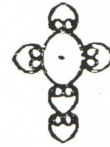


THE MUSTARD SEED



St. Peter



THE INCREMENTAL PROGRESS OF IMPETUOUS PETER

A study of the
spiritual development
of Peter's faith with
consideration of
the cultural and
geographic context.

Research by
Professor Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.
for
Russell S. Doughten, Jr., Mustard Seed International

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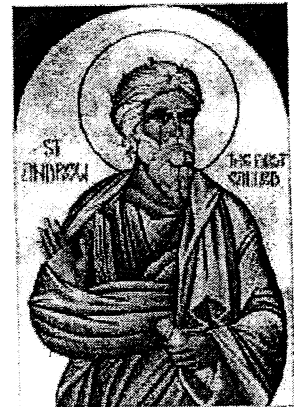
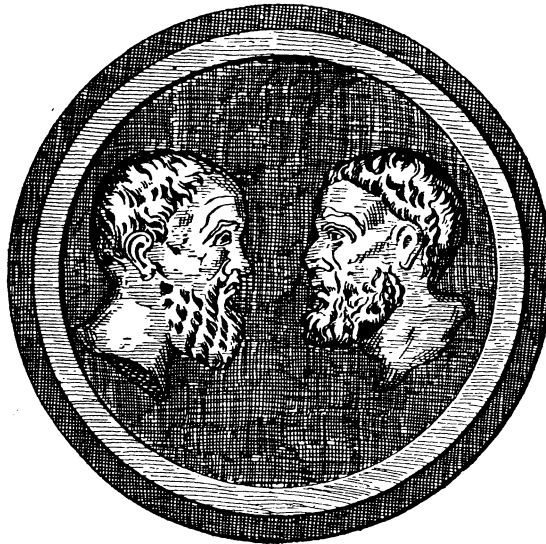
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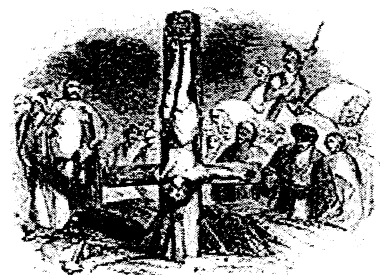
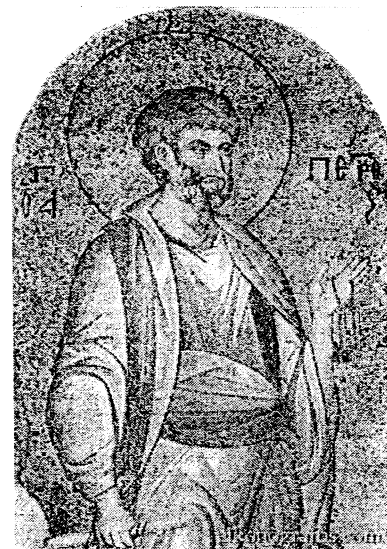
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Images of the Apostle Peter

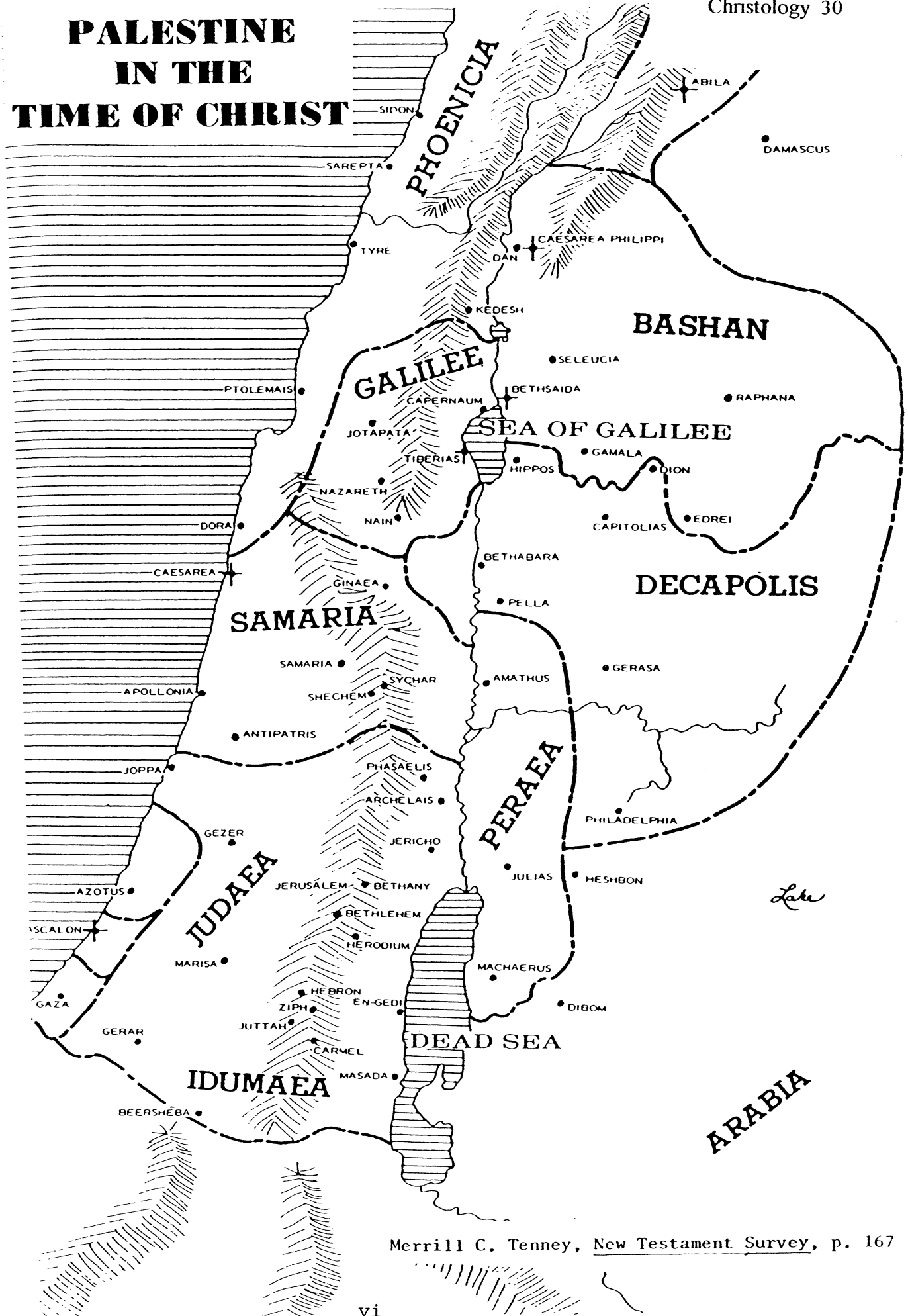


In the Vatican library at Rome is preserved a bronze medal with the heads of Peter and Paul, which was found in the cemetery of Domitilla, one of the Flavian family, and if genuine it is no doubt the earliest portraiture known of the two great apostles. The medal is referred to the close of the first century or the beginning of the second, and at this early period the features of the two apostles must have been faithfully preserved. Both heads are full of character, and that of Paul in particular is distinguished by solemnity and dignity, and the thoughtful and wrinkled brow indicates the high intellect that so remarkably characterized the man. — *Life of St. Paul, Lewin.*

