not stand ajar—it stands wide open to all who will come by the narrow door. But there will come a time when the door will be shut, and no more admittance allowed. The foolish virgins found the door shut against them. When once the door is shut, we may plead, "Lord, open to us"; but it will be too late, and the Lord will say, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." "And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life."

Luke 14

1. And it came to pass, when he went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees on a sabbath to eat bread, that they were watching him.

1. We are told that the Jews arranged to have an abundance of the best food on the day of the Sabbath. This was all prepared the day before the Sabbath. As no work was done on the Sabbath, they had leisure to linger at the table and to enjoy to the full their abundance of well-prepared food. This ruler of the Pharisees invited Jesus to dine with him; others were also invited. The fact that others were invited on this occasion shows that the ruler did not invite Jesus into his home for a private conference. He was not seeking a heart-to-heart talk; he was not seeking to know more about the teaching of Jesus. No motive so honorable as that moved him. Of course, his apparent hospitality had not deceived Jesus. The majority of the Pharisees, especially the leaders and rulers, were bitterly

opposed to Jesus, and were constantly seeking for grounds on which they might accuse him. On this occasion "they were watching him." They were watching him carefully—eyeing him closely, for so the word indicates. They had their trap set.

2-6. And behold, there was before him a certain man that had the dropsy. And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath, or not? But they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go. And he said unto them, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a well, and will not straightway draw him up on a sabbath day? And they could not answer again unto these things.

2-6. A man with the dropsy was at the feast; so also were the lawyers and the Pharisees. The whole arrangement indicates a prearranged plan to entrap Jesus. The sick man was the bait; the lawyers and the Pharisees would be the witnesses. It was not through sympathy for the sick man he was there; they were not hoping he would be cured for his own benefit. They believed that Jesus would heal him even on the day of the Sabbath, and that was contrary to their unwritten law. Their scheme shows to what degree of baseness extreme religious prejudices and bigotry will drive people.

"The conduct of the Pharisee was most execrable. Professing *friendship* and *affection*, he invited our blessed Lord to his table, merely that he might have a more favorable opportunity of watching his conduct, that he might accuse him, and take away his life. In eating and drinking, people feel generally less restraint than at other times, and are apt to converse more freely. The man who can take such an advantage over one of his *own guests* must have a baseness of soul, and a feeling of malice, of which, we would have thought, for the honor of human nature, that devils alone were capable____Probably the insidious Pharisee had brought this dropsical man to the place, not doubting that our Lord's eye would affect his heart, and that he would instantly cure him; and then he could most plausibly accuse him for a breach of the Sabbath. If this were the case, and it is likely, how deep must have been the perfidy and malice of the Pharisee."—Clarke.

While the lawyers and Pharisees were watching Jesus to see

what he would do, he surprised them with a searching question, which made them realize that they were no longer masters of the situation: "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath, or not?" They decided that it was prudent to remain silent. If they should say it was not lawful, Jesus could say, "Why, then, did you bring this man here to be healed?" If they said it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath, they went back on their tradition, and then could find no fault with Jesus for healing the man. Without further words Jesus healed the man.

Then Jesus showed, by a question, the inconsistency and absurdity of the tradition of the elders. "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a well, and will not straightway draw him up on a sabbath day?" This question is little different from the question about animals in another lesson. It would require much heavier work to draw an ass or an ox out of a well than to lead them to water; yet they would do that very thing on the Sabbath. They again held their peace; their carefully laid plan had come to naught. Jesus then proceeded to give these self-important men some much-needed lessons on table manners.

7-11. And he spake a parable unto those that, were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief seats; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a marriage feast, sit not down in the chief seat; lest haply a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him, and he that bade thee and him shall come and say to thee. Give this man place; and then thou shalt begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest place; that when he that hath bidden thee cometh, he may say to thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have glory in the presence of all that sit at meat with thee. For every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

7-11. Too often the man who sees a fault in another and tries to correct it is called a faultfinder. Though Jesus was a guest in the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, he found fault with other guests, "when he marked how they chose out the chief seats." There were places of honor at the table, and the guests were pushing forward to get into these places. Jesus took occasion to give them a lesson on proper conduct. "When thou art bidden of any man to a marriage feast, sit not down in the chief seat."

Jesus made it less personal by giving" directions concerning conduct at a marriage feast. At such formal feasts the master of ceremonies would arrange the guests, giving the more honorable the chief places of honor. If a man overrated his importance, and took a place of honor, he would be invited to a lower seat; that would be humiliating indeed, and a cause of shame. It would be much more fitting to take the lowest seat. If he took the lowest seat, he could not be put to shame by being asked to take a lower seat; if he were not invited to a higher seat, he has escaped being humiliated. If he merited a higher seat, the master of ceremonies would say, "Friend, go up higher." He would thus be publicly honored.

It was a parable Jesus had spoken; there was a deeper significance in what he said than mere table manners. He was showing God's method of dealing with people. He himself states a fundamental law of God: "For every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." But it is sad that the spirit here condemned is often manifested in members of the church, and sometimes even in leaders. Like Diotrefes, they love the preeminence. Before they learned the nature of Christ's reign, James and John asked that they might have the highest places in the Lord's kingdom. They were looking for a worldly kingdom, and it was natural that they should want positions of honor in that kingdom; but it is singular now that a man who knows the nature of the kingdom and who knows what Christ said about seeking positions of honor should, as some do, so earnestly seek to have the preeminence. However, such a spirit makes it utterly impossible for one to be a true believer in Christ. "How can ye believe, who receive glory one of another, and the glory that cometh from the only God ye seek not?" (John 5:44.) We can gain the glory of men by advocating and doing the things that please them. "For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? or am I striving to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ." (Gal. 1:10.) The desire for popularity has ruined many men, who could have been useful servants of God. We do men a great disservice when we

serve men instead of God.

12-14. And he said to him also that had bidden him. When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen, nor rich neighbors; lest haply they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, bid the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; because they have not wherewith to recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed in the resurrection of the just.

12-14. From the remarks Jesus made both to the guests and his host, it seems that the whole atmosphere of that feast was wrong. It seems that making feasts was more common then than now.

A normal person is asocial being; and yet his social nature or feelings is somewhat exclusive. Everyone finds some people with whom he does not care to associate. A social gathering is more pleasant when made up of kindred spirits. When therefore a person makes a feast for social purposes he invites those whose company he enjoys. Of course, if he is a social climber, that desire will influence his invitations.

But does the Lord prohibit all social feasts? It does not seem so, for he himself attended such feasts. By invitation he and his disciples attended the marriage feast at Cana of Galilee, and took an active part in the affair. (John 2:1-11.) He with many other guests attended a great feast made for him by Levi (Matthew). (Luke 5:29.) He also attended other feasts, as the reader will find by searching. What then? By a peculiar figure of speech Jesus sometimes denied a necessary thing so that by contrast he might give the greater emphasis to something else. Notice this: "Work not for the food which perisheth, but for the food which abideth unto eternal life." (John 6:27.) Certainly Jesus did not mean to prohibit working for our food; yet the command is as emphatic as the command not to make a feast for the characters named in our lesson. Do not make working for food that perishes your main business, but rather labor for food that abides unto eternal life. Apply that same principle of interpretation to this section of our lesson and you can see the significance of what Jesus says. Make up your mind to give more attention to helping those who need help rather than

enjoying feasts with your friends, your brethren, and your rich neighbors. Feed the poor and helpless. Such feasts may not be socially what one likes, but they have spiritual values. If you make a feast for social reasons, that is the only reward you get out of it; and if you give a feast, hoping that you will be called to a similar feast, that is the only reward you get. But if you make a feast for such unfortunates as mentioned for the sake of doing them good, knowing that no earthly reward from them is possible, you shall be recompensed in the resurrection of the just. We can distribute food to the needy, thus giving them a feast without calling them together. To those on the right hand Jesus will say in the great day of accounts, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me— Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me." (Matt. 25:34-40.)

15. 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.

15. Jesus had been giving his host directions concerning the giving of feasts. It appears that someone present believed that Jesus would be king, and that the principles he had laid down concerning the giving of feasts would prevail in the kingdom over which Jesus would rule; and he expressed his delight in the prospect of such a state of affairs. "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." He thought that to eat bread—to live—in such a kingdom would fill the cup of happiness. Doubtless he had reference to the food for the physical body; but that is not the bread for the spiritual man in the kingdom of God. The bread which Jesus would give in the kingdom of God not only would sustain spiritual life, but would give spiritual life. "For the bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven, and giveth life unto the world. They said therefore unto him, Lord, evermore give us this

bread. Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." (John 6:33-35.) Jesus is the bread that meets all the requirements of spiritual life.

16, 17. But he said unto him, A certain man made a great supper; and he bade many: and he sent forth his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.

16, 17. This is the parable of the kingdom of God, spoken in answer to what the guest said about the blessedness of the one who should eat bread in the kingdom of God. "A certain man made a great supper." Nothing was lacking in that supper; all that could be desired was there in abundance. It illustrates the great provisions that would be prepared for those in the kingdom of God. As the kingdom had not then been set up, the feast had not then been fully prepared, nor had a full revelation then been made as to what the invited guests might expect. "And he bade many." It was the custom to inform the desired guests that they would be expected to be at a feast to be given; then when the feast was prepared and ready to be served, the expected guests were invited to come. Servants were sent out to say to them, "Come; for all things are now ready." When the guests had been informed that the feast was ready and invited to come, the next move was theirs. All these things are true of the gospel feast. When the gospel feast was fully prepared in the kingdom of God, the Lord sent his servants, the apostles and others, to say to the people, "Come; for all things are now ready." When that announcement was made to the people, the next move was theirs. If they did not come, no one was to blame but themselves.

18-20. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a field, and I must needs go out and see it; I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

18-20. "They all with one consent began to make excuse." They began *to beg off, to ask to be excused*, for so is the force of

the original. When people do not want to do a thing, and yet feel that they should do it, it is an easy matter to find excuses in plenty; but excuses usually fool no one but the person making them. The excuses mentioned in this parable are of a business and social nature. Too often these excuses are called light and frivolous; but we should remember that this parable was spoken by the Lord. Let us not accuse him of selecting the most frivolous excuses that people would make, lest we reflect on the Lord, and lest we also encourage some one to say, "Of course such foolish excuses should not hinder any sensible person, but I have a real excuse which the Lord will accept." Hence, to belittle the excuses of this parable is to encourage people to offer what they consider real excuses. The excuses of the parable are such excuses as men of that time were most likely to make. Business and social affairs now, as then, keep people from attending the gospel feast.

Sometimes a man's business is not very prosperous, and he feels that he must give it his whole time and thought in order to make a living. He therefore feels that he has an excuse for neglecting Bible study, the Lord's day worship, and other religious duties. Or he may be so set on becoming rich that he gives no time nor thought to the service of God. A man should allow neither poverty nor riches to rob him of his loyalty to the Lord. "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is Jehovah? or lest I be poor, and steal, and use profanely the name of my God." (Prov. 30:8,9.) "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 and perdition." (1 Tim. 6:9.) But whether for business or social reasons people are much given to making excuses.

"The first said unto him, I have bought a field, and I must needs go out and see it; I pray thee have me excused." It is hardly reasonable to suppose that Jesus selected a man for a part in this parable that was so foolish as to buy outright a field that he had never seen. People in Palestine lived in towns and cities, and went out to their farms. This man might have

owned this farm for some time, and would go out often to see it—to see that everything was moving along right. Some farmers even today, though living on the farm, go out Lord's day morning to "see" their fields. Of course, this man could have waited till after the feast to see his field; he was merely making an excuse for not going to the feast of his neighbor. He was more interested in his farm than in his neighbor's feast.

Another invited guest had bought five yoke of oxen, and was going to prove them. The language shows that they were under yoke when he bought them. Like other teamsters, this man wanted to give them a thorough test. That testing could have waited till after the feast, but he was more interested in his oxen than in his neighbor's feast. Hence, he sought to justify his nonattendance. This man, as also the other, represents a large class of people who know they should be Christians, but are more interested in other things.

Another had married a wife. He did not ask the servant to have him excused. "I cannot come." This was not so much a social excuse as a domestic excuse. Perhaps he thought that a provision in the law of Moses would release him from any outside obligations. "When a man taketh a new wife, he shall not go out in the host, neither shall he be charged with any business: he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer his wife whom he hath taken." (Deut. 24:5.) He could easily reason that if recent marriage released him from military or business obligations for one year, that he might be with his wife, certainly he was under no social obligations that would take him from her. It was evidently a feast for men, else the man would have been invited to bring his wife to the feast. Many a wife or husband is kept from obeying the Lord by an unbelieving companion.

It should be noted that the servant who was sent out to call the invited guests had no right to accept anyone's excuse; the people who were invited recognized that fact. When he had told the invited guests that the feast was ready, and had invited them to come, his duty to them ended. The same thing is true now with reference to the Lord's servants. He cannot

excuse people for not accepting the Lord's invitation; neither can he rightfully seek to ease the consciences of any who refuse the gospel invitation.

21-24. And the servant came, and told his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant. Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor and maimed and blind and lame. And the servant said. Lord, what thou didst command is done, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and constrain them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, that none of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper.

21-24. The servant reported to his master what these excuse makers had said. Some had said to the servant, "I pray thee have me excused"; but if this servant made any plea for these excuse makers, he failed to influence his master.

It is thought by some that the first invited guests represented the Jews; but the attitude of the majority of the Jews is represented by those who were first invited in the parable of the king who made a marriage feast for his son, as told in Matthew 22:1-14. It does not seem that the parable of our lesson is meant to represent the people of any certain nationality. People who make excuses are found among all peoples and nations.

The attitude of the invited guests angered the master of the feast. His neighbors had treated his feast with contempt. The feast was ready and waiting, and yet there were no guests. Something had to be done about it. "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor and maimed and blind and lame." This was done, and still there was room. Another call went out; this time, to the drifters and wayfarers—to any who had nowhere else to go.

Jesus gave this parable to illustrate who would and who would not "eat bread in the kingdom of God." Those who made excuses were left out. "For I say unto you, that none of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper." Hence, only those who respond to the gospel call enjoy the blessings in the kingdom of God. The lesson of this parable should cause us all

to think seriously when we are tempted to make an excuse that we think will justify our failure to do our duty. An excuse never justifies a failure. How foolish are they that prefer the material things of this life! How poor their sense of values! "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vain glory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." (1 John 2:15, 16.)

25-35. Now there went with him great multitudes: and he turned, and said unto them. 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. Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, doth not first sit down and count the cost, whether he have wherewith to complete it? Lest haply, when he hath laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all that behold begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, as he goeth to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an embassy, and asketh conditions of peace. So therefore whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Salt therefore is good: but if even the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is fit neither for the land nor for the dunghill: men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

25-35. On account of our natural affections and our use of the word *hate*, verse 26 seems to some to require an impossibility. "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." In scripture usage the word *hate* sometimes refers to attitudes instead of feelings, or emotions, implying an attitude of indifference or disregard. Examples: "He that spareth the rod hateth his son." (Prov. 13:24.) If he does not correct and guide his son, he is indifferent toward him—disregards him. "Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul" (Prov. 29:24.) He disregards his own soul—treats it with indifference. And if people, no matter how closely related to us they may be, would give us wrong counsel, disregard them. Jesus is stating a contrast.

Disregard people—even your own life. What then? "Who-soever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."

Two courses, or ways, are open to the lost sinner when the Lord says to him, "Come follow me." He can take up his cross and follow Christ, or he can undertake to map out a course of his own. Or, according to the figure Jesus uses, he can undertake to build a tower, or castle, of his own; but before undertaking such a task, he should count the cost and see whether he has sufficient resources to finish such a tower. Jesus is not admonishing the sinner to count the cost of becoming a Christian, but the cost of not obeying the Lord—the cost of launching out on his own resources. Enquiring sinners were never told to sit down and count the cost of becoming Christians. Such words as "the same day," "today," "the same hour," "now," express the urgency of immediate obedience. And when the call comes the sinner must surrender at once; but if he feels to join issue with the Lord, he should first take counsel whether he can go against one who can easily defeat him. The sinner cannot succeed in a war with Jehovah. It is best to give up everything else, and follow the Lord. "So therefore whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." And the disciple must be salt—must exert a saving influence on others.

Luke 15

LESSON LINKS

In studying the question of saving the lost, there are two sides to consider; namely, what God through Jesus the Christ has done and is doing to save the lost, and what the lost must do to escape their lost condition. In the body of the lesson attention will be given to some of the things God has done and is doing

for the lost. Some general principles governing man's side of the matter are laid down in chapter 14, verses 25 to 35.

1, 2. Now all the publicans and sinners were drawing near unto him to hear him. And both the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

1, 2. The origin of the sect of the Pharisees is not clearly known. It seems that the sect originated soon after the return from Babylonian exile. If you will consult Webster's dictionary or any good Bible dictionary you will see that the name Pharisee is from Hebrew and Greek words that mean, to separate. It is supposed therefore that the sect originated with a group of sincere Jews who sought to separate themselves from the corruptions of the masses of the people. In their efforts to maintain purity of life and of worship, they easily drifted into the feeling that they were purer and more righteous than others of their nation. They continued to be very strict in the outward observance of certain forms and ceremonies, but neglected reverence for God and love for man. It seems that the scribes belonged to the sect of the Pharisees. Of the scribes it is said, 'They had the care of the law; it was their duty to make transcripts of it; they expounded its difficulties, and taught its doctrines, and so performed several functions which are now distributed among different professions, being keepers of the records, consulting lawyers, authorized expounders of Holy Writ, and finally, schoolmasters—thus blending together in one character the several elements of intellectual, moral, social, and religious influence. It scarcely needs to be added that their power was very great"—Bible Encyclopedia. The scribes and Pharisees were persistent enemies of Jesus.

As the publicans were tax collectors for the despised Romans, the scribes and Pharisees despised them. From the standpoint of a Pharisee a sinner was one who, for some reason, had been turned out of the synagogue. Neither publicans nor sinners therefore had membership in any synagogue. With the Pharisee, to be a religious outcast was also to be a

social outcast. It does not seem that a Pharisee ever tried to restore a "sinner" to membership in a synagogue. A Pharisee thought himself defiled if he came into touch with a publican or sinner. Hence, their complaint against Jesus: "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." In the eyes of the Pharisees and scribes such conduct thoroughly unfitted Jesus for being a teacher and leader of men. With them, to eat with such characters was to endorse them.

3-6. And he spake unto them this parable, saying, 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? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and his neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.

3-6. To many people of today it would seem that this parable of the lost sheep overrates the importance and value of a sheep, but not so, if we take into consideration the conditions and circumstances prevailing in Palestine and surrounding countries in the days of Jesus. Some of their offerings were made from their flocks. From the wool came much of their clothing, and sheepskins supplied many of their needs. And of course their flocks furnished their main meat supply. Aside from all these useful considerations, the owner really was much attached to his sheep, even to the point of endangering his life for them. When one went astray, the owner felt the loss keenly. Besides, he knew that no animal was more helpless than a lost sheep. If he did not go and find it, it was a clear loss. His self-interest and his great sympathy for the lost sheep moved him to leave the ninety and nine, and go immediately in search of the lost sheep. And it is said that when a man found his lost sheep, he brought it back on his shoulder. He then rejoiced, and had his neighbors to rejoice with him.

7. I say unto you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons, who need no repentance.

7. Jesus did not mean to teach by this parable that the

majority of the people were not lost, nor even that some were not lost. He was taking the scribes and Pharisees at their own valuation, and showing them the folly of their criticism. These self-righteous Pharisees and scribes did not think they were sinners, and were therefore in no condition to repent. Jesus was showing them that there was more joy over one of these despised sinners who repented than over all the Pharisees and scribes that did not consider that they needed repentance. When Jesus and his disciples sat down to eat with the publicans and sinners at the great feast prepared for him by Levi, "the Pharisees and the scribes murmured against his disciples saying, Why do ye eat and drink with the publicans and sinners?" Jesus replied, "They that are in health have no need of a physician; but they that are sick. I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." (Luke 5:30-32.) Certainly he did not mean that these scribes and Pharisees were in moral and spiritual health, and therefore needed nothing; or that they were so righteous that they needed no repentance. He was merely taking them at their own valuation, and informed them, that so long as they felt about themselves as they did, he was not giving them any attention at all. A physician is wasting his time in prescribing a course of treatment for people who think they are in perfect health; but the good physician experiences joy, and brings joy to others, when he relieves suffering, and brings the sick back to health. To bring back the lost sheep of the house of Israel, Jesus had to go among them, just as the man with the lost sheep had to go after it. Of itself it would not return. And he rejoiced when he had brought it home. Saving sinners brought joy to Jesus, "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame." (Heb. 12:2.) The joy that was set before Jesus was glory of redeemed men and women. A redeemed sinner brings joy to heaven. "I say unto you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons, who need no repentance." It seems that Jesus was here giving these self-righteous Pharisees and scribes to understand that there was no rejoicing in heaven

over them.

8-10. Or what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a lamp, and sweep the house, and seek diligently until she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth together her friends and neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost. Even so, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

8-10. The numbers in the parables of this lesson have no special significance. They certainly do not mean that the greater portion of the human family are never lost; yet in the parables one sheep was lost and one piece of money was lost. "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23.) In these parables the emphasis is placed on that which was lost and on the diligence with which the lost was sought, and also on the joy over the finding of that which was lost.

The woman did not have much money. The marginal reading in the American Standard Version has this information: "Gr. *drachma*, a coin worth about eight pence, or sixteen cents." The total amount of her money was therefore about one dollar and sixty cents. Its purchasing power was, of course, much greater than the same amount today. The lost coin evidently meant much to this woman, for she would not rest till she found it. Perhaps the only source of light for her house was the door. She therefore had to light a candle to give her light as she diligently searched for the lost coin. Her joy was great when she found it. Likely she had let her friends and neighbors know about her loss. So when she found the lost coin, she called them in to rejoice with her. "Even so, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." She sought diligently for the lost coin. Jesus was seeking to recover lost sinners. Instead of rejoicing that he was doing so, the Pharisees and scribes were murmuring against him for so doing. Their theory of keeping themselves separate from sinners had hardened them against sinners till they had no sympathy for sinners; and yet they themselves were about the worst of lost sinners, but were not aware of their lost condition. So long as they remained in that state of mind their

condition was hopeless.

Some Reflections

There is this about the lost sinner; God knows where he is, but the sinner himself does not know. He has lost God.

It is easy to press a figure of speech too far. Parables do not mean all that some people try to make them mean. The parables of our lesson were not spoken to show that the sinner could not do anything about recovering himself from his lost condition. Of course, the lost sheep had nothing to do in bringing himself back home, nor did the lost coin have anything to do about recovering itself; but it is pressing the figures too far to argue that therefore the sinner can do nothing. We could just as easily argue that since the lost coin knew nothing at all about anything, therefore the lost sinner knows nothing about anything. We could also as easily argue that no change was made in either the sheep or the coin. There was no change made in the character of either. There was no difference in either while lost and after restored. As that cannot be said of the sinner while lost and after restored, it is easy to see that a parable can be pressed too far.

Without God the sinner was helpless, and is yet so. He fell into sin—became lost, and could not of his own wisdom and strength recover himself. God through Jesus Christ provided a way of salvation, and by the Holy Spirit revealed this plan to the sinner. On providing and revealing this plan the sinner could do nothing; but since it is provided and revealed, the next move is his. The fact that his sin brought him into condemnation shows that he must turn from his sins in order to be freed from condemnation. As condemnation is conditional, so also must salvation be conditional. One cannot be unconditional and the other conditional. The more you think of this, the more apparent the truth of it becomes.

If people could fully realize the awful consequences of sin, they would be more diligent in seeking to save the lost sinner. But we see so much of the ordinary forms of sin that we do not

become excited about sin and its consequences. The consequences of sin are bad enough here in this life, and that is only a small portion of its consequences. But people have banished the possibility of hell from their thinking till they have little fear of the consequences of sin in the world to come; and that process of thinking has had a bad effect on the morals of the people. It is high time we quit trying to theorize realities out of existence.

Luke 16

LESSON LINKS

The student will get a much better grasp of the lesson if he reads the entire chapter. The verses of our lesson are really an application of the lesson of the parable of the unrighteous steward. The steward seems to have been more than a master of household affairs; he appears to have been a sort of general manager of his lord's affairs. This gave him opportunity to waste his master's means. The sequel shows he was wasting his lord's means on himself. It was his duty to manage affairs in the interest of the one who had him employed. When his lord found that he was unfaithful, he was called on to give an account of his stewardship. He then proceeded, by wasting some more of his lord's means, to bring his lord's debtors under obligation to him, so that they would take him into their homes after his lord dismissed him. "And his lord commended the unrighteous steward because he had done wisely." His lord, the man who had him employed, did not commend him for his dishonesty, but for his foresight, his shrewdness in looking out for his own interests. Wisdom is neither knowledge nor goodness; it is skill in the use of means to accomplish an end. And worldly people use more skill in accomplishing the ends they have in view than do the children of God. Children of God are frequently not very wise in their use of the means of salvation.

In connection with this parable Jesus gives this admonition: "And I say unto you, make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when it shall fail, they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles." The American Standard Version makes this verse much plainer than does the King James Version. We are admonished to use our means in such way as to make friends who will receive us into heaven. They do this in the person of Jesus, as told in Matthew 25:34-36: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me." And so, by using the mammon of unrighteousness to help those who are in need, we make friends who will receive us into eternal tabernacles. And there is no other way we can invest our funds that will bring such wonderful and lasting returns. The investment is safe; the returns are sure.

10. 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.

10. No man with any care for his business would put an untried man in an important position; at least, that is the general rule. Usually an untried man is put in a place of low responsibility, and advanced as he proves himself worthy. If a man is not faithful in small matters, he certainly could not be trusted in a highly responsible position. If a man will not do right in small matters, he is not to be trusted in great matters. Yet many sons of Cod really think they would be generous in the use of their money if they possessed great wealth, and yet they are not generous in the use of the small amount they have. Jesus states a general rule when he says, "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." If a man is dishonest in the use of a few cents or dollars, it would be unreasonable to expect him to do right in the use of large amounts.

11,12. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?

11,12. Wealth is called "the unrighteous mammon" because it leads to so much unrighteousness. The love of money is the source of untold evil. An effort to gain wealth is often the cause of as much evil as is the possession of great wealth. "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 and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Tim. 6:9, 10.) Hence the striving for wealth may destroy one's soul; and the way we use what we have tells much about our character.

"If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" The question is really an affirmation that God will not commit the true riches to the one who does not faithfully use the unrighteous mammon. No earthly possession can be regarded as true riches, for they are deceitful and unenduring. The true riches are the spiritual blessings, culminating in heaven. Heaven and its glories are certainly true riches, for such riches will not be taken from us nor will we be taken from them. "If ye have not been faithful in that which is another's." The things we have in our keeping here really belong to God. We are stewards over that which God has committed to our trust. The deed you hold to a tract of land does not secure it to you for eternity; it merely protects your stewardship over that certain piece of property; it is the Lord's land. "The earth is Jehovah's, and the fullness thereof." (Psalm 24:1.) For a limited time he has given us charge of certain portions of that which belongs to him. And if we have not been faithful in that which belongs to Jehovah, he will not give us permanent possession of a home in glory. "If ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?" If we are faithful children of God, we shall fall heir to an eternal inheritance; that inheri-

tance will be our own. "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be glorified with him." (Rom. 8:17.) "Whatsoever ye do, work heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that from the Lord ye shall receive the recompense of the inheritance: ye serve the Lord Christ." (Col. 3:23, 24.) Remember that you are a steward of God, and that it is required of a steward that he be found faithful. (1 Cor. 4:1,2.)

13. No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

13. This is a general truth. It should be plain to anyone that no man can serve two masters when they are in opposition to each other. A man cannot serve God and the world at the same time. If a man tries to serve two masters, he will inevitably become more attached to one of them. The truth expressed in this verse is of wide application. A timeserver cannot be a servant of God. Paul said, "For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? or am I striving to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ." (Gal. 1:10.) "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (1 John 2:15.)

14, 15. And the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things; and they scoffed at him. And he said unto them, Ye are they that justify yourselves in the sight of men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

14, 15. The Pharisees had a contempt for what Jesus had said. Their minds were so warped by their love of money that the teaching of Jesus concerning money sounded to them like the veriest foolishness. They, of course, thought he had no financial sense at all. They judged as men of the world; they wanted to stand well in the eyes of men. "And he said unto them, Ye are they that justify yourselves in the sight of men." To make a success of life, as men count success, was their ambition. It was not that they wanted to justify themselves by

argument, but they did not want men to condemn them for their lack of financial ability. And outwardly they were very religious, but their religion was a mere pretense. Such conduct is vain and foolish, for God knows the heart.

19-23. Now there was a certain rich man, and he was clothed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day: 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. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and that he was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom: 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.

19-23. There has been a lot of discussion over the story of the rich man and Lazarus, as to whether it is a "parable or history." It seems not to have occurred to some that it could be both. They forget that in many parables historic facts are told to illustrate some spiritual truth. In the parables of Jesus earthly things are used with which to set forth some spiritual truth. A parable is an extended illustration. To be an illustration the hearers had to be familiar with the facts told. Hence, the story of the rich man and Lazarus does not fit the requirements of a parable in any particular. If it is called a parable, then what truth is taught? What is represented? Does the rich man represent the Jews? then all Jews are doomed, for he was lost. Does the poor man represent the Gentiles? then all Gentiles will be saved, for Lazarus was saved. And what or who would the dogs and the five brethren at home represent? Besides, Jesus would not take happenings in the next world, things with which the disciples were not at all familiar, to illustrate things occurring in this world. But if it is a parable, the facts are the same. "There was a certain rich man"—"there was a certain poor man." To say that no such men ever lived is to make a serious charge against the Lord; for either there were such men, or there were not.

"A certain rich man"—perhaps well-known, or Jesus would have mentioned his name. He is not charged with being a miser. In fact, he was not, for he spent money lavishly for the

finest clothing and the best of food. He must have entertained his friends and gone out in company, else why the sumptuous meals and fine clothing? No man who shuns his neighbors spends his money freely for such things. It is not charged against this man that he was a drunkard or an immoral wretch. Such a man would be considered one of the leading citizens of his community. The trouble was, he was a steward of God and was wasting his Lord's means on himself—providing for his own comfort regardless of the needs of others. But riches do not purchase immunity from death nor buy entrance into the land of bliss. The rich man died and was buried.

How come Lazarus to be so poor we do not know⁷. Not only was he poor, but he was afflicted with sores. Perhaps ill-health had reduced him to such a state of poverty. He was a beggar. Some men, who perhaps could not furnish him food, carried him in pity to the rich man's gate. Where food was served as lavishly as was done in the home of the rich man, many fragments of food would be left on the table; these the servants would feed to the dogs. The rich man, having eaten to fullness, would be willing for Lazarus to share with the dogs that which was left over. There is no reason in declaring that he was denied his portion of the left-over fragments. The language indicates that he was carried regularly to the gate of the rich man. Certainly this would not have been done if he failed to get anything to eat. There is no need that we make the rich man out worse than he was. It would have been greatly to his credit had he seen after Lazarus' needs; for that which he had in his keeping was not really his own, and he would soon be compelled to leave it all behind. He should have used God's property to relieve the sufferings of God's people.

The term "Abraham's bosom" is not so much a figurative expression as it is a name which the Jews gave to the place of bliss. To that place Lazarus was carried by angels. He had suffered here, but what a glorious departure from the sufferings of this life. A beggar here, but attended by angels to his eternal inheritance. We can well imagine that the rich man

was followed to his place of burial by a throng of the "leading citizens" of the community, but they could go no further with him. How different was his going and his reward from that of Lazarus! "And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." There is a place of torment for those who do not live as they should, just as there is a place of bliss for those who live righteously. There comes a time when the righteous judgment of God will be revealed; "who will render to every man according to his works." (Read Rom. 2:4-10.)

24-26. 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. But Abraham said, 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. 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.

24-26. The rich man called for Abraham to 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." How poor he had become! The rich had become the beggar, and the beggar had become rich. He was informed that a great fixed gulf separated them, and that there could be no crossing.

27-31. And he said, 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. But Abraham saith, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, 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.

27-31. The rich man's next plea: "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." This reveals why he was there—he had not heeded testimony. Notice he does not say, "Lest God send them," but, "Lest they also come." God does not send people to torment—they go. "They have Moses and the

prophets; let them hear them." This is saying that if they would heed Moses and the prophets, they would not go to that place of torment. He thought they would listen to one who returned from the dead, but Abraham affirmed otherwise. Jesus did come back from the dead, and gave the Great Commission; will you hear him?