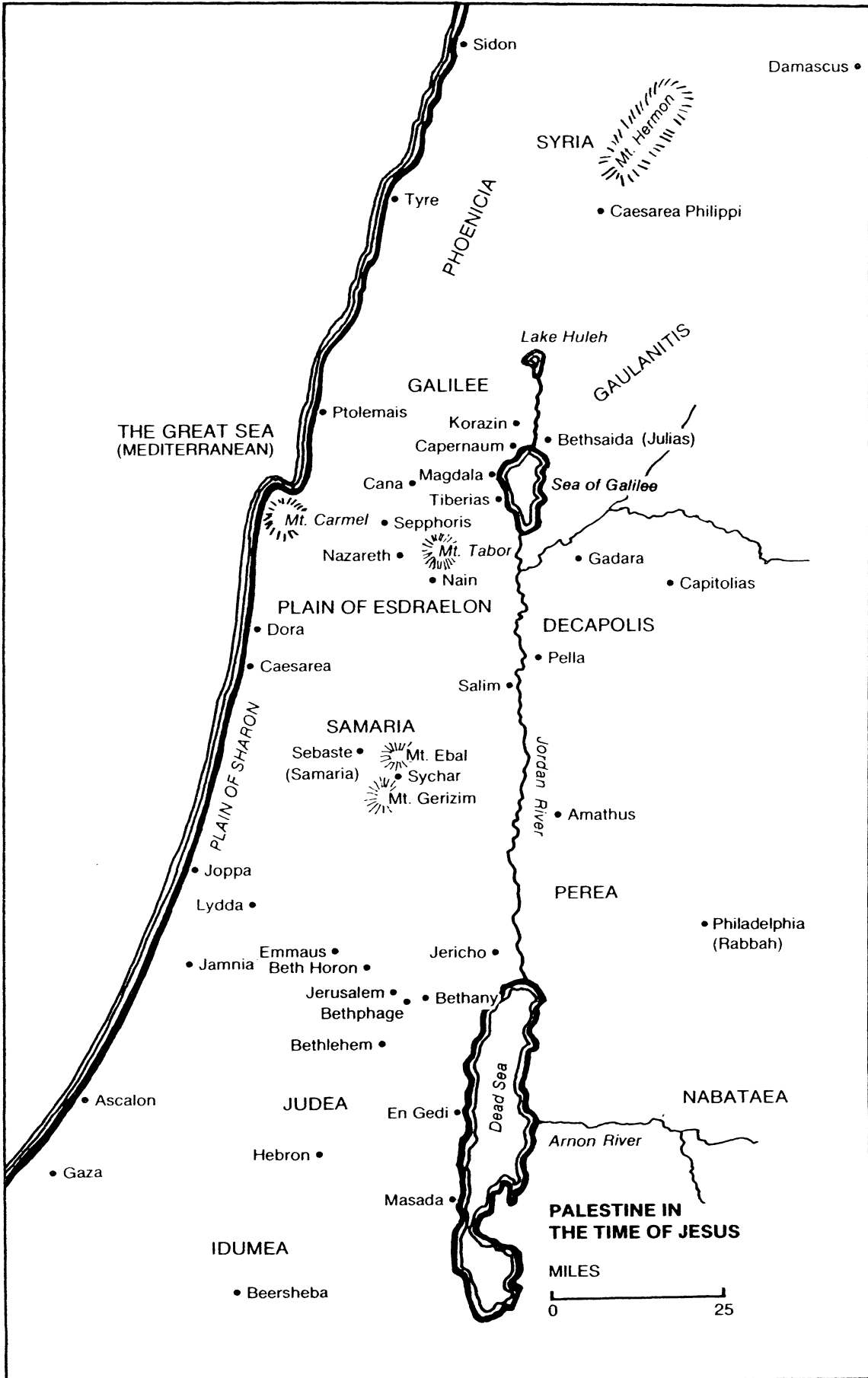
Peloubet's Select Notes on the International Lessons, 1903, p. 176