Luke 17

LESSON LINKS

In studying forgiveness we need to have in mind some of the fundamental principles on which God deals with man. He certainly would not have us to try the impossible. When is it possible to forgive sins? What is forgiveness? To forgive sin is to remit sin, to blot out the charge that is against the sinner, to reward the person as free from all guilt. "Sin is lawlessness." (1 John 3:5.) But how can God consider a lawless person as not lawless? Disobedience must be removed before God can consider a person as not disobedient. As a lack of conformity with the law of God is sin, and brings one into condemnation, so obedience must take the place of disobedience before a person can be free from the sin of disobedience. This change from disobedience to obedience is the result of faith in God and his Christ, and repentance, or a change of mind respecting God and his law. God cannot forgive a sin so long as the man cherishes that sin in his heart. A man cannot be counted as not guilty so long as he is guilty at heart. Hence, repentance is essential to forgiveness; the nature of the case demands it, and God requires it. He does not—he cannot—forgive without repentance on the part of the guilty, for repentance is the process of putting sin out of the heart. And because God desires that all men be reconciled to him, he commands all men everywhere to repent.

1, 2. And he said unto his disciples, It is impossible but that occasions of stumbling should come; but woe to him, through whom they come! It were well for him if a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, rather than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble.

1, 2. If Christians were as strong and watchful as they should be, fewer of them would stumble; but many Christians are so weak and careless and there are so many pitfalls, that many stumble. One occasion for stumbling is false teaching. It has always been so. "For they that lead this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed." (Isa. 9:16.) "Behold I am against them that prophesy lying dreams, saith Jehovah, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their vain boasting." (Jer. 23: 32.) "And many false prophets shall arise, and shall lead men astray." (Matt. 24:11.) "But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even the Master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their lascivious doings." (2 Pet. 2:1, 2.) "Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." (Col. 2:8.) "Let no man deceive you with empty words." (Eph. 5:6.) And persecution causes many to stumble. In the parable of the sower the one representing the seed sown on rocky ground "endureth for a while; and when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway he stumbleth." (Matt. 13:21.) And some fall into all sorts of immoral practices; and some people allure whom they can into such practices. So offenses, or occasions of stumbling, come in many ways; "but woe unto him, through whom they come!" The saddest part of it is that this condemnation rests upon many otherwise good people, for they cause many to stumble by sinful divisions in churches. The doom of all such will be terrible. "It were well for him if a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, rather than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble." "These little

ones" are the undeveloped children of God, babes in Christ, and not real babes. The Christian should help the weak instead of putting stumbling blocks in their way.

3, 4. Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he sin against thee seven times in the day, and seven times turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

3, 4. "Take heed to yourselves." This is the Christian's first obligation. He must take stock of his knowledge of the will of the Lord. He cannot live right unless he has right knowledge. He must study to show himself approved unto God. He must have correct knowledge so that he may guide others aright. He must look to his motives to see that no worldly ambitions move him. He must carefully guard his actions and habits, for the sake of his own character and for the sake of those whom he might influence. Paul gave Timothy this charge: "Take heed to thyself, and to thy teaching. Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee." (1 Tim. 4:16.) To the elders of the church at Ephesus Paul gave this charge: "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20:28.) In taking heed to ourselves we must not forget our obligations to others.

"If thy brother sin, rebuke him." Do not encourage him in his sin; neither say nor do anything that will tend to give him ease of conscience. Rebuke him. "Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching." (2 Tim. 4:2.) "If he repent, forgive him." This shows that Jesus was speaking of sin against a brother. A man can forgive a personal injury or insult, but he has nothing to do with forgiving a sin against God. But it is hard for an injured person to rebuke the offender in the right spirit; it is hard to eliminate personal feelings. Unless a person can do so, he is likely to make things worse. Be careful, lest in rebuking the offender you sin against him. Make your rebuke in a spirit that is calculated to reclaim him from his error; it is not a time to seek to vindicate yourself, nor to avenge yourself.

A brother's salvation is endangered; do your best to save him.

"If he repent, forgive him." In the very nature of the case there can be no forgiveness without repentance. God does not require us to attempt the impossible; hence he requires us to forgive the offender, "if he repent." But many times offense is taken when none was intended. People do so many unthoughtful things, it is well that we take no notice of many things that do not seem to be exactly right. Very likely the other party meant no offense; but when actions or words are of such nature that we cannot ignore them, we are to seek to bring the offending party to repentance. God does not forgive the impenitent, but he seeks to bring that person to repentance, that he may forgive him. And this should always be our attitude toward those who sin against us.

It has been said that if you do not forget, you do not forgive; but it is impossible to banish things from our memories at will. However, if we remember a thing *against* a person, we have not forgiven. How would the disciple know how many times he had forgiven a person if he had no recollection concerning any former wrong and forgiveness? "If he sin against thee seven times in the day, and seven times turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." There is no lack of harmony between what is said here and what is said in Matthew 18:21, 22. Here Jesus tells what should be done in one day, if necessary; but in Matthew there is no limitation as to time, "then came Peter and said to him, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Until seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven." It all means, if the occasion demands it, the process must go on indefinitely. One would hardly be expected to keep a correct account of so many offenses. Hence, we must forgive as often as the offender comes and says, "I repent."

11-13. And it came to pass, as they were on their way to Jerusalem, that he was passing along the borders of Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, who stood far off: and they lifted up their voices, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

11-13. Verse eleven of the Common Version says that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee, but he could not have passed through them in that order in going to Jerusalem. Besides, in his last journey to Jerusalem he passed down through Perea, on the east side of the Jordan. (Matt. 19:1; Luke 18:35.) As he drew nigh unto Jericho on his way to Jerusalem, it is evident that he approached it from the east. It is evident therefore that he did not pass through the midst of Samaria on this last journey to Jerusalem, but merely passed along the borders of Samaria and Galilee, as the American Standard Version has it.

He encountered ten lepers as he entered into a certain village. These lepers did not come near him. The law of Moses **required that lepers be separated from the people. (Lev. 13:45, 46; Num. 5:1-4.) Hence, these lepers were not in the village,** but at the entrance to the village. They "stood afar off from Jesus, but they knew something of Jesus and his powers; in fact, they knew who he was. "And they lifted up their voices, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." We can imagine the anxiety they put into that plea. They were afflicted with a deadly malady, and were shut off from association with their friends and families. Nothing but isolation and suffering, and a horrible death was in prospect for them, till Jesus came along. They knew that Jesus could heal them, if he would, and they had hopes that he would do so. Hence, their plea for mercy.

14. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go and show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, as they went, they were cleansed.

14. In answer to the plea of the lepers Jesus simply said, "Go and show yourselves unto the priests." So far as the record shows, he made them no promise. He issued a command which they could easily understand; but they had confidence in Jesus, and knew he had a purpose in sending them to the priests. Under the law of Moses the priests had to decide on all cases of leprosy and on all supposed cases. His judgment as to what to **do was final. (Lev. 13:46; Deut. 24:8.) Apparently these lepers**

had not gone far in carrying out the order of Jesus before they were healed. "As they went, they were cleansed." It was not a gradual healing, but an instantaneous healing. One moment they were lepers; the next moment they were entirely free from that awful malady.

15-19. 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. 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? And he said unto him. Arise, and go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

15-19. They all started out under the command to go and show themselves to the priests. When they were healed it seems that nine thought of nothing but to show themselves to the priests and be pronounced free from leprosy. The one who returned was a Samaritan. It is not likely that the priests would have had anything to do with him, but in his joy he could have hastened to his own supposed priests in Samaria. But he felt so grateful to his Benefactor that he hastened to return, and give thanks. "And one of them, when he saw 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." The others were, of course, Jews. Likely the nine thought more about having themselves pronounced free from leprosy than they did about giving thanks for their healing. They were too selfish to feel gratitude—only the Samaritan, the stranger, or alien, returned to give glory to God. "Arise, and go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole." It is significant that Jesus did not tell him to go, and show himself to the priests. But he did that which is so hard for some to do; he expressed joyously his appreciation for what Jesus had done.

Some Reflections

As it is a Christian's duty to forgive a trespass against him, it becomes the solemn duty of the offender to make it possible, even easy, for the brother to forgive him.

If everything moved along smoothly, it is likely that we would not know just how strong our faith is. For our own good it is necessary that we be occasionally put through a severe test. The stumbling block is often there; are you able to shove it out of the way, or pass over it, without stumbling? "For there must be also factions among you, that they that are approved may be made manifest among you." (1 Cor. 11:19.)

Gratitude is not a Bible word; but it means thankfulness, and that is a Bible word. In etymology "think" and "thank" are closely related; they are also closely related in action. The person who thinks of the source of any benefit, or blessing, can hardly refrain from being thankful. If he thinks of benefits, he thanks his benefactor. "Count your many blessings." Think on the mercy and goodness of God. David would meditate on God's precepts, on his statutes, on his wondrous works, and on his word. (Psalm 119.) No exercise is more calculated to promote godliness than meditating on God and his word. But people are in such a rush that few people take time to meditate. "Take time to be holy."

Luke 18

LESSON LINKS

A sense of obligation and a feeling of dependence are essential elements of the Christian character. It takes both to give balance to the Christian character. "The neglect of either is hurtful. Obligation binds us to the discharge of certain duties; but a faithful discharge of duties has a tendency to create a feeling of self-satisfaction, and to eliminate the feeling of dependence. On the other hand, the feeling of dependence has a tendency to destroy the sense of obligation. A child that is petted and waited on by all the other members of the family soon reaches the point where it does not feel any obligation to

the rest of the family. There have been Christians, real and professed, who spent so much time in prayer, praise, and holy meditation that they lost sight of the practical duties of life. They spent their time gazing into heaven, and had no time to look about them to the fields white unto harvest. The well-rounded, forceful Christian life is made up of a proper blending of a sense of obligation and a feeling of need"—Sound Doctrine.

If a person did not have a feeling of need, he would not sincerely pray; and if a man had no sense of obligation, he would not render any service to God or man.

1-3. And he spake a parable unto them to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, there was in a city a judge, who feared not God, and regarded not man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came oft unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

1-3. Chapter eighteen is closely connected with the latter part of chapter seventeen. Jesus had been giving some warnings about the calamities that were coming upon the Jewish nation. He informed them that the eagles, the Romans, would soon be gathering around the fast decaying body, the Jewish nation. Even then the children of God must not give up. Bloomfield says, "The commencement of this chapter is plainly connected in subject with the close of the preceding. For an attention to the duties of prayer, patience, and perseverance would be their best support in the hour of tribulation and distress under the evils which would precede the destruction of Jerusalem." Under such tribulations as were coming, they should be so fortified against weakness, that they would not faint; that is, that they would not lose courage and quit.

When a man has no reverence for God and no regard for his fellow man, he is devoid of all commendable traits. He does not take God into account in anything that he does; and the only use he has for people is to so manipulate matters that he can make them serve his interests. He uses people for his own profit; if he cannot use them, he cares nothing for them. It is a pity that men of that character are ever put into positions

where other people must depend on anything they do. Such men will pat you on the shoulder so long as they can use you; they will seek to destroy whom they cannot use. This judge was thoroughly selfish; he was moved by no good motives.

This widow was not a woman of great influence; had she been, these greedy oppressors would not have been seeking to rob her of what she had. Her own resistance was accomplishing nothing. As a last resort she came to this unjust judge, this judge who regarded neither God nor man. Likely she knew he was thoroughly selfish, but she had to do something, and she came to him as a last resort. And the sequel shows that she had her mind made up as to what she would have to do to gain a hearing. She did not aim to be denied. She wanted justice, to be freed of her adversaries. Instead of the plea, "Avenge me of mine adversary" the marginal reading has, "Do me justice of mine adversary." Perhaps the marginal reading gives us the correct meaning of *avenge*. What she wanted was justice—freedom from oppression.

4. 5. 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 her continual coming.

4, 5. The judge cared nothing for the widow and her troubles; so far as he cared, her oppressors might have all she had. "Though I fear not God, nor regard man." He prided himself on being a hard man, but he did care for himself. This woman was giving him trouble. If he pleaded that he did not have time to hear her, she would just calmly wait and later renew her request. She was wearing him out—bruising him. She was coming to him continually—she knew that he was a hard man; but she intended to wear down his resistance, and she succeeded. To save himself from this continuous worry, he granted her the justice she so much desired.

6-8. And the Lord said, Hear what the unrighteous judge saith. And shall not God avenge his elect, that cry to him day and night, and yet he is longsuffering over them? I say unto you, that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

6-8. If the unrighteous judge, "who feared not God, and regarded not man," could be induced by continual pleading to avenge the widow of her adversaries, "shall not God avenge his elect, that cry unto him day and night?" The purpose therefore of this parable is to encourage the people of God to be persistent in their prayers. To pray persistently is not a violation of Matthew 6:7. To pray often for the same thing, if the prayer is sincere, is not to be guilty of vain repetition. Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane prayed the same prayer three times in rapid succession. This parable encourages a similar effort on our part. If God does not hear us at once, it is not because he is indifferent to our cries. He may be testing our faith, or allowing our feeling of need to draw us nearer to him. At the proper time he will avenge his elect, and that speedily. God is long-suffering over his children, and their persistent and continual praying does not wear him out.

Jesus closes his comments on this parable with this question: "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Perhaps we are too ready to take this as a detached statement; but it surely is closely connected with the speech Jesus was making, which began with the twentieth verse of chapter seventeen. In that speech Jesus was warning them of the tribulations that would accompany the destruction of the Jewish nation. The disciples were encouraged to persistent prayer that they might not faint when these tribulations should come. In view of these facts, it seems that the coming of the Son of man here mentioned referred to his coming in judgment on the land of the Jews. The word here translated earth sometimes refers to the land of the Jews. In the destruction of Jerusalem would he find faith in the land of the Jews? At that time the disciples would not expect him to find faith anywhere else.

9. And he spake also this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and set all others at nought.

9. As stated by Luke, Jesus had a definite purpose in speaking this parable; it was a rebuke to the proud and haughty

Pharisees. It is supposed that the sect of the Pharisees originated with a group who earnestly desired to maintain purity of life and teaching; but they had degenerated to the point where they regarded themselves as the most righteous people among the Jews. Outwardly they kept up their tradition. They used their religion as a cloak, an outward dress; but inwardly they were full of corruption. Read the charges Jesus made against them in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew. After pronouncing numerous woes upon them for pretending to be righteous while full of all sorts of sins and corruptions, he pronounces this judgment upon them: "Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell?" The man who begins to take pride in his own righteousness and thinks he is better than others is slipping into the class of the Pharisees.

10-13. Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. 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. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I get. But the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote his breast, saying, God, be thou merciful to me a sinner.

10-13. Two men—a Pharisee and a publican, the two extremes in Jewish social and religious life. Pharisees held the publicans in the greatest contempt, and would have nothing to do with them either socially or religiously. They regarded themselves as the special favorites of God and the publicans as under his severest condemnation. Hence, this Pharisee would think it utterly useless for the publican to pray. Both went up into the temple to pray.

In reality the Pharisee did not pray; he told the Lord about his own perfection of character. For one thing he was thankful, namely, that he was not like other men, "or even as this publican." He was expressing his true sentiments and his estimate of himself. He felt that he was a superior sort of person. He was speaking what he thought was the truth, for men do not knowingly lie to God. It is true that Ananias lied to God, but he thought he was lying only to Peter. We have no reason to doubt that he fasted twice a week and gave tithes of

all that came into his hands. He did not feel that he was guilty of any sins, and so he confessed none; and of course asked for no forgiveness. He made no plea for mercy; he was depending on his own merit. He did not ask God for anything. His prayer was nothing but praise of himself. It is significant that Jesus said, "the Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself."

We of today might learn a lesson from the publican's prayer. Notice its brevity, and yet its fullness. Likely as the Pharisee talked to the Lord about himself, the publican felt that the Pharisee had much the advantage of him. He had no merit of his own to plead before the Lord. Doubtless he felt humiliated and ashamed before the Pharisee. Hence, when he was ready to pray, he would not so much as lift up his eyes toward heaven, "but smote his breast, saying, God, be thou merciful to me a sinner." He did not try to make a fancy speech to the Lord—he prayed. He knew what he most needed—mercy. And if God granted that to him in full, what else did he need? In their prayers, children of God should leave off all flowery speech, all efforts to make an impression on the people, and make their petitions brief and to the point.

1-1. I say unto you, 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.

14. In the eyes of the whole Jewish nation the Pharisee would have been regarded as the one whom the Lord would hear. He was in good standing among his fellow men. He appeared to be a clean man morally, and kept the forms of the law of Moses and the tradition of the elders. Yet the Lord did not hear him. "Him that hath a high look and a proud heart will I not suffer." (Psalm 101:5.) "Every one that is proud of heart is an abomination to Jehovah." (Prov. 16:5.) Also verse 18: "Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall." The Pharisee was both proud and haughty. "Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled." But the publican was humble and of a contrite spirit. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." (Psalm 51:17.)

"For all these things hath my hand made, and so all these things came to be, saith Jehovah: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word." (Isa. 66:2.) "For thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite." (Isa. 57:15.) Because the publican was of this class the Lord heard him. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Matthew 20

The last verse of Matthew 19 belongs with chapter 20 and is so indicated in our lesson. The Savior says: "Many shall be last that are first; and first that are last." The verse stands at the head of the lesson like a warning that Christ's standard of greatness is not the ordinary standard of the world. He wants his followers to be great, but they must be great in his way, not in Satan's. Milton made Satan the hero of his *Paradise Lost*, a being whose matchless energy and indomitable spirit compel the reader's admiration; but Satan is the scorn of the Christian, not his hero, and Satan's mode of advancement is never to be ours. Satan's first is to be our last, and what stands last and lowest in the estimation of worldlings is often to be regarded as supreme by the Christian.

Our Lord illustrated this by his forceful parable of the vineyard laborers. The story is soon told. A farmer went to the marketplace early in the morning, about six o'clock to hire men to work in his vineyard, and, as is still the case in the East, found numerous workmen waiting to be hired. They were sure of their position and drove a good bargain, agreeing to work that day for a denarius, about seventeen cents, worth in pur-

chasing power more than ten times that sum in our land to-day. It was the usual price of a well paid workman, and more, for instance, than a Roman soldier received. At the third hour (9 A.M.) he went out again and found some workmen standing idle in the marketplace, because no one had hired them, and they were ready enough to join his force of laborers with no bargaining except he promised to give them "what was right." This was repeated at the sixth and ninth hour (noon and 3 P.M.), and finally the eleventh hour, or 5 P.M., almost at the close of the working day, he found other workmen and asked them, "Why stand ye here idle?" and received the sorrowful answer, "Because no man has hired us." They were ready to go into the vineyard with not a word said about payment.

Then when pay-time came, the steward handed to each worker a denarius, the same to the eleventh-hour workers as to the first-hour toilers. The latter objected strenuously saying that the owner of the vineyard had no right to give to men who had worked only an hour as much as he gave to those who had borne the burden and heat of the day. But the lord of the vineyard reminded them of their bargain: he had payed the wages he had agreed to pay, and if he chose in his pity and good will to over-pay the later workers, surely he could do as he chose with his own money.

The main teaching of this parable of many lessons is that "God pays his servants not by the day nor by the piece, but by diligence and purpose. The spirit of service is the basis of reward. Quality is more than quantity, and faithfulness is more than time"—George Henry Hubbard.

"The men who bargained were paid according to their bargain; the men who trusted got far more than they could have dared bargain for."—Marcus Dods. Peter had just shown the bargaining spirit, and had asked for the twelve. "We have left all, and followed thee; what then shall we have?" (Matt. 19:27). This parable told Peter that whatever reward any one may have is of God's grace and not of the worker's merit. The true servant of God works for love, and knows that his Master will

reward him far beyond what he deserves.

But finally, though the parable welcomes the eleventh-hour convert, yet it does not encourage procrastination in entering God's service. "No doubt a late entrance is better than none at all. But a true service ought to last all our lives. It is our best and freshest energies that God requires, and not merely the fragments that remain over after days and years spent in idleness and self-seeking. There is a touching little poem by Dora Greenwell, suggested by the inscription on a tombstone in Wales, which tells how the man who lies there passes away at the age of eighty, and yet, referring to the date of his entering God's service, was only four years old when he died.

If you ask me how long I have lived in the world,
 I'm old, I'm very old;
 If you ask me how many years I have lived,
 it'll soon be told:
 Past eighty years of age, yet only four years old.

Oh! how long are you going to be in the world before you begin to live? Why stand ye here all the day idle?"—George Milligan (Selected Notes on International Lessons).

LESSON LINKS

Jesus with his disciples had left Galilee to be at Jerusalem at the time of the gathering of the Jews for the feast of the Passover. He was journeying down the east side of the Jordan River, the route usually traveled by the Jews of Galilee in going up to Jerusalem. He must have traveled slowly, for he did much teaching along the way, and also performed many miracles. The beginning of the journey is recorded in Matthew 19:1.

17-19. And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took his disciples apart, and on the way he said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him unto the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify: and the third day he shall be raised up.

17-19. Vast crowds attended the annual feasts of the Jews. Naturally kinsmen and friends would go in groups for company and for protection against numerous bands of robbers that infested the country. As the people who lived farthest away from Jerusalem would have to begin their journey earlier than those living nearer, it can be easily seen that these groups would be augmented along the way. In such crowds Jesus would have no opportunity to talk to his disciples about matters that the public was not prepared to hear. The apostles must be prepared as far as possible for what was in store for him at Jerusalem. So, along the way Jesus took the twelve disciples apart, and told them what would occur in Jerusalem. "The Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes." That would be the work of Judas Iscariot, and yet it is not likely that Judas had at that time formed that purpose. These chief priests and scribes would condemn him to death. They were the Sanhedrin, the high court of the Jews. They would condemn him to death, but under Roman law they could not execute the sentence of death. "And shall deliver him up unto the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify." The record of his betrayal, trials, and crucifixion shows the exact fulfillment of this remarkable prophecy of Jesus. But there was also a brighter note in what Jesus said: "and the third day he shall be raised up." And this statement was also fulfilled. Though Jesus had spoken so plainly, it seems that what he said made no special impression on the minds of the apostles. Plain truth has little, or no effect, on those who have their minds fully set along other lines.

20, 21. Then came to him the mother of the sons of Zebedee with her sons, worshipping him, and asking a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wouldest thou? She saith unto him, Command that these my two sons may sit, one on thy right hand, and one on thy left hand, in thy kingdom.

20, 21. The mother of the sons of Zebedee was Salome. (Compare Matt. 27:56 and Mark 15:40.) Her sons were James and John; with them she came to Jesus, "worshipping him"—bowing down before him. The parallel passage in Mark says,

"And there came near unto him James and John, the sons of Zebedee, saying unto him, Teacher, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall ask of thee." Salome did the talking; James and John were making the request through their mother. No doubt she was ambitious for her sons—most mothers are—and was willing to do what she could to promote what she considered their interests. The request was made in a childish way; they thought they could inveigle Jesus into promising to give them anything they wanted and then they would tell him what it was. They wanted him to sign a blank check, so to speak, and then they would fill in what they wanted. Had they known Jesus, as it seems to us that they should have known him, they would have known that they could not catch him in such a trap as that. Their method of seeking to gain what they wanted was no credit to their estimate of Jesus. But Jesus did not directly rebuke them for their low estimate of him, but merely asked what was wanted. Salome promptly answered, "Command that these my two sons may sit, one on thy right hand, and one on thy left hand, in thy kingdom." In a kingdom a seat at the right hand of the king was the place of highest honor, a seat at the king's left hand was the next place of highest honor. Hence, James and John wanted the chief places of honor in the kingdom. They thought of his kingdom as a kingdom of the world, a material kingdom, after the fashion of other kingdoms. They wanted to push themselves in ahead of the other apostles. It is hard to understand how John has come to be pictured as a quiet and meek sort of person. John did write much about love; and it may be that people, mistaking what love really is, have thought of John as an amiable sort of person without much spirit; but there must have been a lot of vim and fire about him and James, or Jesus would never have named them "Sons of thunder," nor would they have wanted to call down fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans of a certain village, who would not receive Jesus. (Luke 9:51-55.) John possessed a warm heart, and Jesus therefore loved him.

22, 24. But Jesus answered and said. Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink? They say unto him. We are able. He saith unto them. 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.

22, 23. "Ye know not what ye ask." Their request had grown out of ignorance and selfish ambition. They wanted places of power in a kingdom of their own imagination. They thought they knew the kind of kingdom that was to be, but they did not. Had they known the nature of the kingdom and what was before them, they would not have made such a request. But with a full revelation of God's plan before us, and with all these years to learn it, many of us show as much ignorance in our prayers as did James and John. And apparently some are as ignorant today in their ambitions as were James and John. No man who really knows what Christianity is wants to rule things in the church. And yet many churches are injured, and some are ruined, by the unholy ambition of some to rule. They want the chief places—they want to direct things. Preachers are not always blameless in the matter; this is true when one wants to be looked up to as a leading preacher.

Jesus raised a question that they certainly were not expecting: "Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" In this figurative use of the word "cup" it refers to one's portion in life. It sometimes means blessings, as when David said, "My cup runneth over"; it sometimes means sorrow, suffering, and tragedy, as Jesus here used it. Jesus referred to the suffering of death. In the garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed that this cup might pass from him. The same question in another form, as reported by Mark: "Or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" Jesus here refers to his trial and crucifixion as a baptism, because in them he would be completely overwhelmed; the figure is employed because in real baptism a person is completely overwhelmed. If baptism had been only the sprinkling of a little water on a person's head, Jesus would never have referred to the awful suffering he was about to undergo as a baptism; for it was not a mere sprinkling of

suffering—he was completely overwhelmed with suffering—even to the most agonizing death. Are you James and John, able to undergo all this? "We are able." They, of course, did not know how much suffering Jesus would pass through. If they were a little rash and over confident in their avowal, too many today are lacking in confidence. One grows weary of hearing, "we are not able," "it cannot be done," etc. Jesus assured James and John that sufferings similar to his awaited them, but that places in the kingdom were for those for whom they were prepared.

24. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation concerning the two brethren.

24. The indignation felt by the other apostles was natural; they felt that James and John were trying in an unfair way to get an advantage over them. Men banded together on an equal footing in any enterprise become indignant if some of their number begin to scheme for advantage. James and John, losing sight of the fact that they should conduct themselves in such a way as to promote good fellowship, tried to gain an advantage over the others, and the others resented it. Such scheming sometimes takes place in the church, and always results in an injury to the spirit of good fellowship that should prevail in churches. The man who, like Diotrephes, loves to have the pre-eminence among the brethren is a menace to a church.

25-27. But 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. Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister: and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant.

25-27. If there be those who think that the words in the latter part of verse 23 imply that there would be places of high honor and authority in the kingdom of Christ, the contents of the verses now under consideration should dispel that thought. There were such places of honor and authority in the kingdoms of the Gentiles, and those holding such positions exer-

cised authority over the people. What Jesus said about the conditions that prevailed in the Gentile kingdoms was a reminder to James and John that what they wanted was just such things as the heathens practiced; and that reminder would help to prepare them the better to accept what he was about to say about the conditions that would prevail in his kingdom. His kingdom would not be like the kingdoms of the heathen nations. "Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister." A "minister" is a "waiting man" or "woman"—one who serves. People have obscured the meaning of the word minister by drifting into the habit of thinking that a minister is a preacher. A preacher should be a minister, a servant; but too often he is a ruler—too often he manages the affairs of the church. Too often he outlines the plans and calls on others to carry them out. The other members thus become his ministers. All of the children of God should be ministers. "And whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant"—your bond servant. "First" here does not refer to time, but to rank or importance. The most important person is the one who renders the best service. That is a universal truth, though it is not generally so regarded by men. The washerwoman, the scrubwoman, and the garbage man are more important in any town or city than the society butterfly or the ranking clubwoman or the man who lives off the income of money gained by his parents. In all the affairs of men, service is the important thing, whether we recognize it or not. And certainly that principle holds good in the kingdom of heaven. And service can be rendered in so many ways, that no one needs to complain that he has nothing to do. There are sick people that need attention, the poor that need food and clothing, and ignorant people that need teaching. Do such service as is needed in the name of Christ, and great will be the reward in heaven. The kind of service we render determines whose servants we are. "Know ye not, that to whom ye present yourselves as servants unto obedience, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom.

6:16.) "Through love be servants one to another." (Gal. 5:13.) "Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another: for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." (1 Pet. 5:5.) "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.) Nothing we do brings any profit to the Lord—the profit all comes to us.

28. Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

28. Jesus came to minister to our needs—to render man a service that he could not do for himself. While he was here, he went about doing good. By his death and resurrection he prepared a plan of salvation for us, and then revealed it to us through his inspired men. He died to redeem us from sin; hence, he is our ransom. A ransom is a price paid to release one from servitude of captivity. Man had been captured by the devil, and was in servitude to him. Jesus gave his life for us. Hence, he is both our ransom and our redeemer.

Some Reflections

We are told that the church needs efficient leaders. Is not that plea a little overworked? Do we not rather need faithful followers—not followers of men, but of Christ? If all members of the church were wide-awake, and each one faithfully serving the Lord, there would not be that feeling of need for leaders.

Luke 19

1, 2. And he entered and was passing through Jericho. And behold, a man called by the name Zacchaeus; and he was a chief publican, and he was rich.

1, 2. Jesus was on his last journey to Jerusalem to attend his last Passover, the last Passover that God required anyone to attend. He had traveled down on the east side of the Jordan, through Perea, the usual route traveled between Galilee and Jerusalem. Great crowds would be traveling this road as the time for the Passover drew nigh; they would pass through Jericho. Great crowds gathered about Jesus as he was passing through Jericho, so much so that it must have been difficult to move along. In that throng was a man named Zacchaeus, a citizen of Jericho. "He was a chief publican, and he was rich." The Roman method of collecting taxes was to farm out the taxes, that is, they sold the right to collect taxes in various districts. The man who bought the right to collect taxes in a given district would have men under him. This gives us an idea as to why Zacchaeus was called a chief publican; the taxgatherers were called publicans. It would be unpleasant to pay taxes to any foreign oppressor; it was specially distasteful to a Jew, for most of the Jews did not think it right to do so. Hence, if a fellow Jew became a collector for the Roman government, they would immediately count him an outcast, both a social and a religious outcast. To them he was unclean. Even though Zacchaeus was a rich man, he was an unclean outcast. Of course Zacchaeus knew all this before he became a publican; he therefore could not complain at his lot. But he must have often longed for the society of his fellow Jews, and to enjoy again full religious privileges with them.

3, 4. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the crowd, because lie was little of stature. And he ran on before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.

3, 4. Jesus had just given sight to a blind man, and this intensified the interest of the crowds. Zacchaeus desired to see the man who was creating so much excitement; "and could not for the crowd." So dense was the crowd surrounding Jesus that Zacchaeus could not press his way through it to the point where he could see Jesus; he was little of stature, and could not see over the heads of the people. But he was determined and

resourceful. He knew of a sycamore tree up the way where Jesus would pass, and knew he could reach that tree before Jesus would; so he ran ahead of the crowd and climbed the tree. When there is excitement, people like to see the cause of it; it is therefore likely that Zacchaeus had no higher motive than natural curiosity. As he ran and climbed the tree, he had no idea of the excitement and good fortune that was just ahead of him.

5-7. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, He is gone in to lodge with a man who is a sinner.

5-7. "And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up." Zacchaeus had not expected that. He must have been doubly surprised when Jesus addressed him by name, and even more astonished at what Jesus said to him. He expected no Jew to speak to him in a friendly way, and certainly not to say to him, "To-day I must abide in thy house." It is not likely that any of the strict Jews had spoken to him except in matters pertaining taxes. Now for the greatest man among them to speak to him in a friendly way and to have the honor of having him as a guest made that a great and glad day to Zacchaeus, the greatest day of his life. At the bidding of Jesus "he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully." He would provide for Jesus the best he had, and would naturally want his fellow publicans to share his joy. As he was a chief publican, it is very likely that these publicans served under him. He knew it was useless to invite the Pharisees into his house; no Pharisee would enter the house of a publican. Jesus knew they would criticize him for going into the home of Zacchaeus; but no amount of criticism would turn Jesus from doing right. In the sight of a Pharisee every publican was a sinner, and every sinner was an outcast religiously and socially. And so they criticized Jesus. He often astonished them by disregarding their religious and social standards. On this occasion Jesus really invited himself to go home with a publican, "a man that

is a sinner."

8-10. 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. And Jesus said unto him, To-day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. *For* the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.

8-10. The student will recognize that we have only a brief report of what was said and done on that occasion. Jesus had gone to that home because Zacchaeus was a man that he could help; he could do nothing for these self-righteous Pharisees, and they were therefore left out of consideration. No use to cast pearls before swine. Evidently Jesus did some teaching in that home—enough to make a profound impression on Zacchaeus. "And Zacchaeus stood." Perhaps he arose during the meal. As he had an important statement to make, he respectfully stood while he was making it. "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor." He here seems to have been stating what he was in the habit of doing. "And if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold." The Jew had no citizen rights; so, if a publican exacted more taxes under some false claim or charge, the wronged Jew could do little about it. Zacchaeus does not really confess that he had wrongfully exacted aught of any man; his statement seems rather an indication that he thought he might have done so. He might honestly collect more from a man than he should, and later some one might convince him that he had done so. In such cases he would restore fourfold. We are told that a Roman law required this. Whether he was stating a custom of his or a resolution, his statement shows a right spirit. A resolution to undo wrongs is a mark of true repentance. If a man is not willing to do what he can to undo wrongs he has done to others, he has not repented. He will not continue to profit off what he has gained by dishonest means. Because Zacchaeus showed a right spirit, and because he was a son of Abraham, Jesus said, "To-day is salvation come to this house." And this statement shows that Zacchaeus was in earnest in what he said, otherwise Jesus would not have made that statement. Jesus then

stated his mission—perhaps loud enough for the Pharisees outside to hear him: "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." This statement reveals the whole purpose, the very heart and soul, of Christianity. Jesus did not come to cause men to be lost, but to save the lost. They were lost already.

LESSON LINKS

The time of the crucifixion was drawing nigh and Jesus was on his last journey to Jerusalem. In the house of Zacchaeus, where he lodged, he said, "To-day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost. 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." When Jesus spoke of himself as the Son of man, declaring that he came to seek and to save the lost, he virtually announced that he was the Messiah, for that was to be the work of the promised Messiah. The throngs attending him expected him to become king on reaching Jerusalem. They expected to have a mighty prince on the throne in Jerusalem, under whose leadership they might gain their independence from the hated Romans and subdue the whole world. They expected Jesus to begin that work as soon as he reached Jerusalem. Evidently they thought that he would enter Jerusalem, and take the reins of government into his hands. Their plans and the purpose of Jesus were far apart. So he spoke a parable to hold in check such expectation.

12-15. Me said therefore. A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called ten servants of his, and he gave them ten pounds, and said unto them, Trade ye herewith till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent an ambassage after him, saying, We will not that this man reign over us. And it came to pass, when he was come back again, having received the kingdom, that he commanded these servants, unto whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by trading.

12-15. Parables were based on incidents and customs that prevailed in that day and country. Because some of these incidents and customs are not now familiar to us, it makes it difficult for us to understand some of the parables. When Jesus himself explained a parable, as he sometimes did, his explanation is final. Usually there is one lesson to be learned from a parable; to seek to get more out of a parable than was intended is to make it "go on all fours," and to do violence to the Savior's teaching. The parable of our lesson is a lesson on faithfulness, and it cannot be made to fit at every point; to attempt to do so is to destroy the intended lesson. By ignoring the intent of the parable of our lesson much hurtful speculation can be, and has been, indulged in. Evidently Jesus is the nobleman of the parable, that is, the nobleman represents Jesus. And Jesus had enemies who would not have him to reign over them, but these enemies did not actually send an embassy to heaven to keep him from receiving the kingdom. They did do everything they could—even killed him—to keep him from being king, and tried to destroy his kingdom after it was established. That was as far as they could go. The ten servants of the nobleman cannot be made to represent ten servants in the kingdom of God; God has had more than ten servants on earth. And certainly more than ten servants will have to give account for their conduct. And it will be noticed that only three of the servants are said to have made a report. It can therefore be seen that not everything in the parable represents something like it in the kingdom of God.

16-19. And the first came before him, saying, Lord, thy pound hath made ten pounds more. And he said unto him, Well done, thou good servant: because thou wast found faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Thy pound, Lord, hath made five pounds. And he said unto him also, Re thou also over five cities.

16-19. The point of emphasis in this lesson is faithfulness in our service to God. It seems that the pounds, as also the talents in Matt. 25:14-20, represent the opportunities Christians have for doing service for God. The first servant to report to the returning king showed himself to be a good financier; it shows

also that he had been a busy man. He had been faithful in the trust committed to him. Our Lord would have us to be busy in his service—to use every opportunity to advance his cause in the earth. "Lord, thy pound hath made ten pounds." He was able to return his lord's pound with ten other pounds—ten pounds clear profit, That was a one-thousand percent gain, and pleasing to his lord. "And he said unto him, Well done, thou good servant: because thou was faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities." Some of the advocates of a supposed future kingdom in which Jesus will reign in a world kingdom here on earth seem to forget that this statement is a part of the parable, and argue that the servant of God who proves himself to be faithful and capable will have rule over as many cities as he is capable of managing. But if the ten cities are to be taken as literal, why not the pounds? The language clearly teaches that the faithful servant of the Lord will be abundantly rewarded; he is rewarded here with increased opportunities for doing good, and hereafter he will be rewarded with an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom. (2 Pet. 1:11.) This reward is also spoken of as eternal life. (Matt. 25:46; Rom. 6:23.) The second servant reporting had not done so well as the first. "Thy pound, Lord, hath made five pounds." His lord did not criticize him for not doing so well as the first servant, but said, "Be thou over five cities." Both servants had done well. In the lesson Jesus intended to teach by this parable, the ten cities and the five cities do not mean that, in some supposed future kingdom, these servants will be given real cities to rule over, any more than it means that the Lord gives each of his servants a pound to trade with, or that he had only ten servants. Those who want this parable to have such literal application will need to explain why only three of the ten servants reported.

20-23. And another came saying. Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man; thou takest up that which thou layedst not down, and reapest that which thou didst not sow. He saith unto him. Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I am an austere man, taking up that which

I had not laid down, and reaping that which I did not sow; then wherefore gavest thou not my money into the bank, and I at my coming should have required it with interest?

20-23. The third servant reporting professed to be a very careful man; he had not taken any chances on losing the pound entrusted to him. His lord had said to the ten when he gave each of them a pound, "Trade ye herewith till I come." He had not obeyed his lord; he was afraid to do anything, and so did the wrong thing. He carefully wrapped his pound in a towel, and laid it away for safekeeping. He was determined to return to his lord the exact amount given him—he would lose nothing his lord put in his care. His attitude toward the lord showed the kind of man he himself was. A man always reveals his character when he passes judgment on a person or law or principle. This servant's harsh judgment of his lord leads one to the conclusion that his lord in the past had found it necessary to deal severely with this slothful servant. Hence the servant's harsh judgment: "Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that which thou layedst not down, and reapest that which thou didst not sow." He was charging him with picking up things that did not belong to him and with reaping harvests that belonged to others. These were reckless charges for a servant to make against his lord, who could deal with him as he pleased. "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant." He showed wickedness in his estimate of his lord, as well as in his neglect of duty. His own excuse condemned him. "thou knewest that I am an austere man, . . ." That is, if you regard me as such a hard master, that is the more reason why you should have tried hard to do your duty. He was slothful, and also antagonistic toward his lord.

24-26. And he said unto them that stood by, Take away from him the pound, and give unto him that hath the ten pounds. And they said unto him. Lord, he hath ten pounds. I say unto you, that 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.

24-26. Opportunities for service and the blessings for faithful service are lost by the servant who renders no service, and they go to the servant who is faithful. This is a sort of universal law. The man in business who takes no advantage of opportunities will soon find that all opportunities and profits go to the man who faithfully attends to his business. If the Christian does not use the opportunities for doing good that come his way, he will soon find that someone else is doing the things he should have done, and enjoying all the blessings that come for such service. The one pound was taken from the wicked servant and given to the faithful servant. What little man has will be taken away, if he does not make use of it. "I say unto you, that 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." Verse 27 tells how the enemies fared: "But these mine enemies, that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me."

Some Reflections

Work is not a curse. Even before Adam sinned he was put into the garden of Eden to dress and to keep it. (Gen. 2:15.) The curse for his sin increased his labor, for then he had to combat noxious growths. And labor brought weariness, because man had not access to the invigorating fruit of the tree of life. (Gen. 3.)

There is development of character in honest work. It is good for a man to feel that he is not a parasite but is carrying his part of the load. It is also good for him to be able and willing to help those who cannot help themselves. Even preachers would gain force of character, a feeling of independence, and influence with the people, if they would follow Paul's example.

Matthew 21

1-3. And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and came unto Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying unto them. Go into the village that is over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any one say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.

1-3. Bethphage and Bethany were both on the Jerusalem-Jericho road, about two miles from Jerusalem. Bethphage seems to have been a little farther out than Bethany; hence, Jesus and the multitude following him would reach Bethphage first. Here he said to two of his disciples, "Go into the village that is over against you." This village would be Bethany, the village where Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. The people of that village therefore knew him. In giving the two disciples directions as to how to find the ass and her colt, Jesus shows his power to know things which were beyond the vision of the natural eye. His directions were exact and explicit—they would find the ass tied and her colt with her just inside the village. The disciples so often failed to comprehend his powers, that with wonder they discussed, as they went, how he would know what he was talking about, or whether he really did know. They were to proceed to loose the animals without asking the owner anything about the matter. If the owner asked them why they were doing it, they were simply to say, "The Lord hath need of them." The owner must have been a disciple of the Lord; at least, he would know who was wanting them. The disciples were also to inform the owner that the Lord would soon return them to him. And that is a good plan for borrowers to follow. Some professed followers of Christ are not very good at returning borrowed things.

4, 5. Now this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, Meek, and riding upon an ass, And upon a colt the foal of an ass.

4, 5. It is generally understood that Matthew wrote especially for the Jewish readers. He dwelt on those things that

would be most likely to convince a Jew. Hence, he frequently mentioned the fact that certain events fulfilled certain prophecies—that would be more convincing to a Jew than to a Gentile, for Jews were acquainted with the prophets. He quotes Zech. 9:9 as being fulfilled in the manner in which Jesus would enter Jerusalem. In the quotation, "Zion" refers to Jerusalem", and not that part that is sometimes called Zion. He would be proclaimed as king. Up to that time he had kept his followers and admirers from making any demonstrations. When they would have acclaimed him king, he sought refuge in more quiet places. When the apostles had confessed him as the Christ, the Son of the living God, he charged them to tell no man who he was. He would not allow Peter, James, and John to tell about the transfiguration. He did not want to stir up his enemies more than was necessary, for they would do more to hinder his work. But now his work is about finished, and he is not only to allow a great demonstration, but seems to be deliberately planning for one. He will allow his friends and disciples to enjoy one glad hour before the shadows of the cross envelop them in the darkness of despair. And he will demonstrate to all Jerusalem and to the Jews gathered from every quarter that he is not organizing and equipping a great army, and that he comes not on a horse, the symbol of war and of kingly pride, but on an ass, the symbol of peace, labor, and toil. And the people would see with their own eyes the fulfillment of Zech. 9:9. After that his enemies could do their worst.

6-11. And the disciples went, and did even as Jesus appointed them, and brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their garments; and he sat thereon. And the most part of the multitude spread their garments in the way; and others cut branches from the trees, and spread them in the way. And the multitudes that went before him, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, Who is this? And the multitudes said, This is the prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.

6-11. The student should be sure to read carefully the parallel passages—Mark 11:1-18; Luke 19:29-46. The two disciples found the animals as Jesus said they would; and, as Jesus had

foreseen, "certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt?" "The Lord hath need of them." This was enough for the owner—he gladly yielded to what the Lord wanted. To give up promptly what the master asks, whether it be money, time, or ability, is the proper spirit of Christian service. When the animals were brought to Jesus, and he was properly mounted, he was ready for the great demonstration, or what some call the triumphal entry. Jesus must have spent the Sabbath in Bethany. It is now the first day of the week, six days before the Passover. Jesus was the topic of conversation in Jerusalem among the crowds that had gathered early to purify themselves for the Passover. They were wondering whether Jesus, on account of the growing hostility of the rulers, would dare come to Jerusalem to the feast. "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." (John 11:57.) Well, he would not sneak in, as these rulers evidently thought he might; he himself would show them where he was, and they could then form their own plans. In going from Bethany to Jerusalem, he must have gone the shorter route over the Mount of Olives, for Luke informs us that the shouting and praising began "at the descent of the Mount of Olives." At that point they were in full view of the city, for the Mount of Olives rises about two hundred feet above the temple area. The combined shouting of the great throng would be heard in the city. Their enthusiasm knew no bounds. "And many spread their garments upon the way; and others branches, which they had cut from the fields." They were paying him honor as their king. They waved palm leaves, and cried, "Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest." Mark gives this additional acclaim: "Blessed is the kingdom that cometh, the kingdom of our father David." They were expecting the immediate inauguration of a kingdom like the kingdom of David, which would spread over all the earth, and bring universal peace. Jesus did not in so many words tell the people that they were wrong, and yet he did tell them. Notice

this carefully: "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.) What a picture! The Son of God in the midst of such demonstrations weeping over the beloved but doomed city. Instead of giving them a national government, such as they expected, he pronounced their national doom. But of course the people were too full of excitement and enthusiasm to pay any attention to anything save what they had in mind.

Luke 19

41-44. 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.

41-44. Jesus loved his nation; he loved Jerusalem. He could see vividly the destruction and misery that the invading Roman armies would bring upon the city and the nation, and he wept; "for then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be." (Matt. 24:21.) And yet by their conduct the people were bringing all these tribulations upon themselves, and were doing it ignorantly and blindly. Had they known the things that belong to peace, they could have averted such

calamities and sufferings. They had persistently refused all warnings that did not harmonize with their notions. They rejected Jesus as the Messiah because he was not what they thought the Messiah would be and do. They would not listen to his teaching, because he was not authorized by them to teach. His teaching angered them to madness, because he rebuked their wickedness. Because of such perversity, they could not see the things that belonged to peace. The words of Isa. 5:20, 21 rightly applied to them: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" Their whole processes of thinking were so warped that they saw everything in reverse.

Jesus here briefly described the things that were coming upon them. The city would be so beset that no one could go out, and none could come to their rescue. The city and its inhabitants would be dashed to the ground—would be destroyed. It would be an utter overthrow; "they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another." A short time later Jesus again tells them of the troubles that were coming. (Read Matt. 24:1-44; Mark 13:1-32; Luke 21:5-33.) In this last speech about the destruction that was coming upon them Jesus gives a much fuller description of what would occur when the Roman armies came against them. All these calamities they were bringing upon themselves, because they knew not the time of their visitation. The Messiah had come and had patiently sought to turn them from their sins, but in their self-imposed blindness they would not recognize him. If they had only known.

Matthew 21

LESSON LINKS

From the very beginning of the ministry of Jesus he acted.

both in word and in deed by that authority of the Father that sent him. "As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do." (John 14:31.) "For I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me commandment, what I should say and what I should speak." (John 12:49.) He was God manifest in the flesh; he therefore possessed inherent divine authority. It was this authority that enabled him to say, "But I say unto you." Notice how often this is repeated in the fifth chapter of Matthew. And when he finished the Sermon on the Mount, "the multitudes were astonished at his teaching: for he taught as one having authority, and not as their scribes." (Matt. 7:28, 29.) Early in his ministry he astonished the worshipers at Capernaum by the manner of his teaching, "for his word was with authority." (Luke 4:31, 32.) He had authority over all evil spirits. When he cast an unclean spirit out of a man at Capernaum, the people in the synagogue were amazed, "insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What is this? a new teaching! with authority he commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." (Mark 1:23-27.) He had authority over the waves and winds. He exercised as much authority in cleansing the temple the first time as he did in cleansing it on the occasion mentioned in our lesson for today. Every day was a day of authority with Jesus, even though he was not then the crowned Messiah.

To keep up the connection, let us note again Mark's brief statement of the activities of Jesus after he reached Jerusalem on the day of his "triumphal entry": "And he entered into Jerusalem, into the temple; and when he had looked round about upon all things, it being now eventide, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve." And from Mark's record we learn that the events of our present lesson occurred next day—"on the morrow." On the day of his entrance, so far as the record shows, he did no teaching and performed no miracles. He made a thorough inspection of all that was going on in the temple, but did nothing about it on that day.

12, 13. And Jesus entered into the temple of God, and cast out all them that

sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold the doves; and he saith unto them, It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer: but ye make it a den of robbers.

12, 13. The cleansing here mentioned is not the cleansing spoken of in the second chapter of John. The temple, of course, was under the control of the priests; and they had officers to enforce whatever regulations they made to govern the temple area. After Jesus cleansed the temple the first time these traders and money exchangers re-established themselves in the temple. This was done, of course, by the consent and cooperation of the priests. They were therefore carrying on their business under the protection of the priests, and the priests would profit by their business in rentals or commissions. It is not reasonable that these priests would allow the temple to be cluttered up by all this traffic, if they were getting nothing out of such traffic. Had this business been carried on outside the temple in an honest and business way, it would have been an accommodation to the people. Many worshipers who lived in distant parts of the country could not well bring along their animal sacrifices; this would be true especially of those who lived in foreign cities. To have a place near the temple where they could buy their animal sacrifices was almost a necessity. The Jew living in foreign countries would come with the money of his country, but the half shekel would have to be in Jewish money. Money-changers could serve a good purpose for this and for making change for other gifts in the temple service. But these men were committing a double crime—they were polluting the temple and carrying on their business in such a way that they were robbing the people—charging such prices for their animals and for their exchanging money that it amounted to thievery. These things Jesus had observed when he was looking round about on all things in the temple. He may have given these men on that day a hint that they were carrying on an unlawful business. By the next day, the next day of our lesson, they would have had time to move out, but they had not done so.

It will be noticed that Jesus drove out of the temple "all them that sold and bought." Both parties to an illegal transaction are guilty. If no one bought that which was offered for sale illegally, there would be no illegal selling. He made a clean sweep of the traders and the money-changers; then he said: "It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer." This is a quotation from Isa. 56:7. Jesus then adds these stinging words: "But ye make it a den of robbers." A den is a place of refuge, a place of security, for animals. Hence, the house of prayer, God's house, under the protection of the priests and their temple police, had become a place of security for these robbers of the people! At first thought it may seem strange that neither these men nor the temple police offered any resistance to what Jesus did; but there were sufficient reasons for their not doing so. They knew they were guilty as charged; besides, they remembered that great demonstration of the day before. Too many of these people were close by, and perhaps were applauding what Jesus did. All they could do was clear their stuff out of the temple, and do a little quiet grumbling to themselves.

14-17. And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children that were crying in the temple and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were moved with indignation, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these are saying? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea: did ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou has perfected praise? And he left them, and went forth out of the city to Bethany, and lodged there.

14-17. While in the temple Jesus healed the blind and the lame. Jesus was not doing such works for personal gain, but merely as acts of mercy. His works were very different from that of the traffickers whom he had driven out of the temple. Such deeds of mercy were lawful anywhere and any time; but his actions did not please the chief priests and the scribes. Such deeds would increase his popularity with the masses of the people; he was already too popular to suit them. Neither were they pleased with the children's crying, "Hosanna to the son of David." "They were moved with indignation." Nothing

was going to suit them. As they had been expecting Jesus to slip quietly into Jerusalem, the demonstration as he entered must have been a great shock to them. In their presence he had boldly driven the traffickers out of the temple, and proceeded to perform numerous cures; and now the children were shouting for his praises. They had given commandment, that if anyone knew where he was, he should tell them, so that they might take him. Now here he was before their eyes, exercising authority over what went on in the temple; and they could do nothing about it. They could not even stop the shouting of the children. Their complaint to Jesus was really an appeal to him to quiet the children. "Hearest thou what these are saying?" "And Jesus saith unto them, Yea"; that is, Yes, I hear them. Now as these men, especially the scribes, professed to know all about the scriptures, there is a touch of irony in the reply Jesus made: "Did ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" This is a quotation from the eighth Psalm. It does not seem so much to be a prophecy of this event, as the statement of a general truth. When children voluntarily give praise, it is genuine praise. Much of the praise given by grownups is nothing more or less than polite hypocrisy; but we should give praise to whom praise is due and to that which is worthy of praise. He who praises everything really praises nothing; that is, his praise is worth nothing.

After his day's activities in the temple were over, Jesus went out to Bethany to a home where he loved to linger—the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. That must have been a pleasant home—an ideal home. Here Jesus could rest without being disturbed by any unpleasantness between members of the family. It seems that Jesus spent every night of this week in that home; that is, every night before his arrest.

18-20. Now in the morning as he returned to the city, he hungered. And seeing a fig tree by the way side, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only; and he saith unto it, Let there be no fruit from thee henceforward for ever. And immediately the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How did the fig tree immediately wither away?

18-20. On the morning here mentioned Jesus and his disci-

pies must have left Bethany before the morning's meal was served, for he became hungry before they reached the city; "and seeing a fig tree by the way side, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only." This fig tree was not the property of any individual; standing by the wayside it was public property and anyone might gather its fruit, if it had any. It was a promising looking tree, but Jesus found nothing on it but leaves. Jesus said to the barren tree, "Let there be no fruit from thee henceforward for ever. And immediately the fig tree withered away." It seems that this was a lesson in miracle, a symbolic miracle, a sort of parable in action. The tree promised much, but yielded nothing but leaves. And that fairly represented the Jewish nation. It made great pretense of service to God, but it was pretense only. Jesus had already pronounced the doom of that nation; and like the fig tree it would soon wither and die.

Matthew had a way of grouping related things without always giving them in their chronological order. By referring to Mark's account of this miracle and what the disciples said about it, the student will see that the doom of the fig tree was pronounced as they journeyed to Jerusalem on the day before, that is, the day in which Jesus cleansed the temple; and that the disciples mentioned the complete death of the tree on this day, the morning after the doom of the tree was pronounced. "And as they passed by in the morning they saw the fig tree withered away from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Rabbi, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away." On the import of this miracle Bloomfield has this to say: "This was emblematical and figurative; according to the usual custom of the sages of the east to express things by symbolical actions. It was also prophetic. Our Lord intended to prove that his power to punish the disobedient was as great as that to confer benefits. It was, moreover, to prefigure the destruction of the perverse Jews, because in the *time of fruits* they had borne none (see verses 33-41); and, likewise, to read a very important lesson to all his disciples of every age—that if the opportunities for the approv-

ing themselves virtuous be neglected, naught will remain but to be withered by the fiat which shall consign them to everlasting destruction."

21, 22. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do what is done to the fig tree, but even if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea, it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

21, 22. The twenty-first verse would not seem so difficult, if students would bear in mind that Jesus and his inspired writers used the everyday language of the people. Difficulties and obstacles are sometimes referred to as mountains. When Jesus sent his apostles out he gave them various miracle-working powers, but the ability to remove literal mountains was not included in those gifts. Besides, to have cast Mount Olivet into the sea would have served no useful purpose. Special miraculous powers were given to certain men, but to none was given the power to remove literal mountains. (1 Cor. 12:4-11.) Even those who had power conferred upon them to do certain miracles could not perform such miracles at any time they doubted their ability to do so. Because of unbelief, not unbelief in God, but unbelief in their own ability to cast out a certain demon, the disciples failed on one occasion to cast out a demon, even though they had been given that power.

Faith is an essential in prayer. There must be faith in God as a Father who is able and willing to grant the requests of his children. To doubt his ability and willingness to answer us is to defeat our prayers before we pray. Disobedience will defeat our prayers. (Psalm 66:18; Prov. 28:9.) A desire for self-indulgence will hinder our prayers. (James 4:3.) If therefore a man doubts, or is disobedient to God, or asks for things with which to gratify his own lusts, the Lord will not grant his requests. And we must always recognize the truth that God knows what we need, and that we do not always know what is best for us. "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be the glory in the church and in

Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen." (Eph. 3:20, 21.)

Some Reflections

If you want to know how to pray, a close study of the following will help: "And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my border, and that thy hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it be not to my sorrow! And God granted him that which he requested." (1 Chron. 4:10.)

John 12

LESSON LINKS

From John 12:1 we learn that Jesus came to Bethany six days before the Passover—Bethany, the home of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. Bethany was also the home of Simon the Leper. Little is known of the other village mentioned by Matthew, Mark, and Luke as being on the road from Jericho to Jerusalem. Bethany was situated on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives about two miles from Jerusalem. It seems that Jesus arrived in Bethany late on the day we call Friday and spent the Sabbath in the home of his friends. During the week now about to begin Jesus spent the nights in Bethany. Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is recorded by all four gospels, but only Matthew, Mark, and Luke give details of his preparation for this fantastic event. Jesus reached Bethany six days before the Passover. On Sunday, as is generally understood, he made his so called triumphal entry into Jerusalem. On Monday he cleansed the temple; on Tuesday the incidents of the first part of our lesson occurred. The nights of this week, up to the night of his arrest, were spent in Bethany.

20-22. Now there were certain Greeks among those that went up to worship at the feast: these therefore came to Philip, who was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying. Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: Andrew cometh, and Philip, and they tell Jesus.

20-22. Certain Greeks that had come up to worship at the feast desired to see Jesus. The curiosity of these Greeks is not to be condemned, for people have always wanted to see famous men. Not infrequently curiosity has led to good results. Example: curiosity brought a great crowd together on Pentecost. Not one of them came to hear preaching, or to receive any benefit whatever; and yet see what wonderful results followed. (Acts 2:1-41.) Many people now go to preaching through curiosity, and are convinced by what they hear. The name Philip is Greek, as is also the name Andrew. These Greeks must have known Philip, else they would not have known that he was a disciple of Jesus, for Jesus was not at that time present. When these Greeks told Philip that they wanted to see Jesus, he first conferred with his brother Andrew about the matter. We are not told that Jesus answered the request of the Greeks, but there appears to be no reason why he would not do so. The speech that follows seems to have been made to these Greeks in the presence of Philip and Andrew.

23-26. And Jesus answereth them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will the Father honor.

23-26. "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified." He would be glorified when he ascended to heaven and was crowned King. From John 7:38, 39, we learn that, when Jesus was glorified, the Holy Spirit would be given. As the Holy Spirit came on the first Pentecost after his resurrection, he had certainly then been glorified. Peter states this truth in his sermon on that day: "Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the

promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear." (Acts 2:33.) But he must first suffer the shame and agony of the cross. In a striking illustration he sets forth the truth that death must come first: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." If a man saves his wheat by keeping it in the granary, it bears no fruit. But as the planted grain begins to decay, the seed germ springs into life, and at first feeds off the decaying grain. By this process much fruit comes from one seed. The glory of the planted grain is seen in the quality and abundance of its fruitage. By this illustration Jesus impressed on his hearers the truth that he must die in order to produce life in abundance. We need not worry if we do not understand how this death brings life to others, for we do not understand how fruit results from the death of a planted grain. There is in this illustration a lesson to us. Jesus himself applies the principle to us. If a man loved his grain too well to sow it, he would eventually lose it. So, if a man loves his life too well to give it in service to the Lord, he will lose it. He must die to the world in order to live unto God. "He that loveth his life loseth it." The Christian, like Paul, must not hold his life of any account, as dear unto himself. (Acts 20:24.) By giving our lives to God, we gain spiritual life here and eternal life in the world to come. And if we would follow Christ, we must follow him even unto death, if need be. He must have meant this, for he had just illustrated how it was necessary for him to die. If we follow him, we will certainly go where he is. The world may despise the faithful follower of Christ, but the Father knows him, and honors him in this life by claiming him as his son, and will honor him in the world to come by giving him a home in heaven. The world can offer no such honors as that.

27-30. Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. There came therefore a voice out of heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The multitude therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it had thundered: others said, An angel hath spoken to him. Jesus an-

swered and said, This voice hath not come for my sake, but for your sakes.

27-30. "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say?" He had much to trouble him. The world's sins were like a mighty weight upon his soul. The Jews were plotting his death; such wickedness troubled his soul. The pain and shame of the cross, then only about three days off, pressed upon his sensitive soul. The misguided people, who should be his devoted friends, would cry, "Crucify him, crucify him," and then mock him and jeer at his sufferings on the cross. His disciples would forsake him, and Peter would deny him. No wonder that his soul was troubled, and that he prayed to be delivered from it all. "Father, save me from this hour." But within the moment, gaining the mastery of himself, he added, "But for this cause came I unto this hour." He therefore would not fail to carry out the purpose for which he came into the world. This prayer shows that the main thing that troubled his soul was the horrors of death on the cross. Compare this with the scene in the garden of Gethsemane. Here his soul was troubled; there it was so troubled that he sweat as it were great drops of blood. Here he prayed to be saved from the hour of the cross; there he prayed that the cup might pass from him. Here he said resignedly, "But for this cause came I unto this hour"; there he said, "Not my will but thine be done." But here he advanced a step farther, and prayed, "Glorify thy name." The Father's name would be glorified by the redemption of man through the death of Jesus on the cross. For this he prayed. In answer to that prayer there came "a voice out of heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." God's name is glorified in all his works, even in the destruction of his enemies and rebellious sinners. For examples see Ex. 9:15; 14:18; Lev. 10:1-3. And in glorifying the name of his son he was also glorifying his own name. On two former occasions God had given his approval of his Son by speaking so that those present could hear. At the baptism of Jesus the Father said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." On the mount of transfiguration he said, "This is my beloved Son: hear ye him."

One marvels at the stubbornness and hardness of heart of those who would not be convinced by such testimony. Some of those present on this occasion thought an angel spoke to Jesus; others, not hearing distinctly, thought it thundered. This shows that those who want to hear a voice from heaven speaking to them might not recognize such a voice if they heard it. And this voice from heaven had not come for the sake of Jesus, but for the sake of those who stood by. It should have banished all doubts from the minds of those who heard it.

31-33. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself. But this he said, signifying by what manner of death he should die.

31-33. "Now is the judgment of this world." This expression, considered by itself, might mean the judgment that the world pronounces or the judgment pronounced upon the world; but joined with the statement that "now shall the prince of this world be cast out," it must mean the judgment that is passed upon the world. The world is condemned, and Satan shall be cast out, for he is the prince of this world. In giving his Son to die for the sins of the world, God judged the whole world as guilty and worthy of death. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him." (Isa. 53:5.) The manner of death he should suffer is set forth in the statement that he would be lifted up. John makes plain what Jesus meant by being lifted up; "But this he said, signifying by what manner of death he should die." Verse thirty-four shows that even the unbelieving Jews understood Jesus to be speaking of death on the cross. They thought that their scriptures taught that the Messiah would not be put to death, but would abide on earth forever.

Luke 20

1, 2. And it came to pass, on one of the days, as he was teaching the people in the temple, and preaching the gospel, there came upon him the chief priests and the scribes with the elders; and they spake, saying unto him, Tell us: By what authority doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority?

1, 2. As the chief priests and scribes and elders dared not make an open attempt to destroy Jesus, they questioned his authority. "By what authority doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority?" By "these things" these men meant his teaching and cleansing the temple. The scribes and elders would be most interested in knowing about his authority to teach; the chief priests would want to know about his authority to cleanse the temple. The scribes and the elders knew that he had not attended the schools in Jerusalem, and that the authorities there had never given him authority to teach. A Jew who was regular in his religion would not have undertaken to be a teacher without being properly authorized to do so. The priests had control of the affairs of the temple; and in all such matters the high priest and the chief priests would control. They would appoint the officers and police the temple area. They knew that none of them had given Jesus police powers, and yet he had driven certain traders out of the temple. Hence, these leaders thought they could make things look bad for him by showing the people that Jesus was acting very forward without any authority to act at all.

3, 4. And he answered and said unto them, I also will ask you a question; and tell me: The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or from men?

3, 4. No one who believes the Bible has any difficulty in determining whether the baptism of John was from heaven or of men. A long time before John was born God said through the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me." (Mai. 3:1.) Again, "The voice of one that crieth, Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah; make level in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill be made low; and the

uneven shall be made level, and the rough places plain." (Isa. 40:3, 4.) Inspired writers of the New Testament applied these scriptures to John the Baptist and his work. (Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:2, 3; Luke 3:4-6.) "There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John." (John 1:6.) John's teaching was therefore from God. God delivered the commands through him. He who refused to heed what John said refused to obey God.

5-7. And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why did ye not believe him? But if we shall say, From men; all the people will stone us: for they are persuaded that John was a prophet. And they answered, that they knew not whence it was.

5-7. Before answering Jesus these leaders held a consultation among themselves to see if they could formulate a suitable answer to Jesus. "If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why did ye not believe him?" Hence, it is easily seen that, in the estimation of these leaders, to believe John meant more than simply to agree that what he said was true; it meant to do what he commanded. If we shall say that the baptism of John was from heaven, he will ask us why we were not baptized by him. To really believe a teacher is to do what he says; to refuse to do what he says shows unbelief in him. And to refuse to believe John was to reject the counsel of God. Concerning the attitude of people toward John and his baptism, Jesus said, "And all the people when they heard, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected for themselves the counsel of God, being not baptized of him." The counsel of God was made known to the Jews through John the Baptist; to refuse to do what he told the people to do was to reject God's counsel. The counsel of God is now made known to us through the writings of God's inspired men who wrote the New Testament; if we reject what is therein commanded, we reject the counsel of God. What was true concerning hearing or refusing to hear the seventy whom Jesus sent out is true of any man whom God sends to teach people; "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that rejecteth you rejecteth me; and he that rejecteth me reject-

eth him that sent me." (Luke 10:16.) These leaders of the Jews knew that, if they said the baptism of John was from God, they would confess themselves as openly rebellious against God. If they thus confessed themselves as openly rebellious against God, they could not maintain their leadership over the people. They would also lose in their efforts to maintain a charge of lawlessness against Jesus.