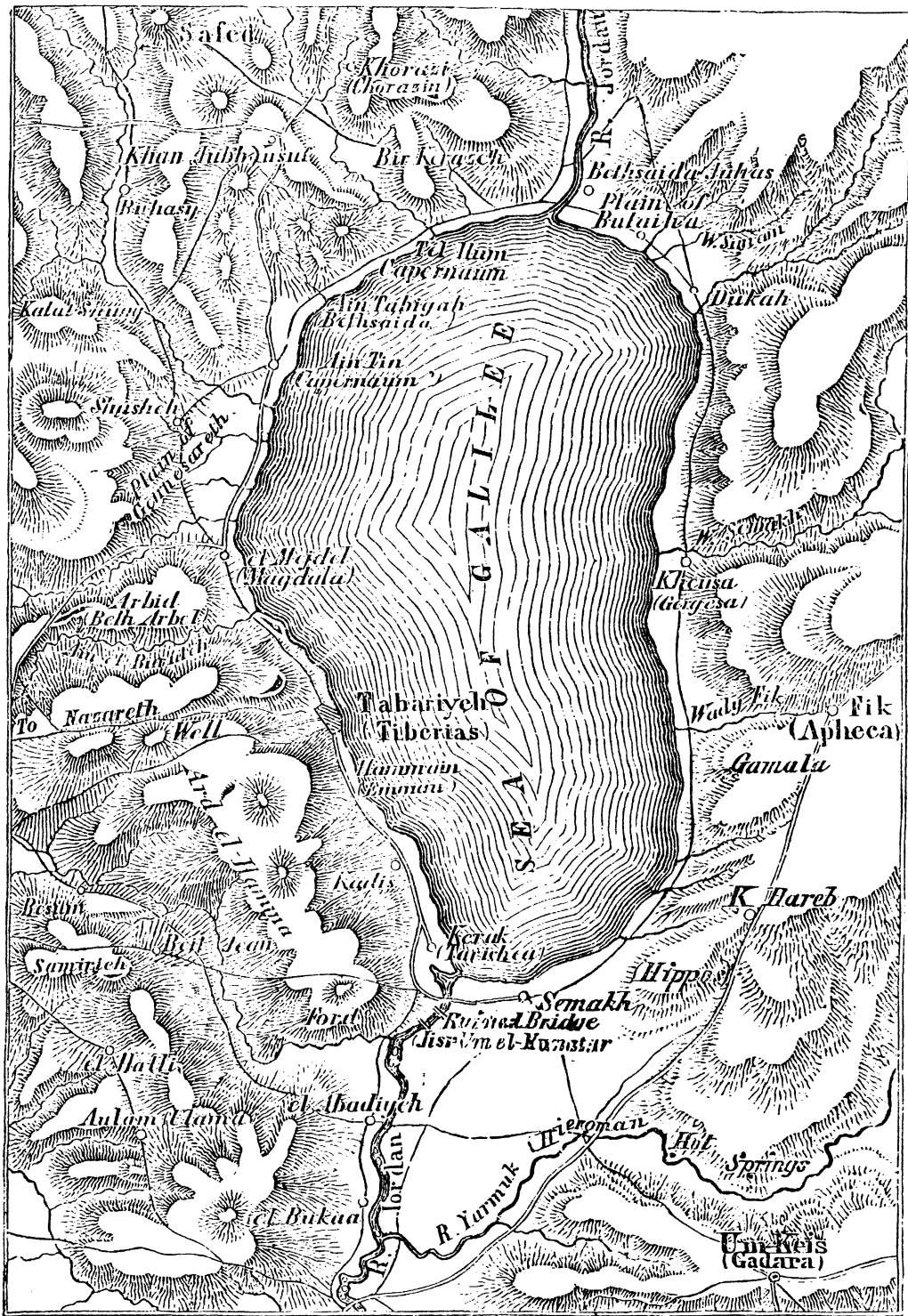


PALESTINE IN THE TIME OF CHRIST



Merrill C. Tenney, New Testament Survey, p. 167





English Miles
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Shores of the Sea of Galilee.

Lehrung den Jüngern ein Mahl bereitet, und an Petrus die wiederholte Frage gestellt, wie lange er jener Tage berichtet, wie oft er die Stadt bebaute; zahlreiche Schiffe belebten den See,

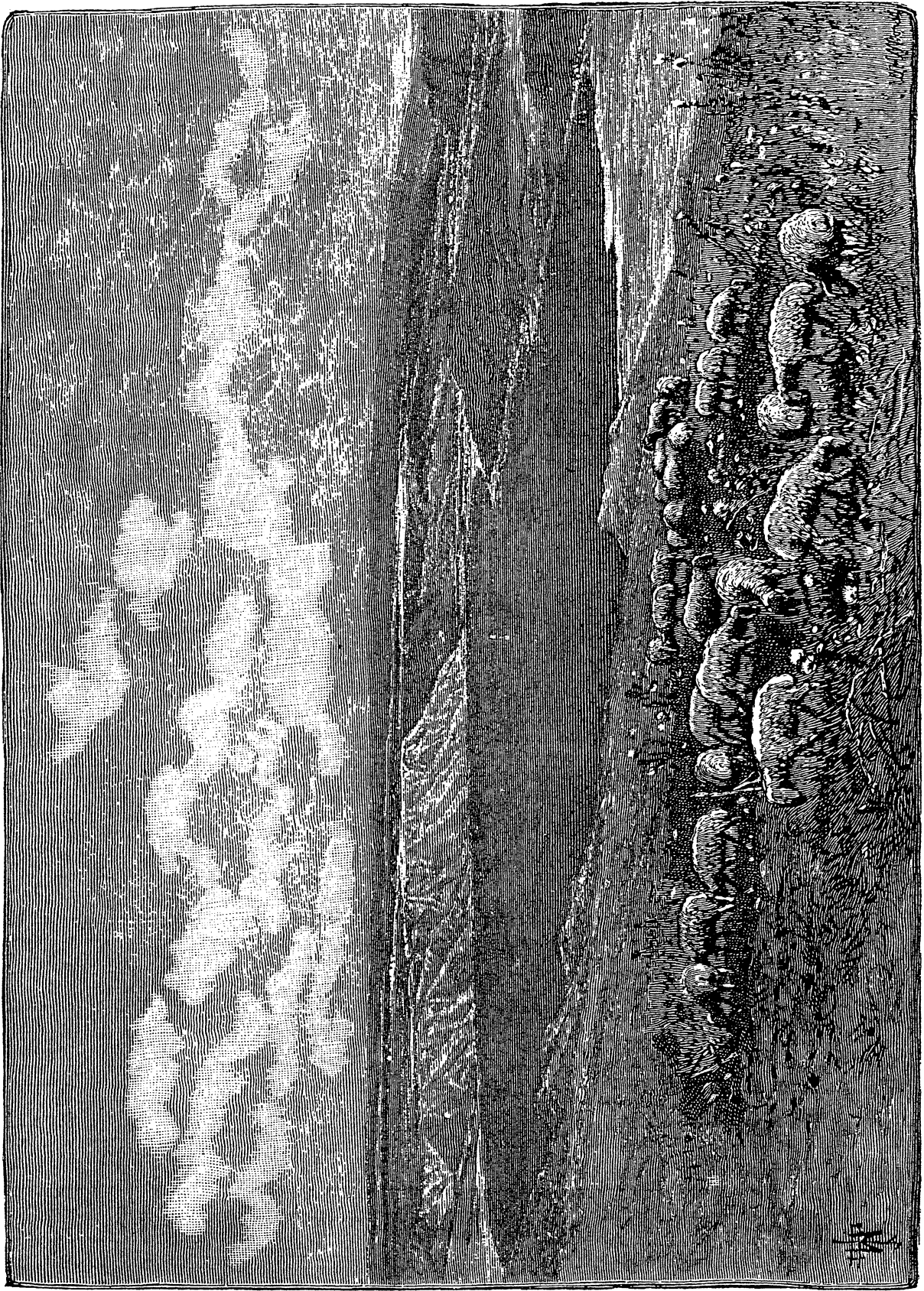


Abb. 121. Der See Genesareth (im Norden).

PETER'S IMPORTANCE

1. His Prominence:

The four Gospels are full of Peter. After the name of our Lord Himself, no name comes up so often in the four Gospels as Peter's name. No disciple speaks so often and so much as Peter. Our Lord speaks oftener to Peter than to any other of His disciples; sometimes in blame and sometimes in praise. No disciples is so pointedly reproved by our Lord as Peter, and no disciple ever ventures to reprove his master but Peter. No other disciple ever so boldly confessed and outspokenly acknowledged and encouraged our Lord as Peter repeatedly did also. His Master spoke words of approval and praise and even blessing to Peter the like of which He never spoke to any other man. And at the same time, and almost in the same breath, He said harder things to Peter than He ever said to any other of His twelve disciples, unless it was to Judas. (A. Whyte, Bible Characters, I, p. 46.)

2. His Sincerity:

No figure in the N.T. presents such a mixture of simplicity and enigma as that of Peter. To outward appearance his character may be read on the surface. He is not a theologian like John the Baptist; he is not a mystic like John the Evangelist; he is a plain, blunt man that speaks the language of the common day and offers his opinion on any subject. He is one of those men who on a superficial view promises to offer a very easy subject of study. And yet the promise is a delusion. Among the interpreters there has probably been more disagreement about the character of Peter than about the character of any other representative of N.T. life. It very often happens that the men and women we meet in this world who seem most open and above-board are precisely those who prove the most difficult to read. Peter is one of these. He not only seems, but he is, above-board. There is nothing sinister, nothing secret, nothing underhanded; his words and deeds convey exactly the meaning he intends them to convey. Yet at the same time the interpreter notices the web of inconsistencies which make the investigation of Peter's life so difficult. His life sometimes touches heaven, at other times it seems to be motivated by hell. We admire Peter today--tomorrow we are almost repulsed by him. He wavers between two poles. Every great thing he does comes from a moment of bravery; every mean act to which he stoops comes from a moment of cowardice. (G. Mathesen, The Representative Men of the N.T., III, pp. 88-90.)

3. His Personality:

The life of Peter is a triple interest. (1) His personality is attractive because of its naturalness, boyancy, and vigor. His impetuosity, candor, freedom of speech, transparency of motive, and his large and genial humanity appeal strongly to our hearts. Peter is the Luther among the Apostles. (2) Peter is the most representative of the Apostles. Were it not for him, our knowledge of their views, tastes, hopes,

prejudices, and difficulties would be scanty; but, owing to his words and acts, these stand out in bold relief. In Peter we see the kind of men the Lord deliberately chose to be His closest friends. The methods, too, by which the disciples became qualified for their great functions are most fully revealed in the treatment of Peter by Jesus--the patient wisdom, the boundless love, the humor, the severity, the perfect frankness, and the unreserved intimacy. (3) The life of Peter affords the most striking evidence for the power of the gospel as it changes a fickle and forward sinner into a firm and faithful saint. If the power of God can transform the life of a man like Peter, it is able to convert any man. Peter's experiences are powerful proof of the transforming quality of the gospel.

Among the twelve Apostles Peter holds a position of prominence. He is always listed first among the disciples (Mt. 10:2-4; Mk. 3:13-19; Lk. 6:13-16). There are changes in the order of the rest but Peter's name is always first. And when the list is again recited after the ascension, diminished by Judas, Peter is still first (Acts 1:13).

4. His Position Among the Disciples:

Peter was further among the most beloved of Christ's disciples. (Mt. 17:1; Mk. 9:22; 14:33.) Sometimes he speaks in the name of the twelve (Mt. 19:27; Lk. 12:41); sometimes he answers when questions are addressed to them all (Mt. 16:16; Mk. 8:29); sometimes Jesus addresses him in place of them all (Mt. 26:40). His eminence among the Apostles depended partly on the fact that he was chosen among the first, partly on his own peculiar traits, and partly on his advanced age. His position among the Apostles is that of primus inter pares, first among equals. He had precedence without supremacy. (Unger, "Peter," p. 850. Hastings, Dictionary of Christ and of the Apostles, "Peter," II, 350.)

PETER'S BACKGROUND

1. The Name:

Peter comes from petros, the Greek for the Aramaic Cephas, from ceph, "a rock," "a stone." His original name was Simon, the Aramaic word for "hearer." The two names are commonly combined, Simon Peter, but in the early part of his ministry, and in the interval between our Lord's death and resurrection, he is more frequently named Simon; after that event he bears almost exclusively the more honorable designation Peter, or, as Paul writes, Peter. Cephas. The name Peter is prophetic of what Simon would become.

2. Parentage:

He was the son of a man named Jonas (Mt. 16:17; Jn. 1:42; 21:16) and was brought up in his father's occupation, a fisherman on the Sea of Tiberias. Jonas is probably derived from John, which means "the grace of God." Peter's mother, according to tradition was named Johanna, which is the feminine name of John and also means, "God is gracious."

3. Education:

As a Jewish lad he received a normal elementary education. As a native of "Galilee of the Gentiles" he was able to converse in Greek, while his native Aramaic was marked with provincialisms of pronunciation and diction (Mt. 26:73). The evaluation by the Sanhedrin of Peter and John as "unlearned and ignorant men" (Acts 4:13) simply meant that they were un-schooled in the rabbinical lore and were laymen. Peter was probably taught to read the Scriptures in childhood. While the influence of Greek literature is not so evident in his writings as in those of the Apostle Paul, he nevertheless evidences a considerable knowledge of pure and accurate Greek, equal to that of the Apostle Paul.

4. Business:

With his brother Andrew he followed the hardy occupation of a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee, being partners with Zebedee's sons, James and John (Lk. 5:7). His occupation was a humble one, but not, as is often assumed mean or servile, or incompatible with some degree of mental culture. The Scriptures suggest that Peter and his friends were prosperous business men. They had their own business and had hired servants. As fishermen they would supply some of the important cities on the coast of that inland lake. The business was no doubt lucrative and since the necessities of life were cheap and abundant in the singularly rich and fertile district, Peter must have been a man of means. Peter did not live as a mere laboring man, in a hut by the sea-side, but first at Bethsaida, and afterwards in a house at Capernaum, belonging to himself and possibly his mother-in-law, which must have been a rather large one, since he received in it not only the Lord and his disciples, but multitudes who were attracted by the miracles and preaching of Jesus.

5. Language:

The language of the Apostles was no doubt the form of Aramaic spoken in northern Palestine, a sort of patois, partly Hebrew, but more nearly allied to the Syriac. Hebrew, even in its debased form, was then spoken only by men of learning, the leaders of the Pharisees and Scribes. The men of Galilee (and Peter among them) were, however, noted for rough and inaccurate language, and especially for vulgarities of pronunciation. Peter was recognized in Jerusalem as a Galilean by the accent and perhaps the idiom of his Aramaic. Peter's home was on the thickly populated shore of the lake, where trade brought together representatives of many nationalities, (important for variety in filming) and where, to say the least, Greek must have been to some extent a medium of communication. It stands to reason that Peter, the fisherman, would learn Greek early in life through his commercial ties. But whatever Greek Peter learned in Galilee must have been of a conversational rather than of a literary kind. The members of the Sanhedrin regarded Peter and his companion John as, from their point of view, illiterate men (Acts 4:13). One further support of Peter's knowledge of Greek is the fact that the Apostle, like his brother Andrew, was commonly known by a Greek name. It must be emphasized that the traditional view of Peter as a rough, uneducated peasant is a considerable exaggeration. (Hastings, A Dictionary of the Bible, "Peter," III 765f.)

It is certain that there was more intercourse with foreigners in Galilee than in any district of Palestine, and Greek appears to have been a common, if not the principal, medium of communication. Within a few years after his call, Peter is seen conversing fluently in Greek with Cornelius. At least there is no intimation that an interpreter was employed, while it is highly improbable that Cornelius, a Roman soldier, should have used the language of Palestine. The style of both Peter's epistles indicates a considerable knowledge of Greek--it is pure and accurate, and in grammatical structure equal to that of Paul. (Smith's Bible Dictionary, III, "Peter," p. 2446f.)

6. Family:

The Synoptics clearly place the house of Simon at Capernaum. In it he apparently lived with his wife, his brother, and his mother-in-law (Mt. 8:5,14; Mk. 1:21,29; Lk. 4:31,38). That he was an affectionate husband, married early in life, and that his wife accompanied him in his apostolic journeys, are facts inferred from scripture (I Cor. 9:5). Very ancient traditions recorded by Clement of Alexandria, who was closely connected with the church which Mark founded, inform us that the name of his wife was Perpetua, that she bore a daughter, or perhaps other children, and suffered martyrdom. It is uncertain at what age Peter was called by the Lord. The general impression of the church fathers is that he was an old man at the date of his death, around A.D. 65. But this need not imply that he was much older than our Lord, though he was probably the oldest of the disciples. He may well have been thirty ^{or} ~~and~~ forty years of age at the date of his call. (Smith, op. cit., 2446.)