"But if we say, From men; all the people will stone us: for they are persuaded that John was a prophet." They knew the temper of a Jewish mob when aroused. It is almost certain that they did think the baptism of John was from men; otherwise, they would have made some outward show of obedience to him in being baptized; but now they were afraid to put into words what their actions had proclaimed all along. And yet not all leaders were hardened sinners; for there were among them such characters as Zacharias and Elizabeth; Simeon and Anna, a prophetess; Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. But the majority of them were like those who were now trying to find some excuse to destroy Jesus. And these were too cowardly to speak their sentiments. It must have been humiliating to them to confess ignorance, but it seemed to them to be the easiest way out to say that they did not know whence was the baptism of John.

8. And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

8. The question had put his questioners where they could say no more; so he said, "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things." He had not appealed to John's baptism as his authority for doing what he had done. It has been argued that cleansing the temple was a priestly function, and that when questioned about his authority, he had appealed to John's baptism—that he was inducted into the priestly office by John's baptism. But Paul plainly states that he could not be a priest on earth. (Heb. 8:4.) Besides, instead of referring to John's baptism as the source of his authority, he plainly told them that he would not tell them by what authority he did

these things.

Matthew 21

28-30. But what think ye? A man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in the vineyard. And he answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented himself, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not.

28-30. It is not said that this is a parable, but it evidently is; for a parable is a statement of material facts to illustrate spiritual truths. Among the Jews there were two outstanding classes, namely, those who pretended to be very religious, and those who were regarded as sinners. Jesus was talking to those who regarded themselves as very religious. They claimed to be right toward everything that came from God. They needed to see themselves in their true light. In the parable neither of the sons was obedient as he should have been. When the father asked the first son to go and work in the vineyard, he disrespectfully said, "I will not." On reflection he regretted that he had so spoken—"he repented himself and went." At first he rebelled, and then submitted. The second son openly avowed his willingness to obey his father, but continued in his own way—he went not. He was like so many people of our time, for they profess great respect for God and his will, but set at naught his commands at their pleasure.

31, 32. Which of the two did the will of his father? They say, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye saw it, did not even repent yourselves afterward, that ye might believe him.

31, 32. The chief priests and elders readily admitted that the first son did the will of the father. "The publicans and the

harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." This does not mean that these characters had actually entered into the kingdom at that time. John had been engaged in preparing people for the kingdom. The publicans and harlots had obeyed John's preaching and had accepted his testimony concerning the Messiah, and were, therefore, on the way into the kingdom. The chief priests and elders had rejected his preaching. On another occasion, in speaking of John and his preaching, Jesus said, "And all the people when they heard, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected for themselves the counsel of God, being not baptized of him." (Luke 7:29, 30.) It should be noticed that, in our lesson, Jesus was talking about the attitude of the people toward John's preaching, and not of their attitude toward himself. Before John came the publicans and harlots—the sinners—made no pretense at serving God, but when John came preaching, they regretted their course, and believed in him. They were like the first son. The leaders in Jerusalem would not believe John, even though they had sent a delegation of priests and Levites to interview John. And when they saw that the publicans and harlots believed John, they did not regret their course and believe him. "And ye, when ye saw it, did not even repent yourselves afterward, that ye might believe." The word repent here in verse 29 is not from the word usually translated repent. It has more to do with feelings than purpose—"to rue, regret." The same word is used with reference to the course of Judas. (Matt. 27:3.) He regretted what he had done, but did not really repent. Many people reject all testimony, and, like the chief priests and elders, suffer no remorse of conscience; others, like Judas, regret what they have done but make no effort to amend their ways.

Some Reflections

The Bible abounds in striking figures of speech. In a beautiful figure of speech the Psalmist represents Israel as a vine which God brought out of Egypt and planted in the land of

Palestine, which grew and spread till it filled the land from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean Sea. (Ps. 80:8-16.) Also Israel is set forth as a vineyard in prophecy. "Let me sing for my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he digged it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also hewed out a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" And then he tells of the destruction that he would bring upon his vineyard. (Isa. 5:1-7.) The parable of our lesson is very much like the passage quoted from Isaiah. The main feature of this parable seems clear enough. "A man planted a vineyard"—God was the planter and the Jewish nation was the vineyard. From further statements in the parable it is plain that the Jewish leaders—the authorities—were the husbandmen. The main emphasis of the parable is placed on the conduct of the husbandmen.

The owner of the vineyard made full preparation of all things necessary for the successful operation of his vineyard.

33-39. Hear another parable: There was a man that was a householder, who planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into another country. And when the season of the fruits drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, to receive his fruits. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them in like manner. But afterward he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But the husbandmen, when they saw the son, said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and take his inheritance. And they took him, and cast him forth out of the vineyard, and killed him.

33-39. "Hear another parable: There was a man that was a householder, who planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to

husbandmen, and went into another country." He made good preparation for his renters. The hedge served as a fence. As most grapes were then made into wine, the winepress was an essential part of a vineyard. The winepress proper was a pit about six feet by eight, hewn out of solid rock, or dugged in the earth and walled up with masonry. Another pit was made on a lower level. The grapes were put in the upper pit, then the men with naked feet trod out the grapes, and the juice flowed through a hole into the lower pit. As the people then lived in the towns and cities, the tower in the vineyard served as a place for the owners to stay during harvest, and for the guards at other times. In this case it required more than one man to operate the vineyard—the householder let it out to husbandmen. It is not supposed that everything in the parable has some application—the parts the men played are the essential things of the parable. Evidently the householder had not rented his land for money, but for a part of the harvest; for at the proper season he sent his servants to the husbandmen for his part of the fruits. These husbandmen did not intend to pay anything; for they beat one servant, killed another, and stoned another. He then sent other servants, and they were treated the same way. As a last resort, he sent his son, saying, "They will reverence my son." But he did not know the depth of depravity to which these husbandmen had sunk. In character and methods of operation they were very like our bandits and racketeers of today. No crime was too great for them to commit, if they could see profit in so doing. So they said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and take his inheritance. And they took him and cast him forth out of the vineyard, and killed him." They killed him for the part of the rent which they owed. Perhaps they thought they could dispose of the entire harvest, and be gone before the householder had time to do anything about it. Besides the sin of it, all criminals take great risk, and many pay the penalty.

40-43. When therefore the lord of the vineyard shall come, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, 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. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye

never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, The same was made the head of the corner; This was from the Lord, And it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

40-43. The chief priests and elders did not at first see that they were the wicked husbandmen of the parable. Hence, in answering the question of Jesus as to what the householder would do with these wicked husbandmen, they pronounced their own sentence—"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." In Luke's account (20:9-18) he represents Jesus as pronouncing the sentence. Evidently the priests and elders first pronounced the sentence, and then Jesus repeated it in such a way that they saw he was aiming it at them; they then said, "God forbid." The Jewish nation was the vineyard; God was the householder; and the leaders of the Jews, the priests and elders, were the husbandmen. They were supposed to guide the destinies of the nation, but had been miserable criminals. On the same point Stephen pointedly said, "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 the coming of the Righteous One; of whom ye have now become betrayers and murderers; ye who received the law as it was ordained by angels, and kept it not." (Acts 7:51-53.) The son whom the wicked husbandmen killed represented the Son of God.

In verse 42 Jesus abruptly introduces the figure of the rejected cornerstone, and then in the next verse makes the application of the parable of the wicked husbandmen. Bloomfield observes that "both the Jewish and Christian dispensations are often designated by the figure of a building; and of the latter Christ is represented as the cornerstone, and, by its importance in sustaining and defending the building, the headstone." McGarvey remarks, "In the figure of the rejected cornerstone, the chief priests and Pharisees are represented as

trying to build the walls of a house, but unable to fit the stones at the corner because they rejected the only stone that was cut for that place. They were guilty of this folly in rejecting Jesus while trying to construct a conception of the kingdom of God." They could not fit Jesus into their ideas of the kingdom, and this shows, as conclusively as anything can, that they had the wrong idea as to what the kingdom would be. That Jesus was not talking about the Old Testament kingdom should be plain to anyone, for he was not the cornerstone of that structure. He is the cornerstone of the new structure which he was about to build.

The Jews had been God's chosen people. He was their rightful king, even when they rejected him for a kingdom of their own. Because of their wickedness they would no longer be his chosen people; his rule and reign would be over another nation, the church. There would be a complete change. The Jewish economy would be destroyed—the law would be abolished, that a new order might be ushered in. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be joined to another, even to him that was raised from the dead, that ye might bring forth fruit unto God." (Rom. 7:4.) The law acted as a barrier between Jews and Gentiles; both could not be brought together in one body so long as the law lasted. Between them there could be no peace. "For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace." (Eph. 2:14, 15.) This new man is the church, the new nation, to which the reign of God has been given.

Some Reflections

The prophecies foretold the coming of John and his mission; yet the leaders, those who professed to be teachers of the law and the prophets, rejected his preaching and his baptism and also the testimony he gave of Jesus. His denouncing their sins

enraged them.

These same leaders rejected Jesus as the Christ and crucified him. He rejected their tradition, disregarded their religious and social distinctions, and condemned them as the worst of sinners; that enraged them beyond measure. Besides, they had their ideas as to the Messiah and his kingdom, and they could not fit Jesus and his teaching into their scheme of things.

The priests and Pharisees had become fanatical; they felt superior to others both in knowledge and righteousness. They therefore considered any man a criminal who criticized or rebuked them; and they sought for grounds on which they might have him put to death.

Mark 12

LESSON LINKS

When Jesus cleansed the temple, it so enraged the Pharisees, scribes, and priests that they renewed their determination to kill him, but they could not find a way to get him away from the admiring multitudes. (Mark 11:18; Luke 19:47, 48.) Then the parable of the wicked husbandmen further enraged them, for they could see plainly that that parable was aimed directly at them. They went away to do more plotting.

13, 14. And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, that they might catch him in talk. And when they were come, they say unto him, Teacher, we know that thou art true, and carest not for any one; for thou regardest not the person of men, but of a truth teachest the way of God: Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?

13,14. "And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, that they might catch him in talk." Matthew informs us that the Pharisees held council, and sent to him their disciples with the Herodians. Their disciples were young

men whom they had in training. Perhaps they thought Jesus would not be suspicious of the young men, and would talk to them more freely than to these old seasoned enemies. Luke says, "They watched him, and sent forth spies, who feigned themselves to be righteous, that they might take hold of his speech, so as to deliver him up to the rule and to the authority of the governor." If they could catch him in some treasonable talk, they would report him to the Roman governor, and he would have him arrested by his soldiers, and they would not have to bother any more about how to get hold of him. But little is known of the Herodians, but it appears that they were more of a political party than a religious sect. It is said that they were partisans of the Herods, and wanted to get the Herod line of kings back, but tributary to the Romans as formerly, so that they would be under the direct rule of the Herods, instead of under a foreign governor appointed by the Emperor. The greater part of the Pharisees were bitterly opposed to the Herodians, but political scheming can easily bury enmity for an emergency. Both parties together might the more easily catch Jesus in his talk, so they thought. Here were some men that very much needed to be taught by Jesus, but did not know it. The only interest they had in talking to the greatest teacher the world had ever known was to entrap him in his talk. They were like some Bible readers of today, who read the Bible only to see if they can find something in it to criticize. On this occasion the enemies of Jesus tried new tactics. Instead of coming to him bristling for a fight, they pretended to be righteous and very desirous of having him settle a disputed question, the Pharisees representing one side and the Herodians the other.

The Question.—"Teacher, we know that thou art true, and carest not for any one." They came to him with the most complimentary speech they could think up; they meant that he did not care for the rank or class of anyone, for they immediately added, "For thou regardest not the person of men." Had they been sincere their speech would have been true and right, but on their hypocritical lips it was a lie—they meant

not a word they said. By their flattering speech they thought to wheedle him into coming out strongly on one side or the other of their much disputed question. "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?" By lawful, they meant "according to the law of Moses." Although the Jews had for many years been under the Roman government, many of them had never become reconciled to paying the taxes required by Caesar. The Herodians would, of course, favor paying the Roman taxes. Both sides were represented in this committee; it had been deliberately so arranged. If he said, "It is lawful to give tribute to Caesar," he would turn many of his friends against him, for many of them were much opposed to paying the Roman taxes. If he said, "It is not lawful," then he would be charged with treason against Caesar. In their mind they had him in a dilemma from which there was no way of escape. They had never concocted a shrewder scheme to get Jesus into trouble. We condemn their motives, but must admire their shrewdness.

15-17. Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why make ye trial of me? bring me a denarius, that I may see it. And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar's. And Jesus said unto them, Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's. And they marvelled greatly at him.

15-17. But they did not deceive Jesus by their flattering speech; he knew their hypocrisy. "Why make ye trial of me?" As Matthew reports: "Why make ye trial of me, ye hypocrites?" They saw at once that they had not deceived him as to their motives in coming to him. They may have resented his bluntly calling them hypocrites, but they knew that it was true. "Bring me a denarius, that I may see it." The denarius was a Roman coin worth about seventeen cents, and was then the pay for a day's labor. According to Matthew Jesus said, "Show me the tribute money." Having examined the denarius, Jesus asked, "Whose is this image and superscription?" The denarius bore the image of the Emperor under whose reign it was coined, together with his title in abbreviated words. The question of

Jesus implied, "Who issued this coin? Whose is it?" He would have them commit themselves; they replied, "Caesar's." Without realizing it, they had got themselves into a dilemma. They had Caesar's money, and were using it in their business transactions; would they return it when Caesar called for it? Jesus so advised: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." They used Caesar's money; they had also Caesar's protection from murder and robbery and other forms of lawlessness, and they used the roads he built. To accept the services of Caesar and not bear their part of the expenses would be dishonest. Neither should a Christian now avoid paying his taxes. "And unto God the things that are God's." As the coin bore the image of Caesar, so we bear the image of God. If we are Christians, we bear his name also; and so the Christian bears his image, and, so to speak, his superscription. Give Caesar his coin—it belongs to him; give yourselves to God—you belong to him. The ease with which Jesus escaped the trap so carefully set for him amazed his inquisitors. Some of the Jews thought they could not be faithful to God and pay taxes to a foreign government. To all such, the alternative was, "Shall we obey God, or shall we obey Caesar?" But Jesus showed them that they confronted no such difficulty—that there was no such alternative. It was not, "Obey God or Caesar"; but, "Obey God and Caesar." It is the duty of everybody to obey the laws of the country in which he lives, so long as they do not interfere with his duties to God. "Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as sent by him for vengeance on evil-doers and for praise to them that do well." (1 Pet. 2:13, 14.)

28. And one of the scribes came, and heard them questioning together, and knowing that he had answered them well, asked him, What commandment is the first of all?

28. The Sadducees, who were materialists, came to Jesus with what they must have considered their unanswerable argument, but Jesus had answered them with ease. This pleased the scribes and Pharisees. Matthew says, "But the

Pharisees, when they heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, gathered themselves together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, trying him." Mark calls him a scribe. A lawyer was not an attorney, but one skilled in the law, a scribe. He asked Jesus which commandment was first of all, that is, which was the first in importance. They could not dispute his miracles, and they could not meet him in argument; and now they would try to test his knowledge of the law. As he had had no special training in the law under their great teachers, they felt that one of their trained lawyers might be able to "show him up."

29-31. Jesus answered, The first is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is one: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

29-31. In answering the lawyer's question Jesus quotes the first words with which Moses prefaced the great commandment. (Deut. 6:4, 5.) The first is, "Hear, O Israel." This was the exhortation of Moses to Israel to give attention to this great commandment which he was about to deliver. He then introduces the authority back of the commandment: "The Lord our God, the Lord is one." He is supreme, the one God of the universe. Other nations had many gods, but the Lord our God is one. So Moses calls on Israel to hear what the director of all things says: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Heart, soul, mind, strength—that comprehends all there is in man. Heart and mind are sometimes used interchangeably, but heart distinguished from mind, as in this place, would mean the emotions—affections, reverence, fear, etc., and the mind would refer to the intellectual powers. We are to love with our intelligence as well as with our emotions. Emotional religion without intelligence leads to superstition; for superstition is ignorant reverence, just as intelligence without reverence is rationalism. The word soul is hard to define; it sometimes refers to the individual, and sometimes

seems to refer to the spirit. We are to give God our strength, both physical and moral. The second is this, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Selflove is inherent. It leads a person to look out for his own good. To love the neighbor as one loves himself leads to an effort to do good to the neighbor. Such love makes a man a useful citizen, a helpful neighbor. "There is none other commandment greater than these." Matthew adds, "On these two commandments the whole law hangeth, and the prophets." If a man loves God wholly and supremely, he will do everything God commands. "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." (John 14:15.) And if a man loves his neighbor as himself, he will not defraud his neighbor, nor steal from him, nor bear false witness against him, nor covet what he has, but will treat him right, and be merciful and forbearing toward him. If a man love God and his neighbor, he will discharge every duty both to God and to his neighbor; and so these two commands include all other commands, and for that reason are the greatest.

32-34. And the scribe said unto him, Of a truth, Teacher, thou hast well said that he is one; and there is none other but he; and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is much more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

32-34. For one time a Pharisee was pleased with what Jesus said. To love God and the neighbor, as Jesus had said, "is much more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices." When the Jews ceased to love God, their sacrifices were an abomination to him. Without love praise is mockery, and worship is hypocrisy. Jesus was much pleased with this Pharisee, and said to him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." He had a right understanding of man's relation to God and to his fellow man. He likely made mistakes in trying to follow out these principles, but a person had better make a thousand mistakes in trying to do God's will to the best of his ability than to set his will and way up against God's will at any point. However

ignorant a man may be, if he is hungering and thirsting for righteousness, if he wants to know and to do the will of God he is not far from the kingdom. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word." (Isa. 66:2.) But to be not far from the kingdom is to be yet outside the kingdom. A drowning man may be within reach of safety, and yet perish. Only a step from the kingdom, and yet perish.

Mark 13

LESSON LINKS

Jesus continued to show himself openly in and about the temple, and was in frequent controversy with those who wanted to kill him. In connection with this lesson read Matthew 24 and Luke 21. It is important that we notice the conversation that led to the matters of this lesson. Matthew (24:1, 2) gives this report: "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. But he answered and said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Mark says: "And as he went forth out of the temple, one of the disciples saith unto him, Teacher, behold, what manner of stones and what manner of buildings! and Jesus said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left here one stone upon another, which shall not be thrown down." Luke says: "And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and offerings, he said, as for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in which there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." The disciples, as well as the other Jews, took great pride in that massive and beautiful

building. They naturally were very greatly amazed at the words of Jesus. That such a prophecy concerning such a magnificent building should be uttered in a time of peace was astonishing beyond measure; but that prophecy was fulfilled, even though the Roman general Titus tried to restrain his soldiers from doing it any injury.

3, 4. And as he sat on the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when these things are all about to be accomplished?

3, 4. Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 go together; and if we would reach anything like correct conclusions in the study of these chapters, or either of them separately, we must note carefully the questions Jesus was answering. Matthew gives this report of the questions: "And as he sat on the mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Mark says: "And as he sat on the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when these things are all about to be accomplished?" Luke says: "And they asked him, saying, Teacher, when therefore shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when these things are about to come to pass?" Many theories have been advanced concerning these questions and the answers Jesus gave to them. Some commentators, but not all of them, think the question, "What shall be the sign of thy coming?" refers to the second visible appearing of Christ, that coming which is yet to be. But that makes Matthew's report cover more ground than the reports of Mark and Luke, and that makes Mark and Luke not reliable reporters of what Jesus said. Besides, in their states of understanding at that time, how could the disciples ask a question about his second visible coming? Jesus had told them that he would be killed and raised again, but had said nothing at that time about ascending to heaven and later

returning again. And it does not seem that they had been convinced that he would be killed. The Jewish idea was that the Messiah, when he came to earth, would abide forever. (John 12:32-34.) The disciples could not therefore have been asking about a future return to the earth from heaven. Besides, not every coming of the Lord in the Bible refers to the second visible coming. Sometimes the Lord comes to visit judgments on the people. (See Is. 13:5; Rev. 2:5, 16; 3:3, 11.) From the positive way in which Jesus spoke of the destruction of the temple, does it not seem very likely that the disciples would think that he himself meant to destroy it? They expected him soon to become king in Jerusalem. Compare these two questions from Matthew and Mark: "What shall be the sign of thy coming?" "What shall be the sign when these things are all about to be accomplished?" The disciples knew the temple was under the complete control of the enemies of Jesus.

5, 6. And Jesus began to say unto them, Take heed that no man lead you astray. Many shall come in my name, saying, I am he; and shall lead many astray.

5, 6. One of the great weaknesses of human beings is their readiness to be led off into all sorts of false ideas and fantastic notions. This is especially true in times of great excitement and stress. Of course, not all are so easily led astray. Not even the disciples of Christ are free from all sorts of delusions. Hence the admonition: "Take heed that no man lead you astray." Perilous times were coming to the land of the Jews; and in such times the disciples would need to be firm in their faith and diligent in practice to protect themselves against being led astray by schemers of all sorts. In times of trouble, such as was coming, the average person would be governed by his emotions more than by his intelligence. Some would claim to be the Christ returned to give them deliverance. A man with such claims, if he had rabble-rousing powers, could almost deceive the very elect; he would gain a following among the easily excitable and highly emotional types of people. As the

time of the destruction of Jerusalem drew near, and troubles increased and the people became more and more perplexed, these fake leaders would increase their powers over the people. And many would be led astray. The exhortation and admonition given in these verses were given especially to prepare the disciples for the tribulations that were to come upon the Jews. But even so, people are never free from the danger of being lead astray; so all along through the New Testament we find admonitions to Christians not to be led astray. "Take heed what ye hear." (Mark 4:24.) "Take heed therefore how ye hear." (Luke 8:18.) It is necessary for us to take heed what we hear and how we hear, else we shall certainly be led astray. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. 10:12.) "Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God." (Heb. 3:12.)

7, 8. And when ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, be not troubled: these things must needs come to pass; but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there shall be earthquakes in divers places; there shall be famines; these things are the beginning of travail.

7, 8. When there are wars and rumors of wars people are too ready to conclude that the end of the world is nigh. They forget that all down the ages there have been wars and rumors of wars; but Jesus was not here speaking of the end of the world, but the destruction of the temple, and along with that the destruction of Jerusalem and the whole Jewish system. The wars and rumors of wars would be those that directly concerned the Jewish people. Historians tell us of threats of Roman Emperors, and of uprisings of the Gentiles against the Jews. They tell us also of pestilences and great earthquakes. These things did not mark the end of the Jewish system, but were the beginning of the tribulations that were coming upon them.

9, 10. But take ye heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in synagogues shall ye be beaten; and before governors and kings shall ye stand for my sake, for a testimony unto them. And the gospel must

first be preached unto all the nations.

9, 10. They were to take heed to themselves—see to it that they did not become involved in any needless complications that might bring avoidable persecutions upon themselves. The persecutions here mentioned were to occur before the destruction of Jerusalem, while the Jewish system was still being operated by Jewish authorities. Every synagogue had certain powers over the Jews in that territory and might punish certain infractions of the law. How extensive these judicial powers were we are not informed. But the language of Jesus shows that the authorities in the synagogues inflicted punishment to the extent, at least, of beating offenders or supposed offenders. As the disciples were being gradually weaned away from observing all the required ceremonies, this would furnish the authorities an excuse for beating them. The higher authorities were allowed to inflict the death penalty. It seems that the Roman authorities granted greater powers to the Sanhedrin than it possessed when Jesus was put to death, as is shown in the death of Stephen and the activities of Saul of Tarsus. The disciples were also to be brought before governors and kings. Notice the actions of Herod, as reported in Acts 12:1-6, and also what happened to the apostle Paul. This was but a small portion of the persecutions suffered by the disciples before the destruction of Jerusalem. "And the gospel must first be preached unto all nations." And Paul bears testimony that this "must" was fulfilled before the destruction of Jerusalem. Paul was put to death before Jerusalem was destroyed. As to his testimony, read Romans 10:17; Colossians 1:6, 23. While Jesus was speaking of the persecutions they were to suffer before the Jewish system was destroyed, it is a fact that persecutions continued, and do continue. "Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. (2 Tim. 3:12.) Suffering persecution from without is bad enough; but what is worse, we are sometimes in perils among false brethren, as was Paul. But there is consolation. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been approved he shall receive

the crown of life, which the Lord promised to them that love him." (James 1:12.)

29-32. Even so ye also, when ye see these things coming to pass, know ye that he is nigh, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, until all these things be accomplished. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. But of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

29-32. In studying this speech of Jesus we meet with difficulties, no matter what view we adopt as to what is meant in this speech as to his coming. Verse 30 presents a very great difficulty in our way, if we try to adopt the idea that the coming mentioned is the second visible appearing of Christ, the appearing that is yet to be. The marginal reading in verse 29 shows us that the words "he is nigh" might as well read "it is nigh." Now notice verse 30: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, until all these things be accomplished." This seems to be the direct answer to the question the disciples asked. "What shall be the sign when these things are all about to be accomplished?" These things therefore would all be accomplished during the lifetime of some who were present. The second visible appearance of Christ is yet to be, and all of these then living have long since passed away. It seems certain therefore that the second coming of Christ had not been among the things mentioned. Christ's words did not fail; they are enduring. "Heaven" here must refer to regions around the earth, and not to the home of bliss where God dwells. Because of our limited understanding, verse 32 sounds strange to us. It is easy to grasp the idea that neither men nor angels would know when these things would be accomplished; but our minds cannot see how the Son of God, one of the Godhead, would not know, but we can believe what Jesus said.

33-37. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. It is as when a man, sojourning in another country, having left his house, and given authority to his servants, to each one his work, commanded also the porter to watch. Watch therefore: for ye know not when the lord of the house cometh, whether at even, or at midnight, or at cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

33-37. Take heed—watch—pray. These are always necessary. It was necessary that the disciples keep an eye on conditions about them, so as to be able to see from the signs the near approach of the doom of Jerusalem; otherwise they might be engulfed in the coming destruction. Jesus had warned them to flee to the mountains when they saw certain developments. (Verses 14-19.) They were to watch developments as well as their own conduct. The parable Jesus then spoke emphasized duty and watchfulness. The man who went into another country had given his servants certain authority and certain work to do, and commanded his porter to watch. It does not mean that the porter was to stand and watch the road to see when the householder put in his appearance; he was to keep watch, so that no undesirable characters were allowed to come in. The parable cannot be made to fit in all its parts, for there was only one porter to keep watch, but all the disciples are commanded to watch. "And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." (1 Cor. 16:13.) "So then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober." "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." (Rev. 3:3.) This does not mean that they were to stand gazing into heaven, but the connection shows that they were to watch themselves to see that they did right. (See verse 2.)

Matthew 25

LESSON LINKS

It must have been a sad hour with Jesus. He had spent the day teaching in the temple and arguing with the Jews. He found them hopeless, and closed his public teaching with these words: 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. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." (Matt. 23:37-39.) Hence, as he left the temple, he said to his disciples, "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." (Matt. 24:2.) On the Mount of Olives, in answer to a question, he told the disciples something as to how this destruction would be brought about, the sufferings that would accompany that destruction, and the signs by which the disciples would know that it was time for them to get out of the city. It seems that the most general and persistent sin of God's people is the sin of neglect. That sin plays an important part in each of the three divisions of the chapter from which our lesson is taken. It is seen in the parable of the ten virgins. Five of the ten were foolish, for they did not provide themselves with an extra supply of oil. For this neglect, they failed to be admitted to the marriage feast—they arrived too late. In our lesson one of the servants neglected to use properly the talent committed to him, and with sad results. In the judgment scene described in verses 31-46 many failed of the Lord's blessings, and received punishment instead, because they neglected the numerous opportunities for helping those who were in need. "For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard." (Heb. 2:2, 3.) How shall we escape, if we neglect? But the three divisions of our chapter show also how abundantly blessed are those who do not neglect, but attend faithfully to their duties and obligations.

14, 15. For it is as when a man, going into another country, called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one; to each according to his several ability; and he

went on his journey.

14, 15. There are some points of similarity between this parable and the one recorded in Luke 19:11-27, but they are not the same. The parable in Luke was spoken when "he was nigh to Jerusalem." The parable of our lesson was spoken four or five days later. We are not told whether the talents were of silver or of gold. In Jewish money there was a great difference between a talent of silver and a talent of gold. A talent of silver is said to have been worth \$1,642.50; a talent of gold, \$26,280. If silver, the eight talents left with his servants equaled \$11,150; if gold, \$210,240. According to Webster, a gold talent, \$32,640; silver \$2,176. The servants were not hired servants, but slaves. The man owned them. Often in those days when men were reduced to slavery by the fortunes of war, men of great ability became slaves. The man in our lesson had confidence in the integrity of the slaves mentioned, else he would not have trusted to them the management of his finances. He did not deliver into the hands of each servant the same amount of money. This man knew the ability of his servants, and gave "to each according to his several ability." The master, of course, represents the Lord; the servants represent Christians; what do the talents represent? "The word 'talent' which is the Greek word 'talanton' anglicized, and means a certain amount of money, has acquired in English the sense of intellectual endowments from its use in this parable."—*McGarvey*. The man did not give his servants intellectual endowments, or business ability. They already had their intellectual endowments, and he gave each an amount of money corresponding to his ability to use it. To the one who had ability to use five talents, the lord gave five talents, and so on—to each according to his ability. But what are the talents the Lord gives his servants? Not intellectual endowments, for they had these before they became his servants. He gives his servants the blessings of the gospel and opportunities to use them to advance his business while he is away. These will be increased along as we properly use them. Our natural abilities are not

equal, and therefore we cannot all have the same opportunities for service, but we can all be faithful with what we have.

16-18. Straightway he that received the five talents went and traded with them, and made other five talents. In like manner he also that received the two gained other two. But he that received the one went away and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

16-18. These servants belonged to the master; he had bought them. It was the master's duty to furnish them with food and clothing, and a place to stay; but all the products of their labors were his. Two of the servants were faithful to their lord. They used the talents committed to them in trading—buying and selling—so as to make gain for their master. Each of these doubled the amount given him. But the servant with the least ability, to whom the master had therefore given only one talent, hid his lord's money in the earth. Perhaps he thought, like some Christians do today, that since he could not do as great things as the others, he would do nothing. Or, like others, he may have been so afraid that he would do the wrong thing, that he would not do anything. This person failed to take into consideration the fact, that the person with little ability and few opportunities, can be just as faithful in the use of what he has, as the person with great ability and many opportunities, and that the reward for such service is just as sure. Our Lord is away. He has left us a great treasure, the gospel, with all that it means and includes. We are to use that to advance his business of saving the world. We have the ability to do so. Paul's charge to Timothy should find lodgment in the heart of every Christian: "Take heed to thyself, and to thy teaching. Continue in these things; for in so doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee." (1 Tim. 4:16.)

19-27. Now after a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and maketh a reckoning with them. And he that received the five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: lo, I have gained other five talents. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord. And he also that received the two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: lo, I

have gained other two talents. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord. And he also that had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering where thou didst not scatter; and I was afraid, and went away and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, thou hast thine own. But his lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I did not scatter; thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received back mine own with interest.