7. Faith:

A significant phrase of Andrew's ("we have found the Messiah, which is being interpreted, the Christ", Jn. 1:41) suggests that both brothers were eagerly awaiting the Messiah. Peter may well have had a close knowledge of the O.T. and been acquainted with the Septuagint (LXX).

8. Bethsaida:

Peter's home-town Bethsaida (Greek, from the Aramaic beth sayda, "house or place of fishing" was located on the W. coast of the Sea of Tiberias (Galilee). It was the native place of Peter, Andrew, and Philip and a frequent resort of Jesus (Jn. 1:44; 12:21). The Lord upbraided the inhabitants for not receiving his teachings (Lk. 10:13). Robinson, the great Palestine scholar, infers that Bethsaida was not far from Capernaum, as also does Edersheim. The latter says (Life and Times of Jesus, ii, 3,4): "From the fact that Mark names Bethsaida, and John Capernaum, as the original destination of the boat, we would infer that Bethsaida was the fishing quarter of, or rather, close to, Capernaum..... Further it would explain how Peter and Andrew, who, according to John, were of Bethsaida, are described by Mark as having their home in Capernaum.... This also suggests that in a sense--as regarded the fishermen--the names were interchangeable, or, rather, that Bethsaida was the 'Fisherton' of Capernaum.

Bethsaida must have been a city of importance, being called a city, Jn. 1:44. Robinson identifies as its probable site 'Ain et Tabighah, a small village in a little plain or wady, with a very copious stream bursting from an immense fountain, slightly warm, but so brackish as not to be drinkable.

Peter's native city is not to be confused with the Bethsaida on the east side, near which, in a desert place, Christ fed the five thousand (Lk. 9:10-17) and "healed them that had need of healing."

In summary: Bethsaida was a fishing village in immediate proximity of Capernaum on the west side of the Sea of Tiberias, providing nourishment for the area and being watered by a brackish fountain. Interesting descriptive details of the area include several mills to the east of the highway, beyond which is a brackish fountain, inclosed by a wall of stone in circular fashion, serving as a reservoir, and is called 'Ain Eyub or Fountain or Oven of Job.

(Unger's Bible Dictionary, "Bethsaida," p. 141. Thompson, The Land and the Book, 360, 374f. Fairbairn's Imperial Standard Bible Encyclopedia, "Bethsaida," pp. 284-285, vol. I.

9. Peter's calls:

Peter and his brother Andrew were attracted to John the Baptist and as a result of this relationship met the Savior. Peter's first contact with Christ resulted in his call to acquaintanceship. (Jn. 1:42).

This acquaintanceship thus formed passed after an interval of a few months, during part of which Peter was with Jesus, into permanent fellowship. It was this second call, a call to discipleship (Jn. 1:35-49) which brought Peter into a realm of our Savior's ministry as a "fisher of men." The final stage of Peter's relationship to Jesus was that of an Apostle. Our Lord had determined to select a very few persons from the larger number of His adherents to be constantly in His company and to act as His messengers. The final call was, therefore, a call to apostleship.

PETER'S FIRST CALL

John 1:35-42

1. The Place:

The Precursor of Jesus, John the Baptist, had his ministry along the Jordan. Masses of people flocked to be baptized in the river. The River Jordan is the principal water-course of the Holy Land, and flows through both Galilee and Judaea. It was therefore best suited for the baptisms of the masses moved by the preaching of John. The exact position of the place of baptism referred to in the Gospels is disputed. Matthew seems to favor a site near to Jerusalem, Judea and Peraea ("the region round about Jordan") 3:5, and is followed by Mark (1:5) and Luke 3:3. John suggests that John also baptized in Aenon, near Salim (south of Beth-Shean?), the exact location of which is uncertain. Christian tradition has in general followed the Synoptics. In this area the Jordan flows peacefully between the green vegetation which lines its banks. The river in the vicinity of Jericho is fairly deep and the localities where it could be safely entered for immersion are none too numerous. (Illustrated Family Encyclopedia, picture in Vol. 12, p. 24).

2. The Circumstances:

Peter and Andrew were friends and business partners with James and John, the sons of Zebedee (Lk. 5:10). They not only worked together, but evidently shared a common interest in spiritual things. These four friends would later become four apostles. Simon seems to have been the head of this enterprising group of young business men, Lk. 5:5 etc. When word of John's ministry reached them they investigated the commotion along the Jordan, much like the priests and Levites (Jn. 1:19), except that they became disciples. There the Savior found them. The history is recorded only in John (1:35-42). Andrew and John (for he clearly is the unnamed actor in the scene)--one of each of the two pairs of brothers who together were in partnership--are expressly spoken of as belonging to the number (ek) of the Baptist's disciples (vv. 35,37). Since Peter and, as the language seems to imply, James were close at hand, (1:41) it is a natural inference that Peter had become a disciple of the Baptist, and through the gate of this discipleship passed into friendship with Jesus of Nazareth. Having been baptized by John himself, it is more than probable that Peter had been a witness of the Lord's baptism (Acts 1:22; 10:37f). (Hastings, III, 757).

3. The Call:

On this particular day, which may well have been a Sabbath (Edersheim, I, p. 344f), after Andrew had heard the Baptist's witness (v. 36f) and had followed Jesus since 10 a.m. (Edersheim), he went in quest of Simon, and, telling him that he had found the Messiah that they had been waiting for, brought him to Jesus. Jesus fixes upon him that piercing, scrutinizing gaze (em blesas) which was to rest upon him at a

later crisis of his life (1:42; Lk. 22:61), and greets him-- it does not appear from the narrative whether Jesus had known Simon before or not (cf. 1:48).

The Lord receives Peter for what he is, Simon the son of Jonas, as the product and heir of a past over which he had had no control, as destined to a peculiar office. The new designation which the Savior gives to Peter is not so much a name as a revelation of the character which He already claims for future service. As yet no permanent bond unites Jesus and these men. Peter and his friends looked henceforth upon the Lord as their teacher, but were not commanded to follow Him as regular disciples.

There were several grades of disciples among the Jews, from the occasional hearer, to the follower who gave up all other pursuits in order to serve the master. At this time a recognition of His person and office sufficed. The men returned to Capernaum after they had accompanied Christ in His journey to Galilee and again in His visit to Jerusalem at the Passover. Peter and the rest pursued their usual business, as they did on a much later occasion (Jn. 21), waiting for a further intimation of His will.

PETER'S SECOND CALL

Mt. 4:18-22; Mk. 1:16-20; Lk. 5:1-11

1. The Background:

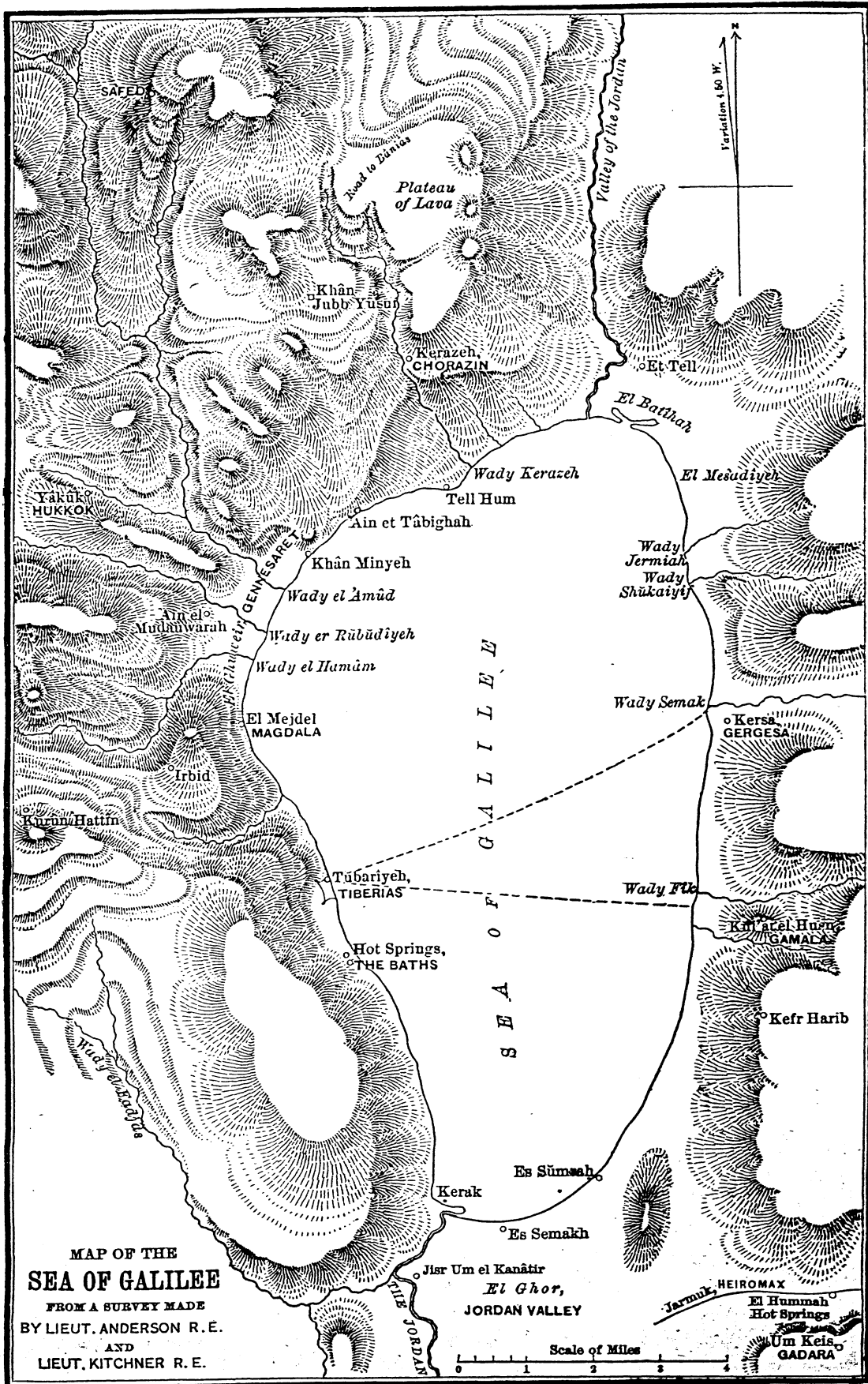
John alone relates Christ's reception of the five disciples as His friends (Jn. 1:33-49). The Synoptics record their selection as disciples and their designation as apostles (Mt. 10:1-4; Mk. 3:13-19; Lk. 6:12-16). Their first call was not a binding association but left them at liberty to return from time to time to their former trade. In the synagogue at Nazareth, for example, they are not present (Lk. 4:16-18), but now, with the second call, the preliminary acquaintance which Peter had with the Lord turns into an abiding relationship.

Many things in the ministry of Jesus had occurred between that day on which Simon Peter had been introduced to him by Andrew, and this one on which, from His boat-pulpit on the lake, Christ addressed the multitudes that lined its banks. From the scene of John's baptism on the river Jordan, the Master, accompanied by some of those who had cast in their lot with Him, repaired to Galilee, where He signalized His entrance upon public life by performing the miracle of turning water into wine. From there He went up to Jerusalem to keep the Passover, and while there He drove the traders from the temple and performed many mighty works. It was at this time also that He received Nicodemus by night, and had with him that important interview described by John.

From Jerusalem, the Lord passed into the rural districts of Judea, but learning there that John the Baptist had been thrown into prison by Herod, He returned to Galilee, taking Samaria on His way, and meeting the woman at the well of Jacob. From Galilee, after having performed a second miracle at Cana, He went to Nazareth, where he entered into the synagogue on the Sabbath and expounded one of Isaiah's predictions with immediate reference to Himself. But His townsmen were filled with enmity against Him, and even attempted to put Him to death, so that He withdrew to Capernaum, where He makes His residence for the time. And it was during the first weeks of His stay there that the second call of Peter took place.

2. The Lake:

The Sea of Galilee or Tiberias is formed by the river Jordan. It is about twelve miles long and six miles wide, reaching a depth of around 165 feet. The water is salubrious, fresh, and clear; it contains abundance of fish; the banks are picturesque, although at present somewhat bare, except for the southern shore. Toward the west the banks are intersected by calcareous mountains; toward Transjordan they are bounded by high mountains, rising to 800-1000 feet, partly of chalk and partly of basalt formation. The lake is of an oval form, being a deep depression in an upland country, and lying about 535 ft. below sea level. In Christ's time the shores were in a flourishing



MAP OF THE
SEA OF GALILEE
 FROM A SURVEY MADE
 BY LIEUT. ANDERSON R. E.
 AND
 LIEUT. KITCHNER R. E.



JESUS TEACHING BY THE SEASIDE.

Hesba Stretton, *The Wonderful Story of Christ and the Apostles*, 1896, 76.

state, covered with cities and inhabited by a busy throng. (Lange's Commentary on Mt. 4:18, p. 93).

A good place for fishing was the vicinity of Capernaum, where warm springs issuing into the sea draw the fish to the shore. The two most common species are the chromis and hemichromis, which could be found in abundance. Hence the shores were populated by fishermen. Fish and fertile soil made the sea a favorite place for settlement.