19-27. "Now after a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and maketh a reckoning with them." This represents the second coming of the Lord of heaven and earth. "After a long time"—that expression seems to have escaped the attention of those who claim that the early Christians were taught to look for the Lord's return any day after he went away. Two of the servants had doubled the amount given them. They brought both the principle and the increase to their Lord. It was his, for they belonged to him. The same thing is true respecting our relations with the Lord. We have been bought with a price. It is true that our entrance into his service was voluntary, for we could have refused to recognize his ownership. But we are his, and all that we have and are belong to him; and the only way we can discharge our duty and receive a reward is to recognize that ownership, and enter into his service. To each of the profitable servants their lord said, "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord." The exercise of whatever ability these servants had, in trading with the talents committed to them, developed greater ability, so that their lord could entrust them with greater things. It is a law of nature that the exercise of any power increases it. It fits a person for greater things. And if we are faithful now, we will reap joys after while. The greatness of these joys will not be fully known till we awake in his likeness, and are admitted into his presence forevermore. The man with the one talent was slothful. His ease and comfort at the moment was all that interested him. His lord was feed-

ing and clothing him, and furnishing him lodging; why should he worry about anything else? His lord's interest was no concern of his; hence, in his lord's absence he would take things easy. Besides, if he tried to do anything, it might be the wrong thing. But he did not see that it would be to his interests to make anything by trading, for it would all go to his lord anyway. He represents a class in the church. There are many slothful members in the church. And there are some who are so afraid of doing the wrong thing that they will not do anything. It is proper and right to be careful, but excessive care may become a vice. We should be careful to know what the Lord wants us to do, and then do that without fear. We should be afraid not to do anything. It seems the slothful servant thought he was doing well with the talent committed to him. He had not lost any of his lord's money; he had not wasted any of it on himself. He brought to his lord the same talent that he had received. And he had an excuse; and his excuse, like all excuses, was a falsehood, and fooled no one but himself. "Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man." His master was not a hard man, save to the servant who was worthless; for he had shown great confidence in his servants, and was also supplying them with the necessities of life. The master adopts the estimate of the slothful servant for purposes of making reply. Since the servant regarded him as such a hard master, demanding and taking more than he had any right to take, it was all the more a good reason why this servant should have been diligent so as to save himself. He was kind and generous to his faithful servants, but he would be hard on his servant who did not serve. He first denounced him as a wicked and slothful servant. The student should read verses 28-30, which says, "Take ye away therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath the ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away. And cast out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth." In the treatment of these servants we see both the generosity and harshness of

their master. And the character portrayed for him fairly represents, as the narrative was intended to do, God's kindness toward the faithful, and his severity toward the wicked. "Behold then the goodness and severity of God: toward them that fell severity; but toward thee, God's goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou shalt be cut off." (Rom. 11:22.) This helps us to see the point in these two statements: "God is love"; "Our God is a consuming fire." It is easy to get a one-sided view of things, even of God. The ones represented by the slothful servant, think of God as harsh and tyrannical. Others take an extreme view of the other side of God's character. It seems hard for some to think of him as both love and a consuming fire; but so he is, and it would be to our interest to so recognize him.

Some Reflections

Ability is the power to perform; the talents were the means with which these servants performed.

To have trust betrayed is a great disappointment. The servant who received the one talent betrayed his master's trust. It was wicked to do so.

Wherein God invites us to trust him, he will not betray us. To doubt him is a sin. He is not slack concerning his promises. He rewards abundantly those who put their trust in him—those who love and serve him.

Let us not presume on his love and goodness. If he did not hate sin and punish the sinner, he could not be good. He will faithfully keep his promises and reward the righteous, but he will in no wise clear the guilty. We may deceive ourselves, but we cannot deceive God. Some one has said, "God is as just, as if he were not merciful; and he is as merciful, as if he were not just." Think on this.

Mark 14

LESSON LINKS

Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9, and John 12:2-8 tell of a feast at Bethany. It is a well-known fact that none of the writers record everything in its historic order. One thing should be noticed, and that is, that John condenses the events of the week up to the night of the betrayal much more than Matthew and Mark. There are certain facts that indicate that John records this feast out of its historic order. Up to two days before the feast the authorities in Jerusalem were worrying about how they might get hold of Jesus. They had decided that they would wait till after the feast, which would last a full week. Read also John 12:1-11, Matthew 26:1-14.

1, 2. Now after two days was the feast of the passover and the unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him with subtlety, and kill him; for they said, Not during the feast, lest haply there shall be a tumult of the people.

1, 2. Two days before the Passover feast the Jews were still plotting the death of Jesus. Thousands of people had come to Jerusalem to attend the feast. Many of these were favorable toward Jesus, and the Jewish leaders knew it. How to kill Jesus without stirring up the people was a problem. They decided against attempting it during the feast, "lest haply there shall be a tumult of the people." A tumult of the people would call out the Roman garrison, and they did not want that; besides, they did not know just how they themselves might fare in such a tumult. Concerning this plotting Matthew is a little more explicit: "Then were gathered together the chief priests, and the elders of the people, unto the court of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas; and they took counsel together that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill him. But they said, Not during the feast, lest a tumult arise among the people." (Matt. 26:3-5.) This was, of course, before Judas bargained with them to deliver Jesus into their hands. This evidently was on the same day of the supper at the house of Simon, immediately after which Judas bargained with the

chief priests to deliver Jesus into their hands. Their plotting to find ways and means of apprehending Jesus then ceased; they left that to Judas. Before this bargain with Judas, they had decided to defer killing Jesus till after the feast. But Judas accomplished what they dared not do.

3. 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.

3. John tells us that Jesus arrived at Bethany on his way to Jerusalem six days before the feast of the Passover. (John 12:1.) John then tells of a supper at which Jesus was present. The incidents at that supper mentioned by John are so much like the incidents at a supper mentioned by Matthew and Mark that it is almost certain that they all speak of the same supper. In these records of the life of Christ no special effort was made by the writers, excepting Luke, to record events in their regular order. We have just seen that two days before the Passover feast there was a council held to determine on some plan to put Jesus to death. This was certainly before Judas contracted with them to deliver Jesus into their hands. It also seems certain that Judas made that contract immediately after the supper. These considerations indicate that Matthew and Mark record the supper in its proper historic order. After mentioning the supper, Matthew says, "Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests..."

This supper was at Bethany in the house of Simon the Leper. It is certain that he had recovered from his leprosy. More than likely Jesus had cured him. He was still called "Simon the leper," perhaps by force of habit or as a means of identifying him. He would not have been allowed to mix with people had he not been cured of his leprosy. This supper was given specially in honor of Jesus. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were present. Characteristic of her, "Martha served." As Lazarus had been but lately raised from the dead, special mention was made of him. But Mary, the thoughtful, devoted Mary, had "an alabaster cruse of ointment of pure nard very costly; and she

brake the cruse, and poured it over his head." John says there was a pound of this ointment, and that it was very precious. There was no selfish motive on the part of Mary in thus anointing the head of Jesus with this precious ointment. With her nothing was too good to bestow upon the Lord. But her act does not warrant us to spend money for display or to gratify our pride. Hers was an act of devotion.

4, 5. But there were some that had indignation among themselves, saying, To what purpose hath this waste of the ointment been made? For this ointment might have been sold for above three hundred shillings, and given to the poor. And they murmured against her.

4, 5. The disciples were indignant at what seemed to them a waste. Judas voiced their indignation: "To what purpose hath this waste of the ointment been made? For this ointment might have been sold for above three hundred shillings, and given to the poor. And they murmured against her." If the race was then like it is today, you can imagine how excited these men became at what seemed to them to be such waste of that which might have been turned into money. We are told that the money for which it might have been sold would amount to about forty-five dollars, perhaps a little more than that. We can well believe that all, except Judas, were really thinking of the help that money would have been to the poor. But of Judas, John says: "Now this he said, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and having the bag, took what was put therein."

6-9. But Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor always with you, and whensoever ye will ye can do them good: but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could; she hath anointed my body beforehand for the burying. And verily I say unto you, Wheresoever the gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

6-9. "But Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me." No doubt she was considerably disturbed when the disciples murmured at her so about what she had done. To her it was a sad time, anyway, and out of

the fullness of her heart she had given Jesus the best she had. Jesus would quickly reassure her and give her comfort for what she had done. "For ye have the poor always with you:... but me ye have not always." What, then, about these Utopian dreamers who look forward to a day when there will be no poor? The poor will be here as long as men tabernacle in the flesh, and we can do them good when we will. Why bother if Mary bestows a costly gift upon Jesus? "She hath done what she could; she hath anointed my body beforehand for the burying." When Jesus had told the apostles that he was to be killed in Jerusalem, they were so full of determination that it should not be and so full of ambition for high places in his kingdom that his speech had little effect on them. But not so with Mary. When he had talked to her about his death, she had not been blinded by any selfish ambition, and she knew she could do nothing to avert his death. But she could make one last sacrifice in anointing his body for the burying. "She hath done what she could." And what she did has been told, and is told, and is yet to be told wherever the gospel is preached. What she did has been told and what Judas did has been told, but with what a different flavor! Blessed are the Marys that do what they can!

10. 11. And Judas Iscariot, he that was one of the twelve, went away unto the chief priests, that he might deliver him unto them. And they, when they heard it, were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently deliver him unto them.

10, 11. Judas Iscariot was one of the twelve apostles. He, with the others, had formerly been sent on a preaching tour "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." In addition to preaching that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand," they were commanded to "heal the sick, raise the dead, and cleanse the lepers, cast out demons." (Matt. 10:2-14.) Judas Iscariot had the same command and the same powers the other apostles had. But greed for money proved to be the cause of his downfall. The parallel verses in Luke say, "And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. And he went away, and communed with the chief

priests and captains, how he might deliver him unto them. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. And he consented, and sought opportunity to deliver him unto them in the absence of the multitude." (Luke 22:3-6.) From Matthew 26:14-16 we learn that Judas got thirty pieces of silver. If this refers to the Jewish shekel, then Judas received an amount equal to about fifteen dollars. And in that transaction Judas Iscariot bought himself a name that is a synonym of infamy. And so this high court of the Jews settled the fate of Jesus before he was arrested! That court and Judas—what a combination.

A selfish man like Judas would not like to be rebuked, nor would he like to be thwarted in his desire to get his hands on some money. He was evidently peeved. Besides, it is likely that Jesus seemed to be too impractical and sentimental to ever be a successful king. Altogether he was in a frame of mind that prepared him to do a base deed. He decided to go to the chief priests: "What are ye willing to give me, and I will deliver him unto you?" Men have fallen low in hatred when they are glad to find a base traitor who will help them put an innocent person to death; but that is what a party spirit in religion will do for people. Neither they nor Judas knew they were fulfilling prophecy. "So they weighed for my hire thirty pieces of silver."

Luke 22

LESSON LINKS

During the Passover week Jesus lodged each night in Bethany; but the days, save one, were spent in Jerusalem teaching the people in the temple. "And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might put him to death." They wished to seize Jesus in the absence of the multitudes, and have him condemned by the Sanhedrin before the people knew

what was going on. "Then were gathered together the chief priests, and the elders of the people, unto the court of the high priest who was called Caiaphas; and they took counsel together that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill him. But they said, Not during the feast, lest a tumult arise among the people." (Matt. 26:3-5.) But help from an unexpected source somewhat changed their plans. Judas, one of the twelve, volunteered his help; for money he agreed to deliver Jesus into their hands in the absence of the multitude.

Whether Jesus and his apostles ate this last Passover at the regular time or the night before has been a matter of some discussion, but it is not necessary to go into that here. It is significant that the Lord's Supper was instituted in connection with the observance of the Passover, for the Passover itself was a commemorative feast. The student can read of the origin of the Passover Feast in Exodus 12:1-36. Some additional regulations are given in Deuteronomy 16:1-8. At the first the Passover was eaten in their homes; but it was not to be so when they became settled in the land of Canaan. They were then to observe the feast in the place where God recorded his name; and Jerusalem became that place. In obedience to that provision of the law Jesus had come with his disciples to Jerusalem to this last Passover that was kept under the law of Moses. Jehovah's Passover ceased. Though Judas had bargained to betray Jesus into the hands of his enemies, he brazenly reclined at the table to eat the passover with Jesus and the other apostles. It must have been at the close of the Passover Feast that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper.

Of course, every supper is the Lord's; but there is a supper that is especially devoted to him; as also every day is the Lord's, but there is a day that is his in a special sense. The Lord's Supper and the Lord's day; these are inseparably connected. The early church met on the Lord's day to eat the Lord's Supper and to engage in other acts of worship.

14-16. And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I shall not eat it, until it be fulfilled

in the kingdom of God.

14-16. To properly prepare this lesson the student must give close attention to the parallel passages: Matthew 26:20-29; Mark 14:17-25; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

It seems that Jesus had remained in Bethany during the day. Peter and John had gone into Jerusalem during the day, and had made ready the Passover. When the hour for eating the Passover came, "he sat down, and his apostles with him." In giving directions for eating the first passover the Lord said, "And thus shall ye eat it: with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is Jehovah's passover." This arrangement was necessary on the night of the first Passover, so that they might be ready to flee from Egypt on a moment's notice. This arrangement seems not to have been followed at subsequent feasts, for no such preparation and haste would be necessary any more. Hence, Jesus and his apostles sat, or reclined, at the table. As Jesus had directed in the arrangement of this feast, and was also the Lord, he was the host and the apostles his guests. And treacherous Judas was there. It seems that Judas, after having bargained with the Jewish authorities to deliver Jesus into their hands, would not have had the courage or shameless boldness to show his face at that feast. We cannot know what emotions surged in the bosom of Jesus as he looked over his little flock, and said, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." This peculiar expression means that he had earnestly desired to eat this passover—this, the last passover before his suffering. The Passover was both commemorative and typical. It commemorated the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. (Ex. 12.) It was a type of Christ; and it seems also that the unleavened bread eaten during the week beginning with the Passover was typical of the purity that should be in the church. "Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, even as ye are unleavened. For our passover also hath been sacrificed, even Christ: wherefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of

malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (1 Cor. 5:7, 8.) Hence, as types both the lamb and the unleavened bread were fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

17-18. And he received a cup, and when he had given thanks, he said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I shall not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.

17, 18. Commentators generally say that the cup here mentioned was a cup used in connection with the Passover—a drink that was a part of the Passover ceremonies. Yet the text does not so state. It could be that Jesus was making the first move in the establishing of the Lord's Supper. It is true that the cup, a part of the Lord's Supper, is mentioned later; but it is possible that Jesus was here distributing the wine in preparation for the supper. Each one at the table had his own drinking cup; the cup here mentioned could have been divided among them to be used at the proper time. Does not the language of Jesus rather suggest this idea? "I say unto you, I shall not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come." This language plainly shows that the kingdom of God had not then come. And this conclusion is in harmony with other statements about the kingdom. John preached "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. 3:2.) Jesus preached the same doctrine. (Matt. 4:17.) The seventy were commanded to say, "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." (Luke 10:9.) There had to be a time of preparation before the coming of the kingdom, and that time was about past. McGarvey makes these comments on the verse as reported in Matthew 26:29: "'But I say unto you, I shall not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.' The literal use of wine is not here meant; for Jesus does not literally drink wine with his disciples in the kingdom as it now is, nor will he do so in the eternal kingdom. The term drink, therefore, is used figuratively for that communion which Jesus has with his disciples while they are drinking the wine of the Lord's

Supper."

19, 20. And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave to them, saying. This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. And the cup in like manner after supper, saying. This cup is the new covenant in my blood, even that which is poured out for you.

19, 20. The passover had been eaten, and they still lingered at the table. Some bread yet remained from the feast; perhaps Jesus had kept some for a special purpose. Only unleavened bread was available, for none other was allowed during the week of the Passover. "Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel." (Ex. 12:15.) Care and skill are necessary in preparing the bread, and there certainly should be someone in every church who cared enough for the Lord's body to prepare bread for every Lord's day.

"And he took bread." The marginal reading has, Or, *a loaf*. He then gave thanks, and "brake it." In common parlance, to *break bread* is to *eat*. Jesus ate some of the bread himself, thus setting an example for the disciples. The language therefore does not mean that Jesus broke the bread into fragments before passing it on to the apostles. "This is my body." Not his literal body, for his own body was still alive and sitting before them, and holding the bread in his hand. It would be hard for any thoughtful person to believe that Jesus was holding his literal body in his hands! The figure of speech that Jesus used is common in the Bible. The bread Jesus held in his hand was bread when eaten. In the eleventh chapter of 1 Corinthians we have these expressions: "As often as ye eat of this bread," "whosoever shall eat the bread," "so let him eat of the bread." Hence, it is bread we eat, and not the real body of the Lord. And we are to eat it in remembrance of him—"This do in remembrance of me." Not simply in remembrance of his death, but of *him*; nor do we do it in order to remember him. Rather we do it because we do remember him. "And the cup in

like manner." This was the fruit of the vine, and was also to be a permanent part of the Lord's Supper. "Poured out for you." He shed his blood, not because of anything he had done, but because of the sins of the world. The law of God had been violated by man—by all men who had lived and who would yet live. Justice had been outraged. Some one had to pay the penalty, or all men would be lost. Jesus, having no sins of his own for which to die, could die for the sins of all men; and now by accepting his sacrifice, all men may be saved. "For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins." (Matt. 26:28.)

21-23. But behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. For the Son of man indeed goeth, as it hath been determined: but woe unto the man through whom he is betrayed! And they began to question among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.

21-23. Judas evidently did not know that Jesus knew of his bargain with the Jewish authorities. Hence, he, as well as the other disciples, must have been astonished when Jesus said, "But behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table." Jesus came into the world to die for the sins of the world; but the part Judas played was of his own choosing. Hence, Jesus said, "Woe unto that man through whom he is betrayed." None but Judas knew to whom these words applied; and of course Judas had to pretend that he did not know. None but Judas knew that the words of Jesus concerning his betrayal had already begun to be fulfilled; nor did they know what any of them might do in the distant future. And so, "they began to question among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing."

24-27. And there arose also a contention among them, which of them was accounted to be the greatest. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles have lordship over them; and they that have authority over them are called Benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. 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.

24-27. So many people like to be considered great; they are

more interested in that than they are in being great. They forget that being exalted to high positions does not transform mediocrity into greatness. The Pharisees loved to have the chief seats in the synagogues, and now the disciples in the very shadow of the cross of Jesus were contending about who would occupy the highest positions in the kingdom of God. The idea of greatness is of a purely worldly nature. God has a different standard of greatness. Man's standard of greatness too often is not the standard of measurement in the kingdom of God. Like Diotrefes, some love to have the pre-eminence. (3 John 9.) And so the spirit that prevails in the world also works in the kingdom of God; and humility and service—God's standards of greatness—are forgotten in a scramble for places of prominence even in the church. And that sort of thing is contrary to the spirit that moved Jesus, who said, "But I am in the midst of you as he that serveth." Greatness belongs to character, and not to position. Such scrambling for position is in direct disobedience to Christ, who said, "But ye shall not be so."

28-30. But ye are they that have continued with me in my temptations; and I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom; and ye shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

28-30. Judas had eliminated himself; he was no longer considered in matters pertaining to the kingdom of God. No promise at this time applied to him. To his faithful apostles he said, "I appoint unto you a kingdom." In a similar statement he said, "Verily I say unto you, that 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." (Matt. 19:28.) In this kingdom the apostles would be next to him in authority. Notice this: "I appoint unto you a kingdom,... that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom." The kingdom would still be his kingdom. They had been chosen as his ambassadors. (2 Cor. 5:20.) They had been given authority to bind and loose on earth. (Matt. 16:19.) This authority would be theirs when they were endued with the

power of the Holy Spirit. (Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8.) It would be impossible for them to ever have any more power than they had by the continued abiding presence of the full power of the Holy Spirit. And that power or authority is still over us in their writings. Their writings are still the authority in the kingdom of Christ.

Some Reflections

Somewhere at a certain time the Lord's Supper began. He who declares that Jesus established no supper or he never lived is met with some unanswerable questions. What it stands for is well known. If it is pronounced a fraud, let the one who says so tell us how it began—how some impostor could have made the first group of communicants believe that such a supper had been observed every Lord's day since Jesus was said to have lived. If the Lord's Supper is not what it is claimed and believed to be, no one can tell how it could possibly have begun. Its very existence is an unanswerable argument as to the origin that is claimed for it. Hence, the supper is not only a memorial, but it powerfully proclaims Christ. "For as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come." (1 Cor. 11:26.)

If a man is going to scheme and scramble for positions of prominence in the church, he should have remained out of the church and gratified his unholy greed in political preferments. But more is the pity that some churches encourage such ambitions.

31, 32. Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not; and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, establish thy brethren.

31, 32. Satan, the great adversary of man, asked to have the disciples that he might sift them as wheat. It is true that Jesus addressed Peter, but he did not say that Satan has asked to have thee, but you, the plural of the pronoun of the second person. He had secured Judas; now if he could destroy the faith of all of them, he would destroy the work Christ had done with

them, and thereby prevent the plan of salvation from ever being propagated in the world. It was an ambitious scheme. To sift them as wheat was to try them so far as he could—test them to the limit of his ability. The words of Jesus show that they, like Job, would be in the power of Satan for a time; and the words of Jesus show also that he knew Peter would be in special danger, but that he would recover more quickly than the others so as to be in a position to assist them. "But I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not; and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, establish thy brethren." Peter would be so overwhelmed with fear that he would deny his Lord, but his faith would not entirely fail him. The experience would make him realize more fully the frailties of human beings, and make him more anxious to help his brethren.

33, 34. And he said unto him, Lord, with thee I am ready to go both to prison and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, until thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

33, 34. "Lord, with thee I am ready to go both to prison and to death." Peter made that assertion in all good faith and conscience. He felt sure of his ability to withstand any sort of pressure that could be brought to bear upon him; but he did not know what was coming, nor did he realize how frail a human being is. Any Christian should be well enough informed to know what he should do under any trying circumstances, but should not be so rash as to vow that he would do as well as he knows. It is not good to have a great amount of confidence in self. A Christian should be strong in the Lord; but when it seemed to Peter that his Lord had failed, he was very weak. The statement of Jesus shows that he knew exactly what would occur, and the exact time at which it would occur. Matthew reports that Peter, even after Jesus made his statement, still persisted in affirming that he would not deny the Lord, even if he had to die for the Lord. "Likewise also said all the disciples." Let us not forget that the others were as sure of their steadfastness as was Peter, and that they were more ready to forsake the Lord than was he.

John 13

LESSON LINKS

A few days before the events of this lesson, two apostles, James and John had pleaded with Jesus for the highest positions of honor in his kingdom. (Matt. 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-45.) Previous to this, the twelve had disputed among themselves as to who was the greatest. (Mark 9:33, 34.) At that time they thought the kingdom of Christ would be a material kingdom, and in it would be positions of honor, as in other kingdoms. By some very plain teaching Jesus sought to get such notions out of their minds. After James and John had tried to get him to promise them places of honor in his kingdom, he called the disciples to him, and said, "Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would be great among you shall be your minister (marginal reading, *servant*); and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant (bond servant): even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:25-28.) In our present lesson he sets before them in a very forcible way an example of useful, but humble service. How different the church would be, if only all its members gave full heed to Paul's injunction to do "nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself; not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others." (Phil. 2:3, 4.) Have regard for the other fellow's feelings, his convenience, and his welfare; anything less than that is not Christian. Jesus went about doing good, thus setting us an example of service to others. "If any man serve me, let him follow me." (John 12:26.) Jesus loved; therefore he served. Jesus rendered much service in healing the sick, the lame, and the blind; but the most far-reaching service that he rendered was his faithfulness in teaching the pure word of God; in this also he set us an example. "For I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me,

he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life eternal: the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak." (John 12:49, 50.)

12-15. So when he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and sat down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done unto you? Ye call me, Teacher, and, Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you.

12-15. The Passover was one of the three feasts that all men were required to attend; attendance by the women was voluntary. (Lev. 23:4-43; Deut. 16:1-17.) Jesus, obedient to the law of God, attended the Passover feast each year. Now he was in Jerusalem to observe his last Passover. For that matter, it was the last Passover that God would require anyone to attend, for the law ended at the cross. (Col. 2:14.) Jesus knew that his time of departure from this world was at hand. The treatment that he had received, and would receive, at the hands of his own nation, had not embittered nor soured him; he still loved his own. Verse 13: "Ye call me, Teacher, and, Lord: and ye say well; for so I am." Yet the Lord had washed his servants' feet. Now read verse 3; if you read this verse in view of what Jesus was about to do, it takes on added significance. Jesus knew who he was—he was not unmindful of his greatness, yet he was about to do a service that was usually performed by a household servant. He did not feel, as people so often feel, that such a lowly service was beneath his dignity. He would do a needed service, no matter how lowly the service might be; and he prepared for that service as a servant would. One naturally wonders how the disciples felt as Jesus proceeded to this necessary service, which none of them had volunteered to do. We can see something of the way Peter felt. By the time Jesus got to him, Peter was full of shame and indignation that the others would have Jesus wash their feet. "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt understand hereafter." Of course Peter knew that Jesus was washing feet, but he did not understand the signifi-

cance of the performance. Peter said, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." But that was putting his will up against the Lord's will; so the Lord said, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." That brought Peter to a realization of his rashness. If it would please the Lord to do so, he was willing for him to wash his hands and his head. Then Jesus said, "He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet." They had bathed in preparation for the feast; but their feet had become soiled in coming to the place of the feast, and needed washing. Jesus therefore rendered a needed service, but only their feet needed washing. Herein is where all religious people who wash feet as a church ordinance miss the significance of what Jesus did. When these people wash feet as a church ordinance they are very particular to see that their feet do not need washing! Jesus washed feet that needed washing, we should be willing to do the same thing. The lesson of the incident is that we should be ready for any needed service, however lowly it might be. The member of the church who is too dignified to do a lowly service for the poorest of the land is too high-headed to be a Christian. Jesus set the example of lowly service; we must follow his example. This brings forward the question of verse 12; "Know ye what I have done to you?" If you think he was setting an example for a religious ceremony, you do not know what he did. He was not merely teaching a lesson of humility; he was teaching them by example to do the needed thing.

16,17. Verily, verily, I say unto you, A servant is not greater than his lord; neither one that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them.

16, 17. The lord of any servant is over and above the servant; that is especially true concerning our Lord and his servants. A Christian must not feel that he is above doing what his Lord did. A servant of God must be willing to do what is needed without thinking of his dignity; if he is as big as he should be, he will. The phrase, "one that is sent," is a translation of one Greek word, "apostle." The Lord's apostles were not greater than he. The lesson, therefore, is they are not too great to

render the lowest service. "If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them." It does one no good to know what he should do, if he does not do it. The blessedness is in doing, not merely in believing or knowing.

18-20. I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth my bread lifted up his heel against me.

18-20. "I speak not of you all." He had not included Judas Iscariot in what he had just said. It seems that Judas made his decision to betray Jesus the night of the supper at the house of Simon the leper. He was annoyed and greatly disappointed that Mary used a pound of precious ointment for anointing Jesus instead of selling it, and putting the proceeds in the bag, so that he might make way with it. "Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests, and said, What are ye willing to give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they weighed unto him thirty pieces of silver. And from that time on he sought opportunity to deliver him unto them." (See Matt. 26:14-16.) Therefore when they came to this Passover, the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus. Jesus of course knew all this. Jesus quotes Psalm 41:9 as having its fulfillment in the betrayal of Christ by Judas. And the quotation shows the baseness of Judas. Jesus was the host at this supper; Judas was a guest; and yet, having learned where Jesus would go after the supper, he arose from the supper and went to arrange for his arrest. And he did this base deed for thirty pieces of silver, in amount, about fifteen dollars. We think of him as selling his Lord for that pitiful sum; but in doing so he sold himself to do evil. He sold out, body and soul, to the devil. And so does anyone who does wrong for gain. In telling them what was coming, he was showing prophetic foresight. When it all occurred as he had said, then the disciples would believe him. He had told them this that it might increase their faith. Then he makes a statement that people are slow to accept at full value. "He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiv-

eth me, receiveth him that sent me." To receive the one he sent is to receive his teaching. Jesus makes that plain in what he said on another occasion: "He that heareth you heareth me, and he that rejecteth you rejecteth me; and he that rejecteth me rejecteth him that sent me." (Luke 10:16.) There is therefore no way to receive Christ and the Father save to receive the teaching of those whom Christ sent. The remaining part of the thirteenth chapter should be carefully read.

34,35. A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

34,35. The words of these verses were spoken on the night in which Jesus was betrayed into the hands of his enemies. Judas had just left to carry out his wicked purpose. In the midst of the plottings and betrayal Jesus spoke of love. The commandment to love was not a new commandment. Moses had said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Lev. 19:18.) "Love ye therefore the sojourner." (Deut. 10:19.) And Jesus had taught them to love even their enemies. (Matt. 5:44, 45.) But such love as Jesus now enjoins had never been commanded. He commands us to love one another, even as he loved us; and he so loved us that he died for us. Such love is the mark of the true disciple. "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren." (1 John 3:14.) Jesus laid down his life for us, "and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (1 John 3:16.) It is a truth that love leads to sacrifice, and our own observation and experience teach us that. But let no one think that love is sentimental gush; if it is not helpful, it is not love. Love seeks the ultimate good of the object loved.

So?ne Reflections

The fact that Christ died for us has led many people to die for their faith in him. Yet the crucifixion would have been powerless, had not Jesus been raised from the dead; hence Paul speaks of the power of his resurrection. (Phil. 3:10.)

To love the brethren as Christ loved us is a high ideal;

perhaps few of us ever fully attain to that ideal. A life without an ideal is a failure.

John 14

LESSON LINKS

Whether Judas left the room before the supper was instituted or after has been a matter of dispute. Luke 22:19-23 seems to prove definitely that Judas was present when the supper was instituted, but left immediately thereafter. Jesus then told the others that he must leave them, and that they could not at that time follow. Peter affirmed that he was ready to follow Jesus even unto death. Jesus then said, "The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice."

1-3. Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

1-3. The words of these verses have been a source of comfort to unnumbered thousands in all ages since they were uttered. The disciples needed comfort. Jesus had told them that he must be put to death, that they would be scattered from him, and that Peter would deny him. They were bewildered and full of sorrow. And though Jesus was all but crushed with the thought of what he himself was to suffer, he seeks to comfort his distressed disciples. They were his chief concern. "Believe in God, believe also in me." The marginal reading has "Ye believe in God." The truth is, both verbs may be either indicative or imperative. The circumstances alone must determine which it is. To make them imperative, as in the American Standard Version, would carry this idea: Instead of being troubled, believe in God and in me; trust us to bring things out for the best. Or if we adopt the equally correct translation, "Ye

believe in God, and ye believe in me," it would carry this idea: You believe in God, and in me; you should not therefore be troubled. And besides this, my going away is for your benefit. There are many mansions in my Father's house, and I go away to prepare a place for you. No matter which translation we adopt, it amounts to this: Faith in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ should banish all trouble from our hearts concerning their plans and purposes. Had they trusted God and the Lord Jesus Christ as fully as they should have, they would not have worried about what he had told them.

"In my Father's house"—that is, in heaven—"are many mansions." "I go to prepare a place for you." This is another reason why they should not be troubled at his going. Also, he would come again; and when he comes again, he will receive his faithful followers unto himself. "And so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thess. 4:17.)

4-6. And whither I go, ye know the way. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; how know we the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me.

4-6. "And whither I go, ye know the way." He was going to the Father's house of many mansions. He had frequently told them the way he was to go. He would go by the way of death by crucifixion at the hands of his enemies and a resurrection from the dead—by the way of a cruel crucifixion and a glorious resurrection. He had told them so much that they should have known it. But they had had their minds too full of the idea that Jesus would not die, but would be an earthly king forever, to think seriously on his statements about being crucified; and now they were too bewildered to think clearly. So Thomas, including the others with himself, said, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; how can we know the way?" Jesus did not give him a direct answer; he had told them often enough the way he was to go, and they seemed never to understand him. Now they needed to know the way they were to go. "I am the way." He is the way, both in the example he set and in the teaching he did; there is no other way for man. "And the

truth." All truth centers in him, and radiates from him; and there is nothing in his life and teaching but truth. "And the life." "In him is life." Life inheres in him, and the life we have comes from him. Someone has paraphrased this verse in this way: I am the true way to life. He is the only way to life; for he says, "No one cometh unto the Father, but by me." He is our way of approach to the Father, the one, and the only, mediator between God and man. "For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all." (1 Tim. 2:5, 6.) The one God has appointed the one way of approach to himself. "He that rejecteth me rejecteth him that sent me." (Luke 10:16.) To reject this one way of approach to the Father is to leave one in sin; "for except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." (John 8:24.) He is therefore our only way of escape from sin. It is through him that we have access into the grace, or favor, of God. (Rom. 5:1, 2.)

7-10. If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also: from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth his works.

7-10. "If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father." Jesus was called Immanuel, "which is, being interpreted, God with us." (Matt. 1:23.) He is the effulgence of the Father's glory, "and the very image of his substance." (Heb. 1:3.) To see him and to know him was to see and know the Father, for he fully represented the Father.

Philip's Request—"Show us the Father." Moses had said to Jehovah, "Show me, I pray thee, thy glory." Jehovah replied, "Thou canst not see my face; for no man shall see me and live." (See Ex. 33:17-23.) The disciples saw Jesus, and he was divinity veiled in human flesh, "the image of the invisible God." (Col. 1:5.) "For in him dwelleth all of the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (Col. 2:9.) So Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath

seen the Father." But even the apostles did not really know Jesus; for had they known him, they would have known the Father through him. Even now, with a fuller revelation than they had, we do not fully know him, nor can we fully know how he is in the Father and the Father in him; but we can believe these things are so, on the testimony of Jesus. To fully know the Father and the Son, we would have to be as wise as they. Jesus gave them to understand that he was not then speaking on his own authority, but that the Father abiding in him was doing his own work through him. Only a short time before this Jesus had said, "For I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life eternal; the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak." (John 12:49, 50.) If we imitate Christ, we will speak only the things which we are commanded to speak.