3. The Scene:

The scene which is painted for us by the Evangelists is of the most fascinating description. It is morning by the lake of Gennesaret, and the villages around its banks have awakened to the activities of life. The hills on its eastern shores are baring their heads to greet the day; and the waters rippling under the early breeze are reflecting, in myriad flashes, the gay sunbeams. To the left as we look across the lake in a north-westerly direction, lies the city of Capernaum, so near that we may hear almost the hum of its inhabitants; and to the right, the fleet of fishing boats, which have been out all night, are standing toward Bethsaida. More immediately on the left the eye focuses on Magdala and Tiberius, while everywhere there are indications of stirring energy among the people. Stanley, the explorer, remarked, that this area was to the Roman Palestine almost what the manufacturing districts are to England. Nowhere, except in the capitol itself, could Christ have found such a sphere for His works and words of mercy; from no other center could his fame have so gone throughout all Syria; nowhere else could He have drawn around Him the vast multitudes that hung upon His lips.

4. The Problem:

Do Mt. and Mk. contradict Lk.? While critics say that the accounts are contradictory, the differences can be easily accounted for. While Mt. and Mk. focus on the general event, Lk. singles out certain details to record. The accounts are complementary rather than contradictory.

5. The Call:

Christ, followed by the multitude, is walking in a southerly direction south of Capernaum towards Bethsaida. Before Him is a group of fishermen, some are on the shore washing their nets (Lk. 5:1-2), while their boats were happily swaying on top of the rippled water. James and John, however, were still in the boat mending their nets, while Simon Peter and Andrew were still casting their nets into the sea, a little farther from shore. Christ had apparently first passed some empty boats, then He came upon Peter and Andrew still fishing (Mk. 1:16), trying to make up for the lost time of the previous night, and just beyond there were James and John with their father Zebedee and their servants mending nets. James, it should be noted ("James the son of Zebedee") was the elder brother of John (Mt. 4:21; Mk. 4:18-19).

The Savior stops and calls across to Peter, asking him to take Him a little distance from the land. Getting him to push off a few yards from land, because of the pressure of the people which became inconveniently great, "he sat down and taught the people out of the ship." (Lk. 5:3). Peter, by being asked to launch out into the deep water, has his faith exercised by an apparently arbitrary command. He is the steersman, probably older than Andrew. He obeys His Master.

We are not told what the subject of the discourse was, perhaps some parable from the scene that was around him; some tender appeal, or some solemn warning, or some teaching concerning the Kingdom of God which He offered. But whatever it was, it caught the eager attention of the listeners, while the fishermen by His side and on the shore, forgetting their nets, would cease their work for a time, as they listened to His words.

But now the discourse is ended, and the Lord, turning to Simon who is the central figure of the narrative, bids him, "Put out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." (Lk. 5:4). Without a doubt, after a night of unsuccessful toil this injunction must have appeared strange to him, but he already knows enough of the Lord to bring his fisherman's theory as a sacrifice to his faith at Jesus' word alone. The title "Master" (teacher) was given even to such teachers as anyone entertained respect for, without as yet standing in a personal relation to them (cf. Lk. 17:13). The answer of Peter, "Master, we have toiled all night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless, at thy word, I will let down the net," is not one of unbelief but of mild astonishment. "I should not have thought of doing anything of the kind; but if thou sayest it, I will let down the net, and look for some success!" This is the spirit of Peter that is implied.

Peter's faith was amply rewarded, for they enclosed such a multitude of fishes that the net began to break. "They beckoned unto their partners in the other boat." Only by the help of James and John his partners, could Simon secure his haul. James and John were close by and were no doubt watching with intense interest the curious occurrence. Perhaps Peter was for once too astonished for words, as he limited himself to simply beckoning them to come to his aid. The breaking of the net indicates only the beginning of tearing, otherwise the whole draught of fishes might have been immediately lost again. As both boats were filled with the "finny freight" they almost sank.

The effect of this miracle on Peter was electric. With that quick insight and that prompt yielding to the impulse of the moment, which, as one proceeds in his history, one discovers to be characteristic of him, he saw the glory of Messiah's Godhead, streaming through the miracle, and fell at his knees, saying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (Lk. 5:8). While the fish were caught and even as the boat began to sink, Christ was apparently right in the boat with Peter, still sitting calmly as He had done when He taught the multitudes.

The cause of this crushing impression of wonder upon Peter is easy to explain. It is not the expression of a superstitious person who is confronted by something supernatural or magical. Rather, it is Peter's



"FOLLOW ME."

first real comprehension of a miracle. Peter had not yet been able to judge other miracles which he had seen so well as this. It belonged to his calling; took place in his vessel, with his net, after his own fruitless endeavors, in his immediate presence. During the earlier miracles Peter's faith had given silent acquiescence, but here both understanding and heart were constrained to bow themselves before Jesus, the Lord of nature, whose secret will "could wield and guide the unconscious creatures so as to make them subserve the higher interests of his kingdom." (Trench, p. 101). Thankfulness and surprise, after so long disappointment, unite themselves with a deep consciousness of his unworthiness, so that he is no longer able to abide in the presence of the Holy One. The deepest emotion of Peter's heart is revealed. His heart, like that of any other creature honest with himself would have done, sensed something of God's holiness as something bringing death and destruction to the unholy creature. It was not a concern over the sinking boat but a conviction of his own sinfulness that brought Peter to his knees.

The "depart from me" was heard by the Lord in spirit, while He dealt exactly against its letter and turned in to be with the man who with trembling hand waved Him from himself.

James and John were overcome with a similar emotion. It has been suggested (Lange, Lk. 5:10, p. 82) that Salome, the wife of Zebedee, was a sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. This would make James and John the cousins of Jesus.

Peter, and perhaps the other disciples as well, fell down at the feet of the Lord, caring nothing for the danger into which they brought the already overloaded vessel. Peter's exclamation reminds one of Job's words: "now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6), and also of Isaiah's words after he had seen the glory of the Lord: "Woe is me! for I am undone!" (Is. 6:5). The Savior understood Peter's state of mind and therefore He immediately replied with the reassuring words: "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." These words constitute the inauguration to permanent discipleship. It was necessary that Peter and his friends recognize their personal insufficiency before they could be used by the Master.

The Lord clothes His promise in the language of that art which was familiar to Peter; the fisherman is to catch men, as David, taken from among the sheepfolds, was to feed them (Ps. 78:71-72). There is here double magnifying of Peter's future occupation as compared with his past. It is men and not poor fishes which he shall henceforth catch; and he shall take them for life, and not, as he had thus far taken the fish, for death. Men embroiled and engulfed in the dark and gloomy waters of life shall be brought into the bright clear light of day by the disciples. (Trench, 104-105).

The effect which this miracle had upon the disciples was so far-reaching that there "begins for them what can only be called a reintegration of personality round a new centre." (Geldenhuys, p. 184). No sooner had they brought their boats to the land, these prosperous business men left all, the boats, the relatives, the homelife, and followed Christ. The

incident affords a glimpse of their spiritual condition. They were animated by a devotion to Jesus and to His program which made them capable of any sacrifice. They did not leave because of idleness, discontent of ambition. They left because their Master beckoned them.

It may well be that the multitude of fishes were first properly dealt with and disposed of. At least Zebedee, left behind with the servants (Mk. 1:20) would have taken the fishes and sold them, and thus provided for the dependents of the disciples. The miracle demonstrated that Christ was able to provide for even the temporal needs which they and their families had.