11, 12. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father.

11, 12. Jesus had done many mighty works. They were his credentials, the proof that he was what he claimed to be. Any man could make great assertions about himself, but no deceived person or deceiver could do such works as Jesus had done. If the disciples could not believe what he had said about his oneness with the Father, they should, for the very works' sake, believe that the Father was with him. Here he staked all his claims on the works he had done. "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake." Earlier in his ministry he had said, "The works which the Father hath given me to accomplish, the very works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." (John 5:36.)

At the first reading, it seems incredible that the apostles would do the works that Jesus did, and even greater works. He

had cured the sick, healed the lame, given sight to the blind, cast out demons, calmed the storm, and raised the dead. We can see how the apostles by the Holy Spirit did all these things; but how and when did they do greater works? Certainly no miracles they did were greater in degree than those Jesus did. What then? They performed miracles over a wider scope of territory; their miracles were greater in their influence over the minds of the people; and their preaching resulted in a much greater number of conversions to Christ. And it is a greater work to cure sin-sick souls than to cure physical ailments. Jesus states why they would do greater works: "Because I go unto the Father." He does not tell them why his going to the Father would enable them to do these greater works; but later in the same speech he did tell them. "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." (John 16:7, 8.) The Holy Spirit with them would enable them to preach the gospel in its fullness, and to confirm their preaching by miracles. (Heb. 2:3, 4.)

13-15. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, that will I do. If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments.

13-15. To do the great works he had mentioned, they must pray to the Father in his name. In their own strength they would be helpless. Apart from him they could do nothing. (John 15:5.) Jesus would grant to them whatever they asked in his name. It is true that all Christians are to pray, but it seems that the instructions given here apply especially to the apostles in their great work. God had inaugurated this plan of salvation, and in its success he would be glorified. But the gospel was to be put to the test before an unbelieving world. The apostles would need constantly to pray for help. Jesus was soon to send them out to preach this plan of salvation to the whole world, and Jesus was promising to help them in their work.

Jesus is our mediator, our go-between, our High Priest. We approach the Father through him. "In my name." We do not go to God in prayer in our own name, but in the name of Jesus the Christ as our representative. He is our advocate. (1 John 2:1.) In carrying out the commands of Christ in extending his kingdom, to do a thing in his name is to do it by his authority, or, rather, as his agent. But to pray to God in his name is different; it is to approach God in his name as our High Priest, our mediator.

We want to please those whom we love; we like to comply with their wishes. If we love Jesus, we will do what he commands. Those who fail to do his will do not love him, no matter how much they profess to love him.

Some Reflections

People spend much time and energy in worrying about things that are entirely in the hands of God. We worry about the weather; and we worry about how God will work out his plans in the final windup of earthly matters. If we believe in God and in Christ, why worry?

That Jesus is coming again is plainly taught, and our hopes center in his coming in the last day. But not every coming of the Lord that is mentioned refers to his final coming. This will be clearly seen by reading such passages as John 14:18, 23; Revelation 2:5, 16.

Perhaps the greatest thing in the life of a Christian is the truth that God is his Father, for it includes about everything else. A father would be disappointed if his son never asked him for anything. We may be sure that our heavenly Father is pleased with the sincere prayers of his own sons, though he may not grant every request.

The child who loves his parents obeys them. Obedience is really such a test of love that John says, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." (1 John 5:3.)

John 16

LESSON LINKS

Jesus was going away, but he would not leave them desolate. "Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me." Judas (not Iscariot) said, "Lord, what is come to pass that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" He thought Jesus meant that he would appear to them in the body, as he had always done. He could not see how that could be, and yet the world not be able to see him. Jesus replied, "If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him." And what he then said about the Holy Spirit shows that he and the Father would come to them in the person of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would teach them all things, and bring to their remembrance all that Jesus had said unto them. And then to show them the close relationship that would still exist between him and his followers, and how they might bear fruit, and the necessity of bearing fruit, he spoke to them the parable of the vine and the branches. Their continued union with him depended on their bearing fruit. Jesus told them then that they were more than servants; they were his friends, if they did the things he commanded them to do. Again he spoke to them of the Holy Spirit, whom he would send to them. Because they would meet with persecutions, he spoke these things to them so that they might not be caused to stumble.

5-7. But now I go unto him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have spoken these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth: 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.

5-7. Jesus repeats to them what he had often told them, namely, that he was going to the Father who had sent him. And now they do not ask him, "Whither goest thou?" Only a few moments before this, Thomas had said, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; how know we the way?" They were now too bewildered to ask any more questions. Jesus immediately

said, "But because I have spoken these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart." In chapter 14, verse 28, he had gently rebuked them for being so troubled at the prospect of his leaving them: "If ye loved me, ye would have rejoiced, because I go unto the Father: for the Father is greater than I." That is, if they had loved him as they should, instead of being filled with sorrow at the thought of his leaving them, they would have rejoiced at the prospect of his returning to the bliss and glory of heaven and to intimate association with the Father. But to give them some measure of comfort, he repeatedly told them that, when he went away, the Holy Spirit would be sent to them to abide with them. (See 14:16-18; 15:26.) Of course they could not then understand all that the coming of the Holy Spirit would mean to them. John the Baptist had called this coming of the Holy Spirit upon them a baptism of the Holy Spirit. (Matt. 3:11.) It was all bewildering to them. And they must have been more astonished than ever when Jesus said, "It is expedient for you that I go away." To be expedient is to be helpful, to be of advantage. The personal presence of Jesus had meant so much to them and their association with him had been so delightful, they could not then understand how his leaving them would be to their advantage, or in any way helpful to them. But if he did not go away the Holy Spirit would not come to them, and they, therefore, could not fulfill their mission as apostles without the presence and help of the Holy Spirit. If Jesus went away, he would send them the Holy Spirit,

The word translated "Comforter" seems not to have an exact equivalent in English. The classic meaning of the word, as given by Liddell and Scott, is "called to one's aid, assisting, especially in a court of justice; Latin, *advocatus*: hence, as a substantive, a legal assistant, advocate, . . . generally, a helper." Many commentators think the term "helper" comes nearer to being a correct translation, or, rather comes nearer to covering the full meaning of the original word. Perhaps the best way to arrive at its meaning is to find out what the Holy Spirit did when he came to the apostles. It is certain that he did

more for the apostles than merely to comfort them. Paul said, "And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity." (Rom. 8:26.) The Spirit helps wherein we need help. The Holy Spirit gave whatever help the apostles needed. They would not be able to remember all Jesus had taught them; the Holy Spirit would bring his words to their remembrance. (John 14:26.) He would guide them into all truth. (John 16:13.) He would enable them to speak in other tongues (Acts 2:1-4), and to preach the gospel. (1 Pet. 1:12.) The Holy Spirit would enable them to work miracles to confirm the word. (1 Cor. 12:4-11; Heb. 2:2-4.) And so the Holy Spirit, working through them and in them, would enable them to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of the judgment. And when they were troubled, he would encourage and comfort them. So he was their ever present help in time of need—a real helper. It was therefore expedient for the apostles that Jesus go away and send the Holy Spirit to them to help them in preaching the gospel to all nations. Without their helper they would not have preached the gospel to all nations.

John 17

LESSON LINKS

It seems that the apostles had become convinced that Jesus would soon leave them. But he would not leave them desolate. Read carefully John 16:6-13. The Holy Spirit was to be to the apostles more than a Comforter, for he was to guide them into all truth and through them convince, or convict, the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He would also bring to their remembrance all that Jesus had said to them. (John 14:26.) Before Jesus uttered the prayer of our lesson, he spoke these words to his disciples: "Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with

me. These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16:32, 33.) This implies that he had overcome Satan, for Satan is the prince of this world. (John 12:31.)

1-3. These things spake Jesus; and lifting up his eyes to heaven, he said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that the Son may glorify thee: even as thou gavest him authority over all flesh, that to all whom thou hast given him, he should give eternal life. And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ.

1-3. "Lifting up his eyes to heaven." Jesus did not pray with his head bowed toward the earth, but with his face turned toward heaven—his eyes lifted up to heaven. That seems to be the natural and proper thing to do when one prays, though it is not usually so done. The way the Lord addressed the Father is worthy of note, simply Father. In the body of the prayer we have Holy Father and Righteous Father; but never here, nor in any prayers recorded in the Bible, do we have any terms expressive of intimacy or endearment, such as are sometimes used today. "The hour is come"—the hour for which he came into the world. It was a solemn hour. The burden of the world's sins was resting upon him; he was standing, as it were, under the shadow of the cross. It will help you to study this prayer with your mind dwelling on the occasion in which it was uttered. "Glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee." When Jesus was glorified, the Holy Spirit would be given. (John 7:39.) "Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promises of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear." (Acts 2:33.) This therefore was the answer to the prayer of Jesus. The Father was glorified in what Jesus did and is doing. The Father had given the Son authority over all flesh; in fact he gave him all authority in heaven and on earth. (Matt. 28:18.) He actually gave him this authority "when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this

world, but also in that which is to come: and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. 1:20-23.) "He is the head of the body, the church: . . . that in all things he might have the preeminence." (Col. 1:18.) Life is in him, and he has the authority to give eternal life to whom he will, but he is the author of eternal salvation only to those who obey him. (Heb. 5:8, 9.) To know God is to recognize him as God, the one who has the right to command; we recognize that right by giving him faithful obedience. Jesus is the Savior, but he will not save any in whose heart he is not allowed to reign as king.

4, 5. I glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou hast given me to do. And now, Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

4, 5. Jesus glorified the Father on the earth in that he did all that the Father sent him to do. Had he failed in one thing, he could not have said he had accomplished the work which the Father gave him to do. He came to do what the Father through the prophets said he would do. In spite of man's theories, let us believe that Jesus told the truth; Jesus did the work he was sent to do. In so doing he glorified the Father. A person is glorified in the full accomplishment of the work which he inaugurates, also in the successful working out of his plans. God's plans did not fail of accomplishment. In verse 5 Jesus again prays that the Father would glorify him, this time praying to be glorified with the Father with the glory he had before the world was. That goes beyond our grasp, excepting it shows Jesus existed before the world was created.

6-8. I manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them to me; and they have kept thy word. Now they know that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are from thee: for the words which thou gavest me I have given unto them; and they received them, and knew of a truth that I came forth from thee, and they believed that thou didst send me.

6-8. In the first five verses Jesus prayed for himself; then to

the close of verse 19 he prayed for his apostles. God had given him these apostles for a definite work; this work was announced in the Great Commission. It seems plain that God had first called these men through the preaching of John the Baptist; for the ones who were baptized in the Holy Spirit on Pentecost had been baptized by John. (See Matt. 3:11; Acts 1:21, 22; 2:1-4, 14.) Of the converts God made through the preaching of John, God gave these men to Jesus to be his apostles. Jesus manifested his Father's name to them; he brought it into full light. "A little of the divine nature was known by the works of creation; a little more was known by the *Mosaic revelation*; but the full *manifestation* of God, his nature and his attributes, came only through the revelation of Christ."—*Clark*. No higher words of praise could have been spoken concerning these men than this: "And they have kept thy word." That covers all the relations with God, with Christ, and with their fellow men; and their attitude toward God's word made it possible for Jesus to say concerning them, "Now they know that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are from thee." For he had given them the words which God had given him, and they had accepted them as true. By his works and the words delivered to them they knew that he came from God, and believed that God sent him. Here the words know and believe are used in much the same sense; they knew he came from God and believed that God sent him.

14-17. I have given them thy word; and the world hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth.

14-17. During his personal ministry Jesus did not claim to be speaking his own word, but only the words which the Father had given him. "For I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak." (John 12:49.) "The world hated them." The term "world" here refers to the disobedient part of humanity. The apostles were not a part of this

class. They had been chosen out of the world, and were not, therefore, following worldly ways and worldly wisdom. As Jesus was not of the world, so also were his disciples not of the world. In a physical sense, they were in the world, and were surrounded by all the temptations and allurements of the world. They had a work to accomplish—a work for which Jesus had trained them and to which he would soon assign them. Because of this, he did not pray the Father to take them out of the world, even though they were both tempted and hated by the world. The world would hate them because they would condemn the sins of the world. Jesus prayed that, while they were in the world, the Father would keep them from the evil that is in the world. To that end he prayed the Father to sanctify them in the truth, or by the truth, and immediately added, "Thy word is truth." People are to be sanctified by the truth and not by a direct work of the Holy Spirit. To sanctify a person is to separate him from the world, for sanctification means "not of the earth." That man himself has something to do in the matter of his sanctification is plain from the following: "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye presented your members as servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, even so now present you members as servants to righteousness unto sanctification." (Rom. 6:19.) Hence, to forsake sin and become servants of righteousness is to become sanctified, and the Lord accomplishes that in us by the influence of his word.

18, 19. As thou didst send me into the world, even so sent I them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

18, 19. "As thou didst send me into the world." Repeatedly Jesus spoke of being sent into the world by the Father. He mentioned the fact six times in this prayer, and on other occasions. Jesus made no bid for worldly honor and praise. He did not seek to impress the people with the idea that he, in and of himself, was attempting to do great things for them. He did not even claim that his coming into the world was of his own

volition. Said he, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work." (John 4:34.) John states the reason the Father sent the Son into the world: "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." (John 3:16.) Now Jesus was to send his apostles into the world. So certain would that be done that it is here spoken of as an accomplished fact. Things that are certain of accomplishment are frequently spoken of as if they had already been done. The word "apostle," means "one sent away." Jesus called these men apostles because he was to send them out to preach. "For their sakes I sanctify myself." He devoted himself to God, for so the word signifies. Jesus did not live a worldly life, but a life wholly devoted to the service of God. In doing so, he set them an example, that they too might be sanctified, or devoted to God. In verse 17 Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth." It is the power of the word of truth brought to bear on the hearts of people that causes them to devote their lives to the service of God; it is in that way that God sanctifies people.

20-23. Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me. And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me.

20-23. Jesus had been praying for the apostles. In going out to face a world of enemies they would need God's help and encouragement. But now he prays for their converts—for all who would believe on him through their word. He prayed especially that they might be one—united perfectly in one body. Read what Paul says about the strife and divisions that were springing up in the church at Corinth. (1 Cor. 1:10-13; 3:3, 4; 11:17-19.) David said, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Ps. 133:1.) So desirable and helpful is this unity that the Lord hates—even abominates—the one who sows discord among his brethren.

(Prov. 6:16-19.) To secure and maintain this unity that is so desirable, all Christians are required to make an effort. They are commanded to give "diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph. 4:3.) But it must be a unity which the Spirit teaches, and not a unity in error. In fact, Christians are required to turn away from those who cause divisions contrary to the doctrine of Christ. (Rom. 16:17, 18.) "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the sons of God." (Matt. 5:9.) Division among the followers of Christ hinders the spiritual growth and development of its members; it even destroys the Christian character of those who are responsible for the divisions. It hinders the progress of the gospel. Hence Jesus prayed that believers might be one, "that the world might believe that thou didst send me." In hindering the belief in Christ it hinders the salvation of sinners. Jesus prayed for unity that the world could see and know that it existed—a union in one body. The one who causes or perpetuates divisions in the followers of Christ antagonizes the prayer of Jesus. The one who hinders that prayer of Jesus is in effect an enemy of Christ, no matter what his professions and pretensions may be. "And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them." The glory here referred to is expressed in the next clause—"That they may be one, even as we are one." The unity of the Father and the Son is one of their glorious attributes. And nothing on earth can be more glorious than for the great host of Christians to be one. What a glorious thing a harmonious and united church is, a church where good will and warmhearted fellowship prevail! Professed followers of Christ have miserably failed to maintain that unity for which Jesus prayed, because they have failed to follow his teaching. But it is the Lord's earnest prayer "that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me." This solemn and earnest prayer of our Lord should admonish us to do all we can in harmony with the truth to promote unity among the followers of Christ. Think of the one who uttered this prayer and the occasion on which it was uttered, and then examine yourself. It

is an awful sin to cause division among the followers of Christ; it is a lovely thing to make peace.

24-26. Father, I desire that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world knew thee not, but I knew thee; and these knew that thou didst send me; and I made known unto them thy name, and will make it known; that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them, and I in them.

24-26. Jesus did not pray for the Father to take the disciples out of the world at the time he was taken out (verse 15), for he had trained them for a great work which they were soon to begin; but they, like all other men, would soon reach the end of life's journey. Jesus prayed that they might then be with him, and behold his glory. That reward would infinitely more than repay them for what they would have to go through in this life. The world had not known God; the world by its wisdom cannot know God. (1 Cor. 1:21.) He can be known now as he is revealed to us in the Bible. The apostles had been slow to learn many things Jesus had often repeated to them, but they had come to know that the Father had sent Jesus into the world. Jesus had taught them much about the Father, and now prays that God's love might be in them, and that he also might be in them.

Some Reflections

The speech recorded in chapters 14,15,16, and the prayer in chapter 17, none of which is recorded by the other writers, came after the Lord's Supper was instituted. It is certain that they did not go out into the garden of Gethsemane immediately after they ate the Lord's Supper. Whether the song mentioned in Matthew 26:30 was sung before the speech and the prayer, or after both, no one can tell. The Lord's prayer, which we have just been studying, is the longest prayer recorded in the New Testament. It was uttered on a momentous occasion—and yet it is not as long as some brethren pray on all occasions. Long prayers are generally out of place.

Mark 14

26-28. And when they had sung a hymn, they went out unto the mount of Olives. And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad. Howbeit, after I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee.

26-28. The night of the betrayal had come, Jesus and his disciples had eaten the Passover, and the Lord's Supper had been instituted. And Judas, knowing where Jesus would go after he had finished his speech to the disciples, had gone to lead a band to that place that they might seize Jesus in the darkness of the night, and in the absence of the multitude. Now Jesus and the eleven were on their way to the garden of Gethsemane. At the supper he had made the startling announcement that one of them would betray him; now he astonishes them again by saying, "All ye shall be offended." The marginal reading has, "Greek, caused to stumble." Matthew reports Jesus as saying, "All ye shall be offended in me this night." And the nature of their stumbling was shown by the prophecy which Jesus quoted: "For it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad." The time for this to be done was short, for the night then must have been half gone. But he assures them, that though he is smitten, he would rise again. He then made an appointment for a meeting in Galilee after his resurrection. From Matthew 28:16 we learn that Jesus had designated a certain mountain for the place of meeting; and of course he had also named a date, else they would not have known when to go to the mountain.

29-31. But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that thou to-day, even this night, before the cock crow twice, shall deny me thrice. But he spake exceeding vehemently, If I must die with thee, I will not deny thee. And in like manner also said they all.

29-31. On different occasions, the disciples manifested a weakness that is all too common among professed followers of Christ. Perhaps they did not recognize it, yet they occasionally

assumed to be wiser than their Lord. When Jesus first plainly announced that he would be killed in Jerusalem, Peter said that it should never be. When Mary anointed his head, some of them seemed to think they knew better than Jesus as to what should have been done with the ointment; otherwise they would have waited to see what he said about it. Now Jesus informs them that they would all be scattered. But Peter affirmed that it was not true in his own case, even if all the others did stumble. But Jesus made it even stronger in Peter's case. "Verily I say unto thee, that thou to-day, even this night, before the cock crow twice, shalt deny me thrice." But Peter was not convinced; he still thought he knew more about himself and what he would do than the Lord did. "But he spake exceeding vehemently, If I must die with thee, I will not deny thee." But Peter was not alone in putting his knowledge up against the Lord's. "And in like manner also said they all." But not many of us are in a position to criticize them, for we often put what we think up against what the Lord says. Their example should also warn us not to be overly positive as to what we would do under certain circumstances. "If I were in his place, I would do thus and so." You merely think you would; you might be like Peter, do even worse than the other fellow.

32. And they come unto a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith unto his disciples, Sit ye here, while I pray.

32. "And they come unto a place which was named Gethsemane." Gethsemane means a place of oil presses. At this time it was a garden, but retained its name. From John 8:12 we have: "When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Kidron, where was a garden, into which he entered, himself and his disciples." From Luke 22:39: "And he came out, and went, as his custom was, unto the mount of Olives; and his disciples followed him." It had been a pleasant place to rest, and to quietly converse with his disciples. It appears to have been open to the public, a sort of pleasure garden, or park; but we now think of it as the Garden of Sorrow and Resignation. "Gethsemane has not come down

to us as a scene of mirth; its inexhaustible associations are the offspring of a single event—the agony of the Son of God on the evening proceeding his passion."—*Smith*. Every time the name Gethsemane comes to the mind of the Christian there springs up in the heart a sad, sweet feeling that nothing else can produce. Having entered the garden Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit ye here, while I pray." The awful hour of the cross was drawing near. Soon he would be in the hands of his cruel and unreasoning enemies, and his beloved disciples would be scattered. The people whom he came to save would soon be a raging mob, clamoring for his blood, and the hopes of his disciples whom he had so patiently trained would be crushed. The only comfort he could have in an hour like that would be found in secret communion with his Father. There comes to every one times when prayer is the only refuge for the burdened soul. There is awe-inspiring sublimity in the scene when a great being like Jesus finds in prayer his only refuge. "Blessed hour of prayer."

33,34. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly amazed, and sore troubled. And he saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death: abide ye here, and watch.

33, 34. Though Jesus had told his disciples to sit here, while he prayed, he selected out of the group Peter, James, and John to go with him that they might be near him while he prayed. "Began to be greatly amazed, and sore troubled." We cannot fathom the mystery of the humanity and Deity in Jesus; he hungered, thirsted, became weary, and rested in sleep, as do human beings. It seems that the horrors of the cross would therefore be dreaded by his human nature, as it would by any other human being. We should not therefore be surprised that Jesus was sore troubled. He knew, as no one else could know, what was before him. He was soon to pass through a mock trial before the high court of his people, and then be delivered into the hands of the Romans, who would crucify him amid the taunts and jeers of his own people. Yet he had come into the world to do good to all, and evil to none. "He was despised, and

rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." (Isa. 53:3.) It seems that there has never been another time in which the world was so full of hate—the Jews hated the Romans and the Romans hated the Jews, and both united in hating Jesus, and would later be as one in their hatred of his church. It is no wonder therefore that he said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." He felt as if he could not survive the pressure that was upon his soul, and the utter helplessness into which he had sunk is seen in the request to the chosen three. "Tarry ye here, and watch with me!" "He who had been their comforter in every hour of trouble and danger, now calls on them for the help which their wakeful sympathy would give him in the hour of his agony. Wonderful sight! The Son of God longing for the sympathy of human hearts, and leaning in a time of weakness on the arm of human friendship! Leaning, too, as so many sufferers have done, on a broken reed"—McGarvey. Another has said, "Every one knows how terrible is suffering in loneliness. The solitary watch in the night hours often becomes a terror to the strong and well. To those in pain it is like an eternity of agony. We can face hard trial and suffering if only we can feel the touch of a loving hand, and know that another shares the trial. This comfort was denied the suffering Savior."

35-42. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass away from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; remove this cup from me: howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt. And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest thou not watch one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. And again he went away, and prayed, saying the same words. And again he came, and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they knew not what to answer him. And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough; the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us be going: behold, he that betrayeth me is at hand.

35-42. Jesus went a little forward from where he had stationed his three companions, and fell on the ground. Standing in prayer is expressive of respect, kneeling is expressive of

humility, falling prostrate upon the ground is expressive of utter helplessness and submission. According to Luke he first kneeled down; as the agony of the hour increased, he fell prostrate upon the ground. Any one who has prayed in great agony of soul has realized in his own experience the condition of spirit that prompted Jesus to fall on his face in that awful hour. "And prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass away from him." Matthew reports his words: "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me." In verse thirty-six Mark reports Jesus as saying, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; remove this cup from me." It was physically possible for God to save Jesus from the cross. No combination of men can be stronger than God. Jesus must have meant, "If it be possible to save men any other way than by my death, let this cup pass from me." We shall not be able to understand fully why the death of Christ was absolutely essential to man's salvation; but we can believe that he died for us, and that only through the merits of his blood can we be saved. Concerning the "cup" McGarvey says, "It was common in ancient times to execute criminals by compelling them to drink a cup of poison, and assassination and suicide were often effected by the same means. The cup, therefore, became a symbol of suffering and death, and is so used here." But is that the correct idea? Consider the following: "Thou preparedst a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou hast anointed my head with oil; my cup runneth over." (Psalm 23:5.) "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of Jehovah." (Psalm 116:13.) "Neither shall men give them the cup of consolation to drink." (Jer. 16:7.) Hence we have the cup of joy, the cup of salvation, the cup of consolation, the cup of suffering.

"Howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt." Both petition and resignation were in that prayer. That should be in every prayer. It is proper and right for a person to be as earnest as possible in presenting his petition, and even persistent. On one occasion Jesus "spake a parable unto them to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint." A certain widow came

oft to the judge with the same plea. (Luke 18:1-8.) And here in Gethsemane Jesus prayed three times, each time saying the same words, with but a few moments intervening between the prayers. But no matter how earnestly we pray, nor how often, we should be resigned to the Lord's will in the matter, being assured that he knows best. There should be no effort to dictate to God as to what he should do. When we dictate we do not pray.

In the sermon on the mount Jesus said, "And in praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do." (Matt. 6:7.) Some have thought Jesus here prohibits a repetition of the same petition, but surely he would not violate his own teaching, and yet he prayed three times in rapid succession, saying the same words. Vain repetitions are empty repetitions. No one who is desperately in earnest will be content with praying once—he will pray again and again, as Jesus did. There is nothing vain about repeating such prayers.

Jesus left the three apostles to watch while he prayed. They had come on a long journey from Galilee to Jerusalem; and in the excitement of the week, they had found little chance to rest. It must have now been past midnight. They were weary; and in the quietness of the garden they soon fell asleep, thus violating a trust. Jesus had also told them to pray that they enter not into temptation, but they did not know how urgent was their need of prayer. The assurance they expressed on the way to the garden was still with them. They neither watched nor prayed. Had they known what was to come upon them within the hour, they could not have slept. When Jesus returned and found them sleeping, he said to Peter, "Simon, sleepest thou? couldest thou not watch one hour?" But even with this rebuke they fell asleep each time he left them. Returning the third time, having gained full control of himself, he said to them, "Sleep on now, and take your rest." It is possible that some time elapsed after he said this and before he added, "It is enough; the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us be going; behold, he that betrayeth me is at hand." Or it may be that as he finished telling them to sleep on and rest, he saw the torches of the mob

at the entrance of the garden; and then added the other words.

43-45. And straightway, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is he; take him, and lead him away safely. And when he was come, straightway he came to him, and saith, Rabbi; and kissed him.

43-45. As the Jewish month began with the new moon and the Passover came on the fifteenth day of the month, the student can see that the mob who came to seize Jesus had the light of the full moon. But even so, they were not sufficiently acquainted with Jesus to know him from the others with him. And, of course, Judas did not want Jesus and the disciples with him to know that he was leading the mob. He, of course, would precede the mob so as to make it appear that he just arrived by accident a little ahead of them. He had said to the mob, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is he; take him, and lead him away." The fact that he had thought to deceive Jesus by that same kiss shows how little he understood the powers of the Lord; and shows, too, how base and mean Judas was. Of course, it did not enter his mind that his kiss would become a synonym for base pretensions to friendship throughout the world and for all time. There is no word in the English language that describes the feelings of a sensitive person when he thinks of the kiss of Judas. Antipathy? aversion? repugnance? disgust? they are all too weak! Does it not seem, that had not Judas been thoroughly hardened, he would have fallen on his knees and begged for pardon when Jesus said to him, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48.)

46. And they laid hands on him, and took him.

46. When they laid hands on him Peter wanted to fight. He drew his sword and cut off the ear of Malachus, servant of the high priest. Jesus immediately repaired the damage. Had Peter been allowed to fight he would have made good his avowal to die rather than forsake Jesus. Jesus taunted the mob for coming heavily armed as if they had come to arrest a

dangerous robber. He called attention to their cowardice when he reminded them that they made no attempt to take him while he taught daily in the temple. When Peter was told to put up his sword, his courage began to fail. He felt that he had no means of defense left. If we could see the situation as it appeared to Peter, we would not denounce him for denying his Lord. Besides, he did even better than most of the others, for he followed along to see what would be done to his beloved Master; the others, with the exception of John, fled.

53,54. And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and there come together with him all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. And Peter had followed him afar off, even within, into the court of the high priest; and he was sitting with the officers, and warming himself in the light of the fire.

53, 54. They seized Jesus and led him away to the high priest. From John 18:12 this report: "So the band and the chief captain, and the officers of the Jews, seized Jesus and bound him, and led him to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, who was high priest that year." Annas had been high priest, but the Roman authorities took upon themselves to set aside and appoint high priests, according to their own pleasure. It is likely that the Jews still thought of Annas as the real high priest; and so they led Jesus first to Annas, and then to Caiaphas. Matthew makes this report: "But Peter followed afar off, unto the court of the high priest, and entered in, and sat with the officers, to see the end." (Matt. 26:58.) He tried to appear neutral, a mere onlooker; and that got him into trouble. Certain ones wanted to know where he stood.

66-71. And as Peter was beneath in the court, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest; and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and saith, Thou also wast with the Nazarene, even Jesus. But he denied, saying, I neither know, nor understand what thou sayest: and he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. And the maid saw him, and began again to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. But he again denied it. And after a little while again they that stood by said to Peter, Of a truth thou art one of them; for thou art a Galilaean. But he began to curse, and to swear, I know not this man of whom ye speak.

66-71. "And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another

disciple. Now that disciple was known unto the high priest, and entered in with Jesus into the court of the high priest; but Peter was standing at the door without. So the other disciple, who was known unto the high priest, went out and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter." (John 18:15,16.) It is understood that this other disciple was John. No one asked him any questions, for they knew him to be a disciple of Christ; but not so with Peter. Earlier in the night Jesus said to his disciples, "All ye shall be offended in me this night." But Peter avowed that he would not deny Christ, even if all the others did. Jesus then told him that he would deny him three times that night. "Peter saith unto him, Even if I must die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples." (Matt. 26:31-35.) The maid who first questioned Peter and charged him with being with the Nazarene was the one who kept the door. (John 18:17.) Peter said, "I am not," to the question, "Art thou also one of this man's disciples?" Twice more Peter was accused of being one of the followers of Jesus, and twice more he denied emphatically that he was. The last time they made the statement that he was one of them, "he began to curse, and to swear, I know not this man of whom ye speak." Like many another man, Peter foolishly thought cursing and swearing would add force to what he said.

72. And straightway the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word, how that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.

72. If Peter had done more thinking before he did so much talking, he would not have said so much. Of this third denial Luke says, "And immediately, while yet he spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how that he said unto him, Before the cock crow this day thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out and wept bitterly." (Luke 22:60-62.) When Peter thought on what he had done and had seen the look on the Lord's face, he was overwhelmed with shame and sorrow. If Peter had been allowed to fight in the garden as he tried to do,

he would have died in defense of his Lord, and made good his statement that he would die with him or go to prison with him. But things he could not understand had come upon him. He had believed Jesus to be the Messiah and that he would establish a great kingdom, and overcome his enemies; but now he was in the hands of enemies who were determined to kill him. Peter was bewildered and cowed—too much so to think what he was saying; and yet he knew he should not have denied Jesus.

Mark 15

12-15. And Pilate again answered and said unto them, What then shall I do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews? And they cried out again, Crucify him. And Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out exceedingly, Crucify him. And Pilate, wishing to content the multitude, released unto them Barabbas, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.

12-15. "And straightway in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes, and the whole council, held a consultation, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him up to Pilate." They had already decided to put Jesus to death; but though they were determined to put an innocent man to death, they wanted to carry out the forms of the law. They must pass sentence in the daytime. "Now when the morning was come, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death." (Matt. 27:1.) It was the determined purpose of the Sanhedrin, the high court of the Jews, to put Jesus to death. It was not the same as an individual killing Jesus on his own responsibility. The authority of the Jews was vested in this court—through that court the nation acted. It was a national act, this killing of Jesus—murder by a nation.

Before Pilate they brought many accusations against Jesus,

none of which they could prove; but Jesus made no answer to any of their charges. Pilate examined Jesus and found no crime in him. "For he perceived that for envy the chief priests had delivered him up." Now here is a strange thing. Jesus had said before Pilate that he was king and used the term "my kingdom." And yet Pilate said, "I find no crime in him," and sought to release him. If Jesus had come to establish such a kingdom as the Jews expected the Messiah to establish, and as some now affirm he came to establish, Pilate would have been bound by Roman law to pronounce him guilty of treason or rebellion. We know not how much Pilate learned from Jesus in his interviews with him, but we do know that he learned enough to know that Jesus did not mean to set up a kingdom like the Jews expected, with his throne in Jerusalem, with the intention of delivering the Jews from Roman rule; otherwise he could not have said, "I find no fault in this man." Neither would he have pleaded with the Jews that he be let go. Pilate had a strange custom, the releasing of a prisoner at the Passover, a prisoner whom the Jews themselves desired released. "And there was one called Barabbas, lying bound with them that had made insurrection, men who in the insurrection had committed murder." (Verse 7.) John adds this: "Now Barabbas was a robber." (John 18:40.) Of course the Sanhedrin was the official spokesman for the people. When Pilate asked them, "Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?" "The chief priests stirred up the multitude, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them." So low had these leaders sunk, that they preferred to have Barabbas—insurrectionist, murderer, and robber—turned loose on the people to harass them with his crimes, rather than have Jesus continue his teaching and miracles of mercy. So warped had they become that, with them, right was wrong and wrong was right. Through Isaiah God pronounced woe on such: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness;... Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" (Is. 5:20,21.) To add to Pilate's perplexity, "while he was sitting on the judgment-seat his wife

sent unto him saying, Have thou nothing to do with that righteous man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." (Matt. 27:19.) But the multitude kept clamoring for the release of Barabbas and the crucifixion of Jesus. When Pilate asked "Why, what evil hath he done?" they merely increased their clamoring for his crucifixion. "So when Pilate saw that he prevailed nothing, but rather that the tumult was arising, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man; see ye to it." This empty ceremony did not clear him of guilt, but it brought from the crowd this astonishing outburst from the multitude: "His blood be on us and on our children." What an imprecation! (Matt. 27:19-26.) "And Pilate wishing to content the multitude, released unto them Barabbas, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified." Pilate was not free from guilt but the Jews had the greater guilt. (John 19:11.)

John 19

LESSON LINKS

Before the Sanhedrin he was accused of blasphemy, because he said he was the Son of God. He was then carried before Pilate, and there he was charged with treason in that he claimed to be a king. After examining him, Pilate announced, "I find no crime in him." But the Jews demanded that he be crucified. Pilate then scourged him, or had him scourged. The Roman scourging was extremely severe. Pilate thought this would satisfy the Jews, for he showed in every way that he desired to release Jesus.

4-6. And Pilate went out again, and said unto them, Behold, I bring him out to you, that ye may know that I find no crime in him. Jesus therefore came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold, the man! When therefore the chief priests and officers saw him,

they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him! Pilate saith unto them, Take him yourselves, and crucify him: for I find no crime in him.

4-6. After the soldiers had mocked and abused Jesus, Pilate went out to the Jews again. The Jews would not go into the Praetorium, "that they might not be defiled, but might eat the passover." (John 18:28.) For that reason, when Pilate wanted to say something to the Jews he had to go outside the Praetorium. They would not defile themselves by going into the house of a Gentile, but they were determined to have an innocent man put to death. They were very religious, but worse sinners than the corrupt governor. When Pilate brought Jesus before them, bleeding from the Roman scourging, clothed in a purple garment, and wearing a crown of thorns, he said, "Behold, the man!" He did not say this in a spirit of mockery; he was in no humor for that sort of thing. He had no use for these bloodthirsty Jews and knew that envy was moving them against Jesus. (Matt. 27:17, 18; Mark 15:9, 10.) But his wife's plea (Matt. 27:19), together with the fact that he had found no crime in Jesus, but to be a righteous man (Matt. 27:24.), had excited both his interest and his fears. And there was in his mind the thought that Jesus might be some divine being. It is likely that he wanted to emphasize that truth when he said, "Behold, the man!"—THE MAN. It is likely he thought it possible that the sight of Jesus in his suffering condition would excite their pity; but instead of modifying their feelings against Jesus, the sight of him served only to intensify their rage. And like the howling mob they were, these members of the Sanhedrin, the High Court of the Jews, cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Perhaps never in the history of the world did the High Court of any other nation become such a howling mob.

Pilate tried to shift the responsibility to others by telling the Jews to take Jesus and crucify him themselves, for he found no fault in him. But even that was a sort of mockery of the Jews in their helplessness, for he well knew that they could not inflict the death penalty. Pilate then delivered his judgment—"I find no crime in him."

7-9. The Jews answered him, 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 Praetorium again, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.

7-9. Luke records the accusation the Jews made against Jesus before Pilate: "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.) This was hypocrisy, for they despised the Roman government, and would have revolted and set them up a king any moment they saw a chance to succeed. They were charging Jesus with treason, but they were not able to convince Pilate that their charge was true. Before their own court they had charged Jesus with being guilty of blasphemy. If he had not been the Son of God, he would have been guilty of blasphemy in so claiming. Though they knew that Pilate had no right under Roman law to consider their charge of blasphemy, they thought to influence Pilate by reminding him that, according to their law, Jesus should be put to death for blasphemy, "because he made himself the Son of God." When Pilate heard that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, he became more afraid. He understood that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God in some special sense. The superstitious heathen thought their gods might appear in the form of men. Thinking this possible in the case of Jesus, Pilate went in and asked Jesus, "Whence art thou?" He was not trying to find out from what place Jesus came, but his origin. Was he a god or a man? But Jesus answered him not; he had said enough.

14-16. Now it was the Preparation of the passover: it was about the sixth hour. And he saith unto the Jews, Behold, your King! They therefore cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him! Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar. Then therefore he delivered him unto them to be crucified.

14-16. The student should read verses 10-13, for they show why Pilate delivered Jesus to be crucified. When Pilate tried to gain the consent of the Jews to release Jesus, they made a

statement, recorded in verse twelve, that shows they intended, if he did release Jesus, to bring charges against Pilate before Caesar; and that would mean the loss of his position, and perhaps his life. Tiberius, who was then emperor, was cruel and suspicious. Pilate would rather sign the death warrant of an innocent person than face charges before Tiberius. Besides, Pilate had very little regard for the life of any of the Jews. Verse fourteen has given commentators no end of trouble. Mark 15:25 says they crucified Jesus the third hour of the day, which according to Jewish count, was nine o'clock; yet John tells us that it was the sixth hour when Pilate delivered Jesus up to be crucified. But John wrote long after Jerusalem was destroyed, and the Jews were scattered. The Jews' method of counting was not recognized over the world; hence, he used the Roman method. With them the day began at midnight, as with us. Hence, it would seem that the death warrant was signed at six o'clock and Jesus was crucified at nine. But as Jesus and his disciples had eaten the Passover, how could this day be the day of preparation for the Passover? From John 18: 28 we learn that the Jews had not eaten the Passover. It seems likely therefore that Jesus and his disciples ate the Passover one day before the regular time to eat it. Perhaps this was done so that Jesus, "our passover," might be killed the same day the regular Passover lamb was killed. The foregoing seems to be the most likely explanation of a difficult matter. When he decided to have Jesus crucified, Pilate brought him out to the Jews, and said, "Behold, your King." They did not then know Pilate's decision, and could not know but that he meant to release him as their king. He evidently found some pleasure in tantalizing them before letting them know his decision. But again they demanded that Jesus be crucified. But Pilate still kept them in suspense and vexed them still more. "Shall I crucify your King?" Since they had condemned Jesus as a blasphemer, and were determined on his death, it was extremely vexing to them for the hated Pilate to place Jesus before them as their king. They hated the Roman government and longed for freedom from it, but were willing to profess loyalty to Rome in

order to accomplish their purpose. "We have no king but Caesar." Thus, without planning to do so, Pilate had succeeded in getting the Jewish officers to avow publicly their loyalty to Rome. "Then therefore he delivered him unto them to be crucified." This does not mean that Pilate gave Jesus into the hands of the Jews for them to crucify him, for the Roman soldiers did that. It means that he complied with their demands by passing the sentence of death on Jesus. Some of these who hypocritically vowed allegiance to Rome must have lived to see the utter destruction of their city and nation by this same Roman government.

Mark 15

LESSON LINKS

None of the things the soldiers did to Jesus was any part of their duty as executioners, but it all showed how cruelly Jesus was treated; but Jesus suffered all these things in silence. "He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." (Isa. 53:7.) "And they led him out to crucify him."

22-25. And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull. And they offered him wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not. And they crucify him, and part his garments among them, casting lots upon them, what each should take. And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.

22-25. "They took Jesus therefore: and he went out, bearing the cross for himself, unto the place called The place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha." (John 19:17.) And yet Mark says, "And they compel one passing by, Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to go with them, that he might bear the cross." (Verse 21.)

From Matthew 27:32 we learn that they found Simon as they came out of the city. Perhaps what Jesus had experienced had so weakened him that he could not go on carrying the cross alone. Luke 23:26 says they laid the cross on Simon, "to bear it after Jesus." That suggests the possibility that both bore the cross from that point on.

"And they offered him wine mingled with myrrh." This was a stupefying drink, given those about to be crucified, to lessen the pains of crucifixion. "But he received it not." Matthew says, "When he had tasted it, he would not drink." He would drink to the full the bitter cup of suffering allotted him. "And they crucify him," nailed him to the cross. Neither of the writers say they nailed him to the cross. The fact is, they might drive nails through the feet and hands, or they might tie the hands and feet to the cross. When some had seen the Lord after his resurrection, and reported the matter, Thomas said, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." (John 20:24, 25.) No one can imagine the suffering attending the crashing of rough, shop-made spikes through hands and feet, and even greater pains, if possible, would come during the long hours of hanging on the cross when much of the weight of the body must be held up by the hands, growing more tender and painful from inflammation. It does not seem that sensible men could be so cruel. The victim was nailed to the cross, then the cross was elevated, and let drop into the hole prepared for it. And there was no need for the cross to be as high as represented in pictures, and such was not the case. The soldier could reach the side of the Savior with his spear, and the soldiers could easily break the legs of the victims.

It appears that the garments of the victims belonged to the soldiers that did the crucifying; they divided them among themselves. Four soldiers carried out Pilate's decree. "The soldiers therefore, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also the coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top

throughout. They said therefore one to another, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be." (John 19:23,24.) These soldiers had not the least idea that they were fulfilling prophecy. (See Is. 22:18.) "And it was the third hour, and they crucified him." It was about nine in the morning.

26, 27. And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS. And with him they crucify two robbers; one on his right hand, and one on his left.

26, 27. "And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS." The superscription was placed above the head of the victim, and named the crime for which he was crucified. The Jews did not like that superscription and demanded that Pilate change it. It was humiliating to them to have passers-by read that the Romans had crucified their king. Besides, they knew that Pilate meant it for an insult to them, for they well knew that Pilate had no love for them, and that their moblike spirit before his court had exasperated him. Such a superscription would also tend to justify his deed, if his act of crucifying Jesus was called in question by the higher Roman authorities. So when the Jews demanded that he change the superscription, Pilate curtly replied, "What I have written I have written." (See John 19:19-22.) He would have his way about one thing. To add insult and humiliation to their crime of crucifying Jesus, they crucified him between two robbers, very likely those who had been in the band headed by Barabbas.

29-32. And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ha! thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself and come down from the cross. In like manner also the chief priests mocking him among themselves with the scribes said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reproached him.

29-32. It would seem that the sufferings of the victim on the cross would satisfy the most cruel hater of the victim, but not so with reference to Jesus. It seems that the two robbers crucified with Jesus escaped the taunts and jeers of the people; that

was all heaped upon Jesus. It seems that Jesus was crucified near a road, for Mark says that "they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ha! thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross." Could anything be more insulting, and could anything more clearly reveal the character of the people who so acted? Instead of being moved with pity and compassion for one who was meekly and silently enduring such suffering, they were so bereft of the common feelings of humanity that they gloated over his humiliation and suffering. And they were miserably perverting what he said about their destroying "this temple"—his body—and his raising it up again the third day. And it is possible that some of these mockers were among the number who shouted his praises as he entered Jerusalem. And the chief priests, their vengeful spirits not yet satisfied, forgetting the dignity of their position and the sanctity of their high office, came out of the city to mock the Lord in his suffering: "He saved others; himself he cannot save." Yes, he had saved others from many evils, and these chief priests and scribes knew it. He had raised Lazarus from the dead, and they knew that. He had given sight to a man born blind, and they knew that. Within the week, he had healed the blind and the lame in the temple, and they were witnesses to that. And yet they crucified him, and were now trying to insult him with their mockeries. What they did not know was that by his voluntary death he would yet save countless thousands then unborn. "He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." (Isa. 53:3.) But these stubborn chief priests and scribes would not have believed had he come down from the cross. Jesus had done enough to cause them to believe, had they not been so stubborn and sinful that they were incapable of believing in any one but themselves. Even the crucified robbers reproached him. Luke tells us that one of them rebuked the other saying, "... for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss." (Luke 23:39-43.) It must be that both reproached him at the start, but one seeing the demonstrations

mentioned in Matthew 27:45-51, completely changed his attitude.

33. And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

33. The way the Jews counted time, the sixth hour would be noon. Jesus had therefore been on the cross three hours, for he was nailed to the cross the third hour. (Verse 25.) Hence at high noon darkness settled down over the whole land and continued for the space of three hours. Matthew mentions other things which showed God's hand in the matter. "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." (Matt. 27:51.) All these things, especially the rending of the veil from top to bottom, and that without the touch of human hands, should have made a profound impression on the priests, but not so. They had gone so far in their evil course that they would even disregard any sign from heaven, as they had disregarded the great miracles Jesus had performed. Their hearts were fully set on doing evil, the while flattering themselves that they were protecting their religion.

34-37. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elijah. And one ran, and filled a sponge full of vinegar, put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let be; let us see whether Elijah cometh to take him down. And Jesus uttered a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.

34-37. It is possible that none of the Roman soldiers understood the language Jesus spoke, when he uttered the heartrending cry, which is here translated, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" At first thought it would seem that the Jews present would have understood him; and yet it is not so strange, if they did not understand him. Under the circumstances it is very likely that he had trouble in uttering words. What he had suffered in his mock trials and on the cross, together with the loss of blood, had certainly greatly weakened

all the forces of his body; and the loss of blood and the consequent intense thirst and the fever caused by the inflammation of his wounds would cause his mouth and throat to be dry. All these things would make it very difficult for anyone to speak distinctly. It must have been a Jew who said, "Behold, he calleth Elijah," for the Roman soldiers likely would not know anything about Elijah. For that reason it is reasonable to suppose that it was a Jew who gave him a drink of vinegar, and said, "Let be; let us see whether Elijah cometh to take him down." This vinegar was a sour wine which the soldiers brought along to drink while they were on guard. Jesus uttered a loud voice, and then died. Luke tells us what he said when he uttered the loud voice: "And Jesus crying with a loud voice, said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." (Luke 22:46.) The multitude who derided him at the beginning of his suffering on the cross had now seen enough to make them apprehensive of what might come. "And all the multitudes that came together to this sight, when they beheld the things that were done, returned smiting their breasts." (Luke 23:48.)

38,39 And the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom. And when the centurion, who stood by over against him, saw that he so gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.

38, 39. Soldiers were left at the place of crucifixion to see that friends of the victims did not come and rescue them from such horrible suffering and death. It might have been necessary for the centurion to be present with the guards to see to it that friends of the victims did not bribe the soldiers and rescue the victims. Be that as it may, there was a centurion present on this occasion. The darkness, the earthquake, the rending of the rocks, and the behavior of Jesus through his trials and on the cross so impressed the centurion that he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God." Matthew 27:54 has this, "Now the centurion, and they that were with him watching Jesus, when they saw the earthquake, and the things that were done, feared exceedingly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God." The demonstrations that occurred while Jesus was on the cross,

together with his behavior in his mock trials and on the cross, may have contributed greatly to the results of the preaching on the following Pentecost.

40,41 And there were also women beholding from afar among them were both Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; who, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him, and many other women that came up with him unto Jerusalem

40, 41. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was near the cross while Jesus was suffering the agonies of the crucifixion; she is not therefore named among the women that stood afar off, as they watched the proceedings. "And there were also women beholding from afar: among whom were both Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; who, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him; and many other women who came up with him unto Jerusalem." In the list of names the most prominent was mentioned first. The fact that Jesus had cast seven demons out of Mary Magdalene argues nothing against her character. She first appears with many other women in Luke 8:1-3. She and these other women must have been women of means, for they ministered to Jesus and the twelve of their substance. They contributed to the support of Jesus and the apostles, and it seems that Mary Magdalene was the leader in this matter. "In reality, all the indications of her character and position which are furnished by the scriptures point to a woman in easy circumstances, with a benevolent disposition, tender sensibilities, and commanding influence. Her name stands first among the female attendants of Jesus at almost every mention of it, and on her he conferred the peculiar honor of making her the first woman witness of his resurrection from the dead. It is a shame on the Christian world that a woman of virtue so preeminent has come to be commonly regarded as a reformed harlot; and her cognomen which served only to distinguish her from other Marys by indicating her birth place, has become, in the contracted form of Magdalene, the name of societies and institutions for the reformation of abandoned women. This is an illustration, however, of the corrupting and degrading ten-

dency of human tradition when it dares to tamper with the sacred narratives. It is Rome that has given Mary the false and low repute in which she is erroneously held"—McGarvey. All the women mentioned were devoted followers of Jesus. In the agonies of the cross Jesus did not forget his mother. Seeing her and John standing near, he said to her, "Woman, behold thy son!" By a look or nod he directed her attention to John. Then to John, "Behold, thy mother!" Mary's husband Joseph must have been dead, for it is written that John took her to his own home.

42,43. And when even was now come, because it was the Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, there came Joseph of Arimathaea, a councillor of honorable estate, who also himself was looking for the kingdom of God; and he boldly went in unto Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus.

42, 43. In his "Interwoven Gospels" William Pittenger has woven together in the following order what the four writers say about Joseph of Arimathaea and his asking Pilate for the body of Jesus: "And when even was now come, because it was the Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, there came a rich man, Joseph of Arimathaea, a councillor of honorable estate, who also himself was Jesus' disciple, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, (and) was looking for the kingdom of God; he had not consented unto their counsel and deed; and he went boldly in unto Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus." And herein we have a singular thing. He who, though he had been a disciple of Jesus, but was afraid to confess it, now, that Jesus was dead, goes boldly into the presence of Pilate, and asks for the body of Jesus. Perhaps the apostles made no move in the matter because they had no place to bury the body. Joseph did not want the body thrown into a common grave with two thieves. It was the even of Friday, the day before the Sabbath. Joseph was a councillor, that is, a member of the Sanhedrin; but he had no part in the mock trial that condemned Jesus. He was also a rich man. He was looking for the kingdom of God. As a disciple of Jesus, he had expected Jesus to set up his kingdom, though it is not likely that he had any clearer ideas as to the nature of the kingdom than did the others. But he was

"a good and righteous man." (Luke 23:50.) This man was of Arimathaea, which Luke identifies as a city of the Jews. Some have thought that Arimathaea was the ancient city of Ramah, the home of Samuel; but that is merely conjecture. Most likely he had a home in Jerusalem; he must have owned the garden in which he had prepared his own tomb.

44,45. And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling *unto* him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. And when he learned it of the centurion, he granted the corpse to Joseph.

44,45. "And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead." It is said that the victim sometimes remained alive on the cross two or three days. Now this man Joseph asks for the body of Jesus but a few hours after he was nailed to the cross. Pilate must have known that Joseph was a man of integrity and honor; otherwise he would have given him no consideration supposing it was a scheme to rescue Jesus from the cross. The centurion who had charge of the crucifixion had returned to army headquarters, leaving the soldiers to guard the victims on the cross. Pilate was cautious; he sent for the centurion to learn if Jesus was already dead, "he granted the corpse to Joseph." The thoughtful reader will notice that even the enemies of Jesus made it certain that Jesus had died on the cross, and was not rescued alive. Had it not been for the official guaranty of his death, enemies might have claimed that he was removed from the cross alive and afterwards exhibited as having risen from the dead. And so God uses even sinners to establish his truth; even official Rome contributed its part in establishing the truth of the resurrection.

46, 47. And he brought a linen cloth, and taking him down, wound him in the linen cloth, and laid him in a tomb which had been hewn out of a rock; and he rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.

46, 47. Joseph went to the expense of buying a piece of linen cloth for a shroud for the body of Jesus. Of course, he would not alone attempt to take the body from the cross and bury it. A man of his station at that time would have a body of servants;

he would superintend the operations. "And there came also Nicodemus, he who at the first came to him by night, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. So they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury. 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. There then because of the Jews' Preparation (for the tomb was nigh at hand) they laid Jesus." (John 19:39-42.) These men had been so quiet about their attitude toward Jesus that one wonders if either of them before this moment knew that the other was friendly to Jesus. It is singular that these men, these high Jewish officials, should now boldly show their friendship to Jesus, after remaining so quiet during all the proceedings against Jesus. However on one occasion, when the high court of the Jews was planning to kill Jesus, "Nicodemus saith unto them (he that came to him before, being one of them), Doth our law judge a man, except it first hear from himself and know what he doeth?" But this effort to remind them of what was just under the law was met by this contemptuous reply, "Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and see that out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." (John 7:50-52.) The Sanhedrin had turned itself into a mob determined on the death of Jesus, and both Joseph and Nicodemus knew that a Jewish mob was incapable of reasoning about anything. Nothing that they could say would have any influence. If they could not influence the court against their unrighteous procedure, they could now give the body of Jesus a decent burial. "And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid." "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." (Luke 23:55, 56.) Incidentally this shows that the burial took place on Friday evening. This should settle the day of crucifixion—the day before the Sabbath. When we consider how God uses his enemies in carrying out

his plans, we are struck with amazement. None of them knows that he is being used. When the Jews became so corrupt that Jehovah could bear with them no longer, he said, "Ho Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, the staff in whose hand is mine indignation! I will send him against a profane nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cutoff nations not a few." (Read Isa. 10:5-19.) Nebuchadnezzar would have no idea that he was doing the work of Jehovah, that Jehovah was using him as a man would use an axe. Now in the burial of Jesus the bitterest enemies of Jesus contribute their part to prove that no one could steal away the body of Jesus, so as to make it appear that he had arisen from the dead. "Now on the morrow, which is the day after the Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees were gathered together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest haply his disciples come and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: and the last error will be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a guard; go, make it as sure as you can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, the guard being with them." (Matt. 27:62-66.) A stone had been placed at the entrance to the tomb; now the governor's seal was so placed on it that it could not be moved without breaking the seal, and the soldiers were left to guard the tomb against possible theft of the body. So these bitterest enemies made it impossible for the dead body of Jesus to be taken away. Such facts as these bear repeating. If it is said by infidels that Matthew was not telling the truth about this transaction, let him remember that Matthew wrote while many of these men lived. Had he made a false statement, these enemies would have eagerly seized on that false report, and thereby discredited all that Matthew had said. Any fair-minded man knows this to be true. "Surely the wrath of man

shall praise thee." (Ps. 76:10.) God therefore overrules the wicked purposes and deeds of wicked men to make them contribute to the carrying out of his own purposes.

Mark 16

LESSON LINKS

The leaders of the Jews made it impossible for the disciples to steal the body away, and yet it disappeared. When it was announced that Jesus had arisen, these leaders realized that they had made about the worst mistake they could have made. Then to cover up their mistakes they hired the guard to tell the absurd story that the disciples stole the body away while they were asleep! The only explanation of the disappearing of the body of Jesus is that he arose from the dead.

1-4. And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, brought spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun was risen. And they were saying among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the tomb? And looking up, they see that the stone is rolled back: for it was exceeding great.

1-4. The student should read all the parallel passages-Matthew 28:1-10, 18-20; Luke 24:1-12, 45-49; Acts 1:1-8. He will find it difficult to place some of the events in their proper settings. Matthew records an incident not mentioned by the others: "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. His appearance was as lightening, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the watchers did quake, and became as dead men." This was before the full daylight. As soon as the guards recovered their strength and wit sufficiently to do so, some of them went into the city and told the chief priests what had occurred. Of these things the disciples, at that time, knew nothing; it is not likely

that they knew a guard had been placed at the tomb. "And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, brought spices, that they might come and anoint him." "Mary Magdalene" means Mary of Magdala. Magdala was a city on the west coast of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus had cast seven demons out of Mary Magdalene, for which she was bound to him with the strong ties of undying gratitude. She was a good woman, and possessed some means, for she had ministered to Jesus of her substance. (Luke 8:2, 3.) Mary the mother of James is referred to in Mark 15:40 as "Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses." Salome was the wife of Zebedee and the mother of James and John. These good women had made some preparations for this anointing on the day Jesus was crucified, but did not have time to finish their self-imposed task of love before the beginning of the Sabbath. They most likely spent the Sabbath in Bethany, from which place they started to the tomb before daylight Sunday morning. To finish their preparations for the anointing they had to go through Jerusalem to purchase additional spices. While they did not reach the tomb till after the sun was up, it was very early for them to reach the tomb after having passed through Jerusalem to purchase additional spices on their way from Bethany. It is evident that the other writers speak of the time at which they started to the tomb, and Mark speaks of the time of their arrival. Had these women known that a guard had been placed at the tomb and that the governor's seal was upon it, they would not have come to anoint the body, for they would not have dared to break the governor's seal. Neither did they know that an angel had already broken the seal, and that the guards had fled. They were only aware of the fact that it would be difficult for them to remove the stone, and were discussing the question: "Who shall roll us away the stone?" At that juncture they came near enough to see that the stone was already rolled away. Mary Magdalene remained no longer than to see that the body of Jesus was gone, and then rushed away to tell Peter and John, saying to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they

have laid him." The other women had remained at the tomb. No one can imagine how excited and bewildered these women were.

5-8. And entering into the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, arrayed in a white robe; and they were amazed. And he saith unto them, Be not amazed: ye seek Jesus, the Nazarene, who hath been crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold, the place where they laid him! But go, tell his disciples and Peter, He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. And they went out and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them: and they said nothing to any one; for they were afraid.

5-8. "And entering into the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, arrayed in a white robe; and they were amazed." This was the angel of whom Matthew spoke and concerning whom he had said, "His appearance was as lightning, and his raiment white as snow." Matthew says the angel rolled away the stone and sat upon it, but he had entered the tomb before the women arrived. Luke mentions two angels. This seeming discrepancy is explained on the grounds that one did the talking. The angel said, "Be not amazed: ye seek Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified: he is risen; he is not here; behold, the place where they laid him!" No mere human being could have made such announcement as that in words so simple and direct. In its very simplicity it bears the stamp of its divine origin. "He is risen"—this is a translation of only one Greek word. With one word the angel announced the greatest event that has occurred since the beginning of the world! "But go, tell his disciples and Peter." We are not to understand that this put Peter outside the list of disciples, but rather singles him out as one they must be certain to see. It is a form of speech by which special prominence is given to the person named. Peter needed to know that his beloved Master had not turned against him. He had bitterly denied his Lord, and had had no chance to confess to his Lord. After the shame and remorse he had suffered since he denied his Lord, Peter needed to know that the Lord had not forsaken him nor cast him off, but had him specially in mind. And what relief and comfort that

knowledge was to Peter! "He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you." On the way to the garden of Gethsemane the night of his betrayal, he had said to his disciples, "Howbeit, after I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee." Jesus had appointed a certain mountain in Galilee for this meeting with them. As this was an appointed meeting, it must have been the time when he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, for so many people would not come together in an accidental meeting. (1 Cor. 15:6.) He must have appointed that meeting for a point in Galilee, for the most of his disciples were in that region.

John 20

LESSON LINKS

It would take a book of immense size to contain a full account of all that was said and done in connection with the trials, crucifixion, and resurrection of our Lord. The accounts are therefore of necessity fragmentary. This makes it difficult in some instances to place details in their proper order. John gives this account of some of the events on the day of Jesus' resurrection. John 19:38-42 gives an account of the burial. From verse 42 it seems that this burial was meant to be only temporary. Of the women who came early with spices the day after the Sabbath, John mentions only Mary Magdalene.

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. She runneth therefore, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid him.

1, 2. Mary Magdalene was evidently the most active of the group. These women had not learned that Pilate had given the Jewish authorities permission to set a governor's seal on the

tomb, and place a guard at the tomb. But that seal and that guard were of no avail, for the women found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance to the tomb and that the body was gone. Mary Magdalene went in haste to report the matter to Peter and John; and in that report she included the other women that went early to the tomb, for she said, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid him." It seems that she thought some of the friends had removed the body to its permanent resting place, but she knew not where that was to be. The women, of course, were anxious to place on the body of Jesus the spices and ointment which they had prepared.

3-10. Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb. And they ran both together: 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; and he beholdeth the linen cloths lying, and the napkin, that was upon his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself. Then entered in therefore the other disciple also, who came first to the tomb, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. So the disciples went away again unto their own home.

3-10. Peter and John lost no time; they ran to the tomb, but John outran Peter. Commentators think that age made the difference in their speed. Some are naturally faster than others. When John reached the tomb, he looked in, and saw the linen cloths lying, but did not enter. It is useless to speculate on the reasons for his not entering the tomb. We know from other recorded instances that Peter was usually bold and daring and prompt to act. Hence, so soon as he arrived, he entered the tomb. Though John speaks of himself outrunning Peter, he grants Peter the honor of being the first to enter the tomb. Conditions inside the tomb did not indicate that thieves had hastily snatched the body away; the cloths were not scattered about in disorder. Evidently Peter had doubted what Mary Magdalene had said as to the absence of the body of Jesus. At least John had not believed her story, for he says, "Then

entered in therefore the other disciple also, who came first to the tomb, and he saw and believed." Some think this means that John believed in Christ, believed he had been raised from the dead; but the next two verses show the contrary. He now believed, and of course so did Peter, that Mary Magdalene had told a correct story. It does not seem that any of the disciples expected Jesus to rise the third day, yet he had repeatedly told them he would rise again the third day. While they were in the regions of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus began to tell them plainly "that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up." (Matt. 16:21.) Even during his last journey to Jerusalem, "he took the twelve disciples apart, and on the way he said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him unto the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify; and the third day he shall be raised up." Even the chief priests knew that he had so taught, for they said to Pilate, "Sir, we remember that that deceiver said while he was yet alive, After three days I rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest haply his disciples come and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: and the last error will be worse than the first." But it seems that the disciples had their minds so fully set on other things, that they failed to grasp what Jesus had said. These disciples did not know the prophecies concerning his resurrection. This does not mean that they did not know the scriptures at all but that they did not know that any passages foretold the resurrection of the Christ. On that same day Jesus said to the two disciples as they journeyed to Emmaus, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:25, 26.) Peter and John, having satisfied themselves that the body of Jesus had been taken away, returned to their places of abode. Sometime during that day Jesus appeared to Peter.

11-13. But Mary was standing without at the tomb weeping; so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; and she beholdeth two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

11-13. Mary Magdalene had run to tell Peter and John that the body of Jesus had been taken away, but it is not likely that she ran with them back to the tomb. However she did return. "But Mary was standing without the tomb weeping." Mary was full of gratitude to Jesus for what he had done for her—"from whom he had cast out seven demons." (Mark 16:19.) This does not mean, as some seem to think, that she was a bad woman before the demons were cast out. We know little about demons, and how they came to enter into certain people: but we know that he cast a demon out of one who is referred to as a child, a little daughter. (Mark 7:25-30.) This could not have been on account of any immorality on the part of this little girl. Nothing is said against the character of Mary Magdalene, but all that is said of her show her to have been a woman of high ideals and devotion to the Lord. She would have another look into the tomb; "so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb." It seems that she this time wanted merely to see the place where the body of Jesus had lain; but she saw that for which she had not looked, namely, "two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain." If she recognized these as heavenly visitors, it is singular that she remained so calm and unperturbed. They said to her, "Woman, why weepest thou?" as much as to say, "There is no need now to weep; he is risen from the dead; he is now alive for evermore." But she had not yet grasped the fact that Jesus had arisen from the dead; so she said, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."

14-17. When she had thus said, she turned herself back, and beholdeth Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardner, saith unto him, Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take

him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She 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.

14-17. When Mary finished speaking to the angels, "she turned herself back," she turned to return to her place of abode. Then she saw Jesus, but did not recognize him. That fact has been the basis of a lot of guessing; but a common sense explanation seems to be this: She was weeping in great grief, and was not interested in seeing anyone, and did no more than to notice that some one was standing near. Besides, her tears blurred her vision; and verse 16 shows that she was not looking at the man. It is not at all surprising that she did not take enough notice to see who he really was—just supposed him to be the gardener. She still could not realize that Jesus had been raised from the dead, but thought the gardener might have had something to do with removing the body from the tomb. She had not been facing the supposed gardener while she was talking. But now in a voice she readily recognized, Jesus spoke the one word, "Mary." Then she turned and said, "Rabboni." Then Jesus said a thing that has given rise to much talk by preachers and commentators: "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to the Father." The marginal reading has "Take not hold on me." It seems that she was about to take hold of his feet and worship him, as was done within the hour. (Matt. 28:9.) Jesus was not going to ascend immediately; there would be yet time for her to express her devotions; there was at that moment something more urgent—she must go and tell the other disciples. Notice how in that announcement he expresses his unity with the disciples in his relation to 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." Here he makes himself one with the disciples.

Luke 24

LESSON LINKS

Evidently the two disciples mentioned in our lesson had not learned of the resurrection of Jesus. These two disciples "were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was threescore furlongs from Jerusalem." While they talked along the way about the things that had happened, "Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, What communications are these that ye have one with another, as ye walk? And they stood still, looking sad." They asked, "Dost thou alone sojourn in Jerusalem and not know the things which are come to pass there in these days?" They then told him what had happened to Jesus the Nazarene "who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. . . . But we hoped that it was he who should redeem Israel." And then they told him about the empty tomb and the vision of angels.

25-28. And he said unto them, O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they were going: and he made as though he would go further.

25-28. "And he said unto them, O foolish men." The Greek word here translated "foolish" is not a severe term of reproach. It conveys the idea of inconsiderate, thoughtless. "And slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!" In the full light of the New Testament revelation, it seems strange to us now that the disciples were so blinded; but they had an entirely different program marked out and that blinded them. "Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things?" Had not the prophets plainly foretold his sufferings? But they had it figured that the Christ would make his enemies suffer, and not that he should suffer at their hands. How could the mighty conqueror suffer crucifixion at the hands of his enemies? They

had not believed what the prophets said about his sufferings. "And to enter into his glory?" They thought he would enter his glorious reign without suffering. It is easy for people to go astray when they begin to map out a program for the fulfillment of prophecies. Their blunder should admonish us to be careful. "And beginning from Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." From Moses he would quote Deut. 18:15, 18. References to Christ by the other prophets are too numerous to refer to here. But I never read this verse without wishing that I had that discourse of Christ in full. "And when they drew nigh unto the village, whither they were going." They were on their way to Emmaus. "And he made as though he would go further." And he would have gone on had they not shown an interest in being with him longer.

29-32. And they constrained him, saying, Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is now far spent. And he went in to abide with them. And it came to pass, when he had sat down with them to meat, he took the bread and blessed; and breaking it he gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Was not our heart burning within us, while he spake to us in the way, while he opened to us the scriptures?

29-32. "And they constrained him, saying, Abide with us; for it is toward the evening, and the day is now far spent." They gave him a warm and urgent invitation to abide with them, such an invitation as anyone likes to receive. "And he went in to abide with them." "And it came to pass, when he had sat down with them to meat, he took the bread and blessed." That is, as the old-timers were wont to say, he said the blessing; he gave thanks for the bread. "And breaking it he gave to them." "And their eyes were opened, and they knew him." That they had not recognized him before seems strange to us. It is not necessary to conclude that anything miraculous opened their eyes. In common language it is frequently said that something opened our eyes, that is, causes us to see the right. "And he vanished out of their sight." "And they said one to another, Was not our heart burning within us, while he spake to us on the way, while

he opened to us the scriptures?" Who but Jesus could expound the scriptures with such power as to warm our hearts as he did?

33-35. And they rose up that very hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they rehearsed the things that had happened in the way, and how he was known of them in the breaking of the bread.

33-35. By invitation of the two disciples, Jesus entered their lodging place, perhaps their home; and at the table, while they were eating, they first discovered who he was. This discovery was so startling and important to them, that they rose immediately, and departed for Jerusalem to tell the glad news; but they did not know what had already taken place in Jerusalem that day. They found the eleven and them that were with them. "When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews." (John 20:19.) The body of apostles had been called the twelve; when Judas fell away, it was called the eleven, even though all of them were not present on this occasion. "The Lord is risen, and hath appeared to Simon." This eager announcement was made before the disciples from Emmaus could say a word. Jesus had been seen alive by three of those already present. "And they rehearsed the things that had happened in the way, and how he was known of them in the breaking of the bread." In this way evidence was piling up, and dead hopes were coming to life again. We cannot realize how wonderful all this was to these down-hearted and discouraged disciples.

36, 37. And as they spake these things, he himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they beheld a spirit.

36, 37. It is not likely that they had much light in that room, for they were gathered there for fear of the Jews. (John 29:19, 20.) Their lights were not very bright at best. And of course there was great rejoicing and excitement as they talked about

the happenings of the day. These things would account for their not seeing Jesus till he said, "Peace be unto you." They were not in a frame of mind to calmly consider what they saw and heard, and therefore "were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they beheld a spirit." This shows that they did not hold to the materialistic ideas of the Sadducees—they believed that a spirit could exist apart from the body. So far as the record shows none of the early Christians held to the materialistic theory of the Sadducees. We know that the inspired apostle Paul was not a Sadducee on the nature of man. (Acts 23:6-9.)

38-43. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and wherefore do questionings arise in your heart? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold me having. And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here anything to eat? And they gave him a piece of broiled fish. And he took it, and ate before them.

38-43. Jesus sought first to quiet these disturbed disciples; they could not weigh evidence or have any rational thoughts so long as they were so terrified. And so he calmly asked them, "Why are ye troubled? and wherefore do questionings arise in your heart?" There before them stood the body they had seen all the days of their journeys with him, the same body that had been nailed to the cross. Had it been a different body, a glorified body, a different body assuming the likeness of his natural body, there would have been deception; and one recoils from the thought that Jesus practiced deception on these bewildered men. To make the matter sure to them, Jesus said, "Handle me, and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold me having." And so Jesus appeared to them in his natural body, and invited the disciples to satisfy themselves by closest inspection. He showed them his hands and feet. There could have been no mistake—the body that was crucified and buried now stood alive before them! And yet for the moment "they still disbelieved for joy." To them it was too good to be true—the joy of seeing him was mixed with doubt as to

whether it really was he. To further assure them and to bring them down to realities, he asked, "Have ye here anything to eat?" While they were in such a highly emotional state, that request would sound strange to them; who would think of eating on such an occasion? But the question served to bring them back to practical things; besides, who will say that Jesus did not want something to eat? At least, when they gave him a piece of broiled fish, he did eat. Here was a practical demonstration of his reality—a demonstration that the same Jesus who was crucified was now alive before them. When people get so carried away by excitement, they need to be called back to some commonplace thing till their reason returns.

44-48. And he said unto them, These are my words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their mind, that they might understand the scriptures; and he said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. Ye are witnesses of these things.

44-48. It is possible, even likely, that we have only a condensed report of what Jesus said on this occasion. Among other things which Jesus had formerly said to the disciples about the prophecies concerning him is the following: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the things that are written through the prophets shall be accomplished unto the Son of man. For he shall be delivered up to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and shamefully treated, and spit upon: and they shall scourge and kill him: and the third day he shall rise again." (Luke 18:31-33.) The Jews did not always distinguish between the law, the psalms, and the prophets, for they sometimes included all the Old Testament in the term *law*; but Jesus would here have them to understand that there were prophecies concerning him, not only in the prophets but also in the first five books of the Bible and also in the psalms. It is not necessary for us to conclude that Jesus used some miraculous powers in opening their mind. Paul was sent to the Gentiles to open their eyes.

(Acts 26:16-18.) Such things are done by teaching, and that is what such expressions have meant all down the ages till now. If a sinner has to wait for God to open his eyes in some miraculous way, then he is not to be blamed if he never understands what to do. Jesus placed the blame where it belongs when he said, "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."

"And he said unto them, Thus it is written." Jesus was here affirming that, not only had the things he suffered and his resurrection had been foretold by the prophets, but that the prophets had also foretold that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." In view of much that is said these days about the object and scope of the Old Testament prophecies, this is an illuminating statement. Repentance and remission of sins had been preached by John the Baptist, but he did not preach repentance and remission of sins in the name of Christ—that was to begin at Jerusalem; and it had been so written in the prophets. Jesus must have had such passages as the following in mind: "And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it. And many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem." (Isa. 2:2, 3.) This same thing is expressed in Mic. 4:1, 2. It is very important that we notice that this preaching repentance and pardon in the name of Christ was to begin in the city of Jerusalem. In a kingdom, in an absolute monarchy, no one can issue laws and grant pardon except the king, and he cannot do so till he is actually inducted into his office—till he is crowned king and assumes the throne. It was necessary therefore that

Jesus be crowned and occupy his throne before repentance and remission of sins were preached in his name. One needs only to read the second chapter of Acts to see that repentance and remission of sins were preached that day in the name of Christ; he was then on his throne and offering pardon to criminals. Jesus had chosen his apostles as his witnesses, not only of his works, death, and resurrection, but "of these things," that is, of his teaching. And he authorized them to begin their witnessing in Jerusalem, where their testimony could have been disproved, if such were possible. The enemies tried to keep them from continuing to give their testimony, but they never tried to disprove what they said; and their failure to try to do so is overwhelming proof that they knew they could not disprove what these witnesses testified. They tried to intimidate, but never to disprove.

John 20

LESSON LINKS

There is some difficulty in determining the order of events of the day of the resurrection but we are told that on that day Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9), to Simon, and to two disciples on the way to Emmaus.

19-21. When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had said this, he showed unto them his hands and his side. The disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord. Jesus therefore said to them again, Peace be unto you: as the Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

19-21. The apostles had seen what befell their Master, and they feared for their own lives. They were assembled in a room with the doors shut for fear of the Jews. From Luke we learn the two disciples who had seen Jesus on their journey to Emmaus had returned and were telling the group assembled

in that room how Jesus "was made known to them in the breaking of bread," when Jesus suddenly stood in their midst, and said, "Peace be unto you." They were too terrified to speak. "But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they beheld a spirit." (Luke 24:37.) To convince them that it was he, and thus to allay their fears, he said, "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold me having." (Luke 24:39.) From this incident we learn that the apostles did not hold with the materialistic school of the Sadducees—they believed in the existence of spirits, which the Sadducees did not believe. Jesus also taught that a spirit could exist apart from the flesh and bones. Jesus and his disciples were not materialists. When Jesus showed them the wounds in his hands and feet, and in his side, their fear gave way to faith and gladness. Their Lord, whom they loved, was with them again. Having quieted their fears, Jesus again said to them, "Peace be unto you." This and similar expressions are often found in the Bible. It was a sort of combined salutation and prayer—a prayer for God's peace to be with them. Paul speaks of the peace of God, which passeth all understanding." (Phil. 4:7.) "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you." He would send them out to preach the gospel to all nations.

22, 23. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit: whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

22, 23. The last clause of verse twenty-one and verses twenty-two and twenty-three is John's record of the Great Commission. During the forty days between his resurrection and ascension, Jesus often appeared to his disciples, "speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God." We are too prone to think that Jesus, in a few words, announced on one occasion the Great Commission, and then said no more about it. But in speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God he was saying the very things contained in the Great Commission in a condensed form. John's record of the Great Commission is the

substance of a speech made on the night after he rose from the dead. Matthew records briefly what he said on a mountain in Galilee. What Mark and Luke record seems to have been spoken in Jerusalem on different occasions. A little reflection will convince any one that the speeches he made during the forty days must have been an elaboration of the things contained in the Great Commission.

When Jesus breathed on the apostles, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit," it does not necessarily follow that they immediately received the Holy Spirit; for in Luke's record of the commission, Jesus told them to tarry in Jerusalem till they were endued with power from on high. And in Acts 1:4, 5, Luke records Jesus as saying they would be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence. And we learn from Acts 2:1-4 that the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost. Hence, they did not receive the Holy Spirit the moment Jesus breathed upon them.

When Jesus promised Peter the keys of the kingdom, he added, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matt. 16:19.) But in John's record of the Great Commission the same authority is conferred upon all of them. "Whosoever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained." They forgave sins by announcing the terms upon which sins would be forgiven, and leading people to comply with those terms. Whosoever would not comply with these terms, their sins were retained. Paul, though called to be an apostle out of season, had the same powers the others had. (2 Cor. 11:5.) But they could do this only as guided by the Holy Spirit.

24, 25. But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.

24, 25. Thomas, one of the twelve, was not present when Jesus first appeared to the assembled group. When they met

up with Thomas, they told him that they had seen the Lord, and that he was alive, but he did not believe them. There is no indication that he accused them of falsehood. He thought they had been too ready to believe and were therefore deceived; but he would not be deceived—he would have to have evidence that could not be mistaken. He would not, so he thought, accept the evidence of his eyes. He must not only see the wounds in the hands and side of Jesus, but he would have to put his fingers in the nail prints in the hands and thrust his hand into the wound in his side; otherwise, he would not believe. He is called "doubting Thomas"; but he did not doubt, he positively disbelieved. But even so, he was about like the others; for when Jesus appeared to them, they thought they saw a spirit. He had to show them his wounds, and ask them to handle him and see that it was he, and not a spirit. (Luke 24:36-43.) It seems unfair to Thomas to make him out worse than the others.

26-29. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said. Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and see my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and put it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. 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.

26-29. In the language of the Jews, after eight days meant on the eighth day. When the people begged King Rehoboam to make their burdens lighter, he said to them, "Come again unto me after three days." (2 Chron. 10:5.) But verse twelve tells us that they came to him the third day, "as the king bade, saying, Come to me again the third day." Hence, after eight days was the eighth day, or the first day of the next week. At this appearing Thomas was present. Jesus invited Thomas to make the test that he had said he would have to make before he would believe, and added, "Be not faithless, but believing." But Thomas was not so hard to convince as he thought he would be, for he immediately said, "My Lord and my God." And so it is not true that faith is lost in sight, as we so often hear; for Jesus said, "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast

believed." But many must believe on the testimony of those who did see. Hence, Jesus adds, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

30, 31. Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name.

30, 31. What is a miracle? You will find it difficult to tell in exact terms what a miracle is; yet if we had seen the great works of Jesus performed, we would readily recognize them as miracles. Some miracles are called signs, signs of God's presence with the person through whom, or in connection with whom, they were wrought; but some miracles were not signs. The creation of all things was a series of great miracles, but they were not signs of God's presence with anyone. The final end of all things worldly will be the result of great miracles, but none of them will be signs. To say that miracles have ceased is to forget the resurrection and the destruction of the world. Signs ceased when their need ceased; their purpose was to confirm the word—that was their sole purpose. (Mark 16:19, 20; John 3:2; Heb. 2:3, 4.) Jesus did many signs which John did not record. None of the writers told about all the signs which Jesus did. In recording the few they had in view the same thing that moved John to write; namely, "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name." John plainly states the purpose of his writing, namely, that people might have life—eternal life—in the name of Christ; "for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved." (Acts 4:12.) But people must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, in order to have life in his name; "for except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." (John 8:24.) But no one can believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, if he has never heard of him. (Rom. 10:14.) John therefore wrote, so that people might have enough knowledge of Christ and his works to enable them to believe in him. Not so many years ago,

faith that came from reading the testimony given in the Bible was called "historic faith" by many people. They said such faith was of no value toward saving the soul; but that notion directly contradicts the testimony given by John. Aside from what is written, it is impossible to believe.

John 21

LESSON LINKS

It is not likely that every appearance of Jesus after he arose from the dead has been recorded, for his appearances covered a period of forty days. (Acts 1:1-3.) "Now when he was risen early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene." (Mark 16:9.) He then appeared to other women. (Matt. 28:5-9.) Then he appeared to Simon Peter. (Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5.) Toward the close of the day he appeared to the two disciples who went out from Jerusalem to Emmaus. (Luke 24:13-31.) He then appeared to ten apostles in Jerusalem, Thomas being absent. (John 20:19-24.) All these appearances were on the day of his resurrection. Eight days later he appeared to the apostles, Thomas being present. (John 20:26-29.) It seems that the next recorded appearance is the one mentioned in our present lesson. Before Jesus was crucified, he said to his disciples, "After I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee." (Matt. 26:32.) After he was raised up both he and an angel reminded them of this appointment. (Matt. 28:7-10.) Of course there was a time and place appointed for this meeting, else no one would have known when or where to go. It seems certain that the disciples remained in Jerusalem, or Bethany, for at least a week before they went down to Galilee. While they were waiting for the appointed meeting, "Simon saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We will also come with thee." If speakers and writers had read the Bible

enough to know that Peter had seen the Lord at least three times, they never would have said that, when Jesus was crucified, Peter gave up hope and went back to fishing. It is likely that they needed to replenish their funds. They toiled all night, and took nothing. "But when day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach: yet the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. When they cast the net on the other side of the boat, as directed by the man on the shore, "they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes." John immediately said to Peter, "It is the Lord." They lost no time reaching the shore; there they found that Jesus had already prepared something to eat. The statement in the fourteenth verse, that this was the third time Jesus had appeared to the disciples after he arose from the dead, does not contradict the facts already stated concerning his appearances. This was the third time he had appeared to a group of his disciples; the other two times mentioned are in John 20:19-29.

15-17. And when they had broken their fast, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again a second time, Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Tend my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

15-17. "So when they had broken their fast," or, as we would say, when they had eaten breakfast, "Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these?" Three times Peter had denied his Lord, and three times now the Lord calls on him for an avowal of his love. It is not clear as to what is meant by "these." Some are confident that Jesus meant, Do you love me more than these things, the fish and the fishing equipment? Do you love me more than you love your business? Many professed Christians do love their business more than they love the Lord. Others are equally confident that Jesus meant, Do you love me more than do these other disciples? That seems to be the more natural view; for Peter

had affirmed that, even if all the others stumbled, he would not. He thought he was more devoted to the Lord than the others: and yet he had denied his Lord three times. His experience had taught him that he was not so strong as he thought he was, and the Lord's questions hurt; yet he knew, in view of his denials, the questions were not unjust. His experience had also taught him a new respect for the Lord's foreknowledge—taught him not to dispute what the Lord said would come to pass. So he said, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." But here is a curious fact: Peter answered the Lord, and yet did not exactly answer him; for Jesus used one word for love and Peter used another. Unfortunately we have only the one word for love, and that word cannot express the distinction these two words express. The Greek verb, *agapao*, which Jesus used, is expressive of reverence and respect, or of a sense of duty or obligation. It can be exercised at will; it is subject to command, and that command can be obeyed. It is found in such passages as Matt. 5:43; 19:19; John 3:16, and many other passages. It sometimes expresses such a desire to do others good as to lead one to action. One loves God when he willingly obeys his commands (John 14:15, 21); and he loves his neighbor, and even his enemy, when he wishes them well, treats them fairly, and helps them in their needs. But the word Peter used, *phileo*, is more personal, and grows out of kinship or association. It is therefore warmer and more intimate. We miss entirely the point of difference between the two words when we argue that the word Jesus used is stronger than the word Peter used. The interesting point in this discussion is the difference in the significance of the two words, and not their relative strength. The love Jesus inquired about in the first two questions is the love Peter had been taught to exercise toward God, toward his neighbor, and even toward his enemy. That word involved no personal feeling or affection growing out of pleasant association. No wonder the first questions probed Peter to the quick; he felt that Jesus was holding him too much at arm's length, when he knew that Jesus knew how warm was his devotion to Jesus; and in each answer Peter used the word that expressed

that warm devotion. Then Jesus adopted the same word Peter had used; as much as to say, "Now, Simon, do you really have that warm personal devotion to me that you express? Think of the past; remember what you said when I was being mocked and abused before the high priest." The continued questioning grieved Peter; he did not want his Lord to doubt his affections; he was deeply hurt. Then he answered, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Peter did not think Jesus knew all things when Jesus said to him, "Verily I say unto thee, that thou to-day even this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice." (Mark 14:3.) But events proved to Peter that the Lord did know. When Simon answered the first time, Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." At his second answer Jesus said, "Tend my sheep"—be a shepherd to my sheep. At his third answer Jesus said, "Feed my sheep." Of course what Peter was commanded to do was required of all the apostles. They were made general shepherds over all Christians through all time. As an apostle Paul felt his responsibility. (2 Cor. 11:28.) All Christians—all churches—are today as much under the apostles, and are as dependent on them for spiritual food and guidance, as were the churches in the days of their personal ministry. We must look to them.

18, 19. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. Now this he spake, signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

18, 19. In questioning Peter, Jesus had showed trust in Peter by telling him to feed his lambs, to tend his sheep. Peter would not, in the face of danger, deny the Lord any more. When the time came, as it would come, he would die rather than forsake or deny his Lord; he would yet make good where he had formerly so ignominiously failed. While he was young, he could gird himself, and go where he pleased. Jesus taught him that it would be different when he grew old; then another would bind him, and lead him where he did not want to go.

"Now this he spake, signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God." Tradition has it that Peter was crucified with his head downward, and that he stated that he was not worthy to be crucified in the usual way, as was his Lord; but tradition is not very reliable. Be that as it may, Peter had the assurance from the Lord's own words that he would live to be an old man; for this crucifixion was to be his manner of death when he was old. He therefore could not teach, without denying his Lord's words, that Jesus might come again at any time. Peter knew, and all who heard the Lord knew, that the Lord would not come so long as Peter lived, and that Peter would live to be an old man. "And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me." There must have been a deeper meaning in these words than a mere invitation for Peter to follow him to one side away from the other disciples.

20-23. Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; who also leaned back on his breast at the supper, and said, Lord, who is he that betrayeth thee? Peter therefore seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. This saying therefore went forth among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, that he should not die, but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?

20-23. It is thought by some commentators that John leaves out some things that were done and said. Not every detail could be told. Perhaps Peter, having followed Jesus apart from the other disciples, was already in conversation with Jesus when John was seen approaching. The most likely subject for this conversation, in view of what Jesus had just told Peter, was the manner of Peter's coming martyrdom. "What shall this man do?" According to the marginal reading in the American Standard Version, the Greek means literally, "and this man what?" Peter and John were often together; and Peter, being older, had a tender, protective feeling for John. Since he himself was to suffer martyrdom, what was to be the fate of John? That, at least, would be a natural question for Peter to ask. It does not seem reasonable, as some think, that Peter resented John's coming to them, and asked Jesus what

about it. The reply of Jesus has been a matter for much speculation. Various theories have been advanced, but no real light given. Some have thought, as did some of the disciples then, that Jesus meant that John would never die; others, that he would not die before Jesus came in judgment on Jerusalem and the Jews; others, that Jesus would come, and take him away by a "natural death"; others, that John would remain where he was till Jesus and Peter returned from their conversation. But these seem rather fanciful. Peter's question about John seemed to be that he wanted to know about the manner of death John would suffer, for Jesus had just told Peter about his manner of death. The reply Jesus made seems to have been meant as a gentle rebuke to Peter, as much as to say, "Why inquire into matters that do not concern you? If John should never die, If I should keep him alive till I come again, what of it?" Here is what should concern you: "Follow thou me." And that meant more than going about with Jesus on that day; Peter was to follow his teaching, his manner of living, and even in the manner of death he should die. It seems that John did not know, at the time he wrote this record, what Christ meant by what he said to Peter, but he did now that the others had wrongly interpreted what Jesus said; he knew there was no promise in the words of Jesus that he would never die.

24. This is the disciple that beareth witness of these things and wrote these things: and we know that his witness is true.

24. Some have thought that John may not have written verse 24, that it is an appendix added by others who knew John's testimony to be true; but that is a matter that need not disturb us. John knew that his testimony was true; for others to know it to be true did not make it any more true. From verse 25 we learn that John had recorded a small portion of the things Jesus said and did.

Matthew 28

Some Reflections

Had not Jesus been raised from the dead, the whole structure of Christianity would have had no foundation; it would have been false. It would have been the greatest fraud ever perpetrated on the human race. Yet the religion of Christ has reformed all sorts of characters, and made useful men and women of them. Now a baseless lie could not make good people out of bad ones. Only the religion of Christ can redeem men and women from sinful lives; therefore only the religion of Christ is of heavenly origin.

The women found the tomb empty. They had expected to find in it the body of Jesus. It was gone. Pilate and the Jews had made it impossible for his body to be stolen away. The guards knew it had not been stolen. Jesus arose from the dead; there is no other sensible explanation.

The prophecies relating to Christ were so varied that no impostor could have made any show of fulfilling them. The questions asked John the Baptist show that the leaders in Jerusalem thought the prophet foretold by Moses and the Christ would be two persons. (John 1:19-28.) The Jews could not figure out how the Messiah could establish an everlasting kingdom, and yet suffer death at the hands of his enemies. Yet all these seemingly irreconcilable prophecies, and many others, blended perfectly in the person and mission of Jesus. He was, therefore, what he claimed to be.

LESSON LINKS

Some of the soldiers who were guarding the body of Jesus, so soon as they sufficiently recovered from their fright, went into the city, "and told unto the chief priests, all the things that were come to pass. And when they had assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave much money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and rid you of care. So they took

the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying was spread abroad among the Jews, and continueth until this day." (Matt. 28:11-15.) Here were the members of the Sanhedrin paying the soldiers to tell a lie that was too flimsy for a sensible person to believe. If someone thinks that Matthew might have invented this story, he should remember that Matthew wrote while many of the persons concerned were still living. If Matthew had fabricated that story, the enemies of Christ would have gloried in disproving it; yet none of them did so. In a very few words Luke sums up the activities of Jesus between the resurrection and his ascension: "The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which he was received up, after that he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit unto the apostles whom he had chosen: to whom he also showed himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God: and being assembled together with them, he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, said he, ye heard from me: for John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence." (Acts 1:1-5.) We are too prone to think that Jesus at one of the meetings during the forty days announced the Great Commission in the few words recorded, and said no more about it; but that is not reasonable, for he was preparing them for the greatest work ever committed to man. Besides, the record says that he was, at these various meetings, speaking to them the things concerning the kingdom of God. The writers give a condensed report of what was said, and each one records what was said on a different occasion. Matthew records what he said on the mountain in Galilee; Mark and Luke report what he said on different occasions in Jerusalem. To get the commission in full we must study all records.

16,17. But the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted.

16, 17. The night in which Jesus was betrayed he said, "But after I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee." (Matt. 26:32.) There had to be appointed a definite time and place for this meeting, else no one would have known where to go nor when to be there. So far as the record shows this is the only meeting Jesus appointed during the forty days between his resurrection and ascension, though he may have appointed others. If this is the only appointed meeting, then it is certain that it is the meeting in which Jesus was seen by above five hundred brethren at one time. (1 Cor. 15:6.) But Jesus had appeared to different ones in Jerusalem before he went to Galilee for this meeting. They would remain in Jerusalem till the days of unleavened bread were ended. They were evidently yet in Jerusalem when Thomas first saw him a week after he arose from the dead. It seems that Peter and some of the disciples went down into Galilee some days before the appointed meeting. Not wanting to be idle, and perhaps needing some funds, Peter proposed to go fishing. Others went with him. It is singular that it has often been said when Jesus was crucified, Peter gave up hope and went fishing. Peter had seen the risen Lord twice before he went fishing, as the record shows. Jesus appeared to them on this fishing trip; and John immediately adds, "This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to his disciples, after he was risen from the dead." (See John 21:1-14.) And yet some, when he appeared to them at the appointed meeting, doubted. It could not have been that any of those who had been seeing the Lord on these different occasions still doubted. But there was a great crowd at that meeting who had not seen him since his resurrection. We can well believe that their doubts were soon dispelled.

18. And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth.

18. Jesus was about to issue an order that was to be world-wide and age-lasting. At least world-wide and age-lasting authority would be necessary to enable one to give such an order. "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on

earth." He therefore had all the authority necessary for giving any sort of an order. None could question what he said or did. This authority was recognized by the early disciples, and reaffirmed by the writers of the New Testament. "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified." (Acts 2:36.) "Moses indeed said, A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto me: to him shall ye hearken in all things whatsoever he shall speak unto you. And it shall be, that every soul that shall not hearken to that prophet, shall utterly be destroyed from among the people." (Acts 3:22, 23.) When God raised Jesus up from the dead, he "made him to sit at his right hand in heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church." (Eph. 1:19-23.) Only the Father himself was not under the authority of Christ. (1 Cor. 15:25-27.) Such he is now, and as such we adore him.

19, 20. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

19, 20. The commission that we are now studying is, by common consent, called the Great Commission, in contrast with the more limited commission given the apostles during the personal ministry of Jesus. This commission is reported in varying words by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. This variation is due to the fact that no two of them give a condensed report of the same speech. The careful student will notice that each report emphasizes a different phase of the commission. To get all these matters before us, and to get the commission in full, we will have to consider each report.

Matthew's Report.—Matthew's report is in the printed text, which see. Notice the items in this report: Go—make disciples

of (teach) all nations—baptizing—into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit—teaching them—I am with you. The teaching is first; the taught are then to be baptized. No others are to be baptized. We have been so in the habit of thinking of Matthew's record as a mere formula to be used in baptizing, that we have overlooked the force of the expression, "baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." In being baptized the person passes into the blessed name, and into communion with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in which relationship all spiritual blessings are found. Hence, baptism brings us into salvation with all its attendant blessings. And Jesus promised to be with them, to sustain and help them. And that promise was to hold good to the end of the world.

Mark's Report.—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned." Note the items: Go—preach—believeth—baptized—saved. In preaching the gospel they would teach the people what to do to be saved. Preaching comes first as it does in Matthew. Believe comes next—faith comes by hearing the gospel. The believers were to be baptized. Salvation comes after baptism.

Luke's Record.—"And he said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. Ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high." Note the items: Preach—repentance—remission of sins—in his name—beginning at Jerusalem—when the Holy Spirit comes. According to all three of these records the whole world is the field of operations. These things were to be done in the name of Christ at Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit came.

Johns Record.—"As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit: whose soever sins ye

forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." They would forgive sins by inducing the people to do the things necessary to the forgiveness of sins; the sins of others would be retained. The authority to bind and loose, as in Matthew 16:19, is here given to all the apostles. They did not have the power till the Holy Spirit came upon them, and then only as the Holy Spirit spoke through them.

The Commission in Full—To render a just verdict a jury must put together the testimony of all the witnesses, so as to get a complete chain of evidence. To get the commission in full, we must put together the items given by the witnesses we have examined; and we must arrange these items in such a way as not to change the order in which either writer places them. We cannot put baptism first, for neither of the writers does that. We cannot put salvation before baptism, for that would change Mark's order. This therefore would be the correct arrangement: Preach, or teach—belief (faith)—repentance—baptism—salvation, or remission of sins. If the apostles followed this order, we know it is correct. Compare the events when on Pentecost the first sermon was preached under this commission. Peter preached—faith was demanded and exercised—then, repent—be baptized—remission of sins.

Some Reflections

Some would have us believe that Christ now has all authority, but is not exercising it; they would have us believe that his powers now lie dormant. Those who so believe do not honor and adore him as they should. But no such idea is hinted at in the Bible. The word "therefore" in Matthew shows that his command to the apostles was based on his having all authority.

Like any wise ruler, Jesus the Christ exercises only so much power at any given time as is necessary to the carrying out of his plans. He has been doing this ever since he was crowned King of kings and Lord of lords. These things began to be done in his name at Jerusalem on the first Pentecost after his resurrection from the dead. This shows that he then began to exer-

cise his authority as king.

The commission is not the constitution of the kingdom of Christ; neither is the New Testament. Christ is the absolute monarch, and an absolute monarchy has no constitution. The New Testament in its entirety is the decree, the edict, of Christ, the absolute monarch. The kingdom of Christ is not a limited monarchy.

Luke 24

49-53. And behold, I sent forth the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high. And he led them out until they were over against Bethany: and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, blessing God.

49-58. "And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you." This promise was the power which would enable them to reveal the gospel and confirm it by signs. This was the baptism of the Holy Spirit. "And being assembled together with them, he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, said he, ye heard from me: For John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence." (Acts 1:4, 5.) Jesus had repeatedly promised them this power. (Matt. 10:19, 20; John 14:25, 26; 15:26; 16:1-13.) This power was to bring to their remembrance all that Jesus had taught them, and also to guide them into all truth. It was through men inspired by the Holy Spirit that the Holy Spirit was to exert his power on the hearts of men; the words they spoke were the words of the Holy Spirit. And because the Holy Spirit was to operate through human agency, the apostles were commanded to preach to the whole creation—to all nations. "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.) "And he led them out until they were over against Bethany." They were on the Mount of Olives, for Acts 1:12 tells us that they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet. On Olivet he blessed them, and was carried up into heaven. Of course these disciples stood gazing after him, till a cloud received him out of their sight; and still they stood gazing into the heavens, hoping to get another glimpse of him. "And while they were looking steadfastly into heaven as he went, behold two men stood by them in white apparel; who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? this Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven." (Acts 1:10, 11.)