6. The Net:

Thomson asks: "How do you account for the fact that so many of the apostles were chosen from this class of fishermen? It could not have been accidental." (p. 401). And then he answers his question by the wise observation: Nothing in the kingdom of Christ is accidental or the result of caprice, least of all the vital matter of its first teachers and founders. There was, no doubt, an adaptation, a fitness in the occupation of these men to develop just those attributes of character most needed in the apostolic office. There are various modes of fishing, and each calculated to cultivate and strengthen some particular moral quality of great importance in their mission. Thus angling requires patience, and great perseverance and caution." Thomson then continues to elaborate (pp. 401-402) on the various types of fishing; angling, hand-net, drag-net, bag-net.

Pictures of nets can be seen in Living Bible, XII, 28-29. Since the bag-net figures so prominently in this narrative it would be well to cite here an extended paragraph from Thomson (pp. 402-403):

And again there is the bag-net and basket -net, of various kinds, which are so constructed and worked as to enclose the fish out in deep water. I have seen them of almost every conceivable size and pattern. It was with some one of this sort, I suppose, that Simon had toiled all night without catching anything, but which, when let down at the command of Jesus, enclosed so great a multitude that the net broke, and they filled two ships with the fish until they began to sink. Peter here speaks of toiling all night; and there are certain kinds of fishing always carried on at night. It was a beautiful sight. With blazing torch, the boat glides over the flashing sea, and the men stand gazing keenly into it until their prey is sighted, when, quick as lightning, they fling their net or fly their spear; and often you see the tired fishermen come sullenly into harbour in the morning, having toiled all night in vain. Indeed, every kind of fishing is uncertain. A dozen times the angler jerks out a naked hook; the hand-net closes down on nothing; the drag-net brings in only weeds; the bag comes up empty. And then again, every throw is successful, every net is full--and frequently without any other apparent reason than that of throwing it on the right side of the ship instead of the left, as it happened to the disciples here at Tiberias.

7. The Apparel of Peter:

Some understand from John 21:7 that when Peter fished he was actually naked. This is not necessarily so. During the heat of the day in such a hot climate it is common to fish with nothing but a sort of shawl or napkin tied around the waist. When Peter met the Lord in the John passage, and when he returned from fishing all night in the Lukan account, he must have been wearing an upper garment, sort of a linen blouse over his loin cloth and /or fisherman's shirt. It reaches to about the knees and is tucked under the girdle. It is frequently laid aside during fishing and can be put on and taken off in a moment.

HEALING OF PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

Mt. 8:14-15; Mk. 1:29-31; Lk. 4:38-39

1. The Time:

Chronologically speaking, the event took place during the residence of the Lord at Capernaum, previous to His journey into Galilee and to the Sermon on the Mount.

It was the late afternoon of the first Sabbath after the four disciples were called by the shore of the lake. Christ had had an exhausting day teaching at the synagogue of Capernaum (Mk. 1:21; Lk. 5:31) and casting out unclean spirits. Supper time had come as Jesus came to the stately home to which Peter had probably moved from Bethsaida (Jn. 1:45). It must have been a roomy home, for while it belonged to Peter (Mt. 8:14; Lk. 4:38), Andrew apparently also lived there (Mk. 1:29) with his family. Furthermore, James and John were along, Peter's mother-in-law resided there, and a multitude of sick were healed inside, while "all the city was gathered together at the door." (Mk. 1:33).

2. The Healing:

Returning to the house for dinner, the disciples experienced three events in rapid succession. Mark uses the word "immediately" three times in as many verses (29-31). Immediately Christ had come from the synagogue to the restful seclusion of the spacious house. But immediately upon His arrival He was informed that in another part of the house Simon's mother-in-law was lying with a great fever. Christ unhesitatingly went to the chamber, touched the sick woman and immediately the fever left her. The incident of the healing could thus not have consumed much time.

No sooner had Christ entered the house and washed His feet (or, as is more likely, had them washed by the servants of the house--Simon being a successful businessman with various hired servants), when word reached him that a dreadful fever had come upon Peter's mother-in-law. Luke, the physician, records that it was a great fever. The severity of the sickness is evident from two facts: (1) Dr. Luke uses the technical expression "great fever," indicating that she was seriously ill. (2) The fever hindered her from greeting Jesus and ministering to the honored guest, something which she no doubt greatly desired to do. The fever must have been of some duration and since Christ had not healed her before this, the inference can be drawn that either He had never been in the home or that His last visit had been quite some time ago.

Once Christ had been shown the chamber of the sick woman, He and the patient were alone. Luke mentions the fact that He "stood over her" or perhaps better, "stood by" (cf. Lk. 2:9, 38). Matthew informs us that Christ touched her hand while Mark is more specific when he relates that "he came and took her by the hand, and raised her up." Luke alone records that just as Christ had before rebuked the demons, He now "rebuked the fever." Immediately she was free of the fever. As proof of the complete

healing which took place after this fever (lit. "great fever-heat") which is always an exhausting sickness, she rises and serves the Savior.

Her serving refers to a particular ministering, namely the waiting at table during meal-time. This she did to show her deep gratitude and it demonstrated her perfect recovery. Undoubtedly, Peter's wife helps her in this activity. She could not yet have been dead, because many years after this occurrence, (A.D. 57) Paul refers to Peter's wife as living and accompanying her husband on his missionary journeys (I Cor. 9:5). Clement of Alexandria refers even to Peter's children, one of whom, a daughter, is mentioned by name. She was called Petronella, and perhaps she assisted her mother Perpetua in waiting on the Master (Lange, Matthew, p. 158).

3. The Lesson:

The first major healing activity of the Savior at Capernaum took place in Peter's city, indeed, in his very house. The Lord seems to take particular care in training Peter to be an apostle. First, the draught of fishes indicated the Lord's sovereignty over nature. The healing of his mother-in-law brought about a closer bond between Peter and his Lord. It also must have had a very salutary effect on Peter's family. They would understand that while Peter must leave his immediate family, they would not be left alone. It has been suggested that the miracle is indicative of Christ's dealing with the families of his other disciples as well. All their physical needs were met by the Master. (Rienecker, Matthew, p. 100). It is very illuminating that among the Twelve there was none whose house, person, boat, family, in short, whose whole circle of life was so made the focus of remarkable miracles as that of Peter, who had left everything promptly and was now bound with permanent bonds to the Lord.

4. The Result:

Christ's fame spread abroad. "And when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him" (Lk. 4:40). The whole town came to Peter's house as soon as the Sabbath rest was over and they could legally bear burdens again. They brought and carried a multitude of sick and demon-possessed, to each of whom Christ gave personal attention, for "he laid his hands on every one." (Lk. 4:40). Christ is not just seen as the Master but also as the Messiah, for Matthew informs us that these acts were performed to fulfill Isaiah's prophecy concerning the Messiah (Mt. 8:17). The demons were forbidden from speaking out and confessing who He was, so that the disciples and the people would be able to decide for themselves who it was that performed these mighty miracles.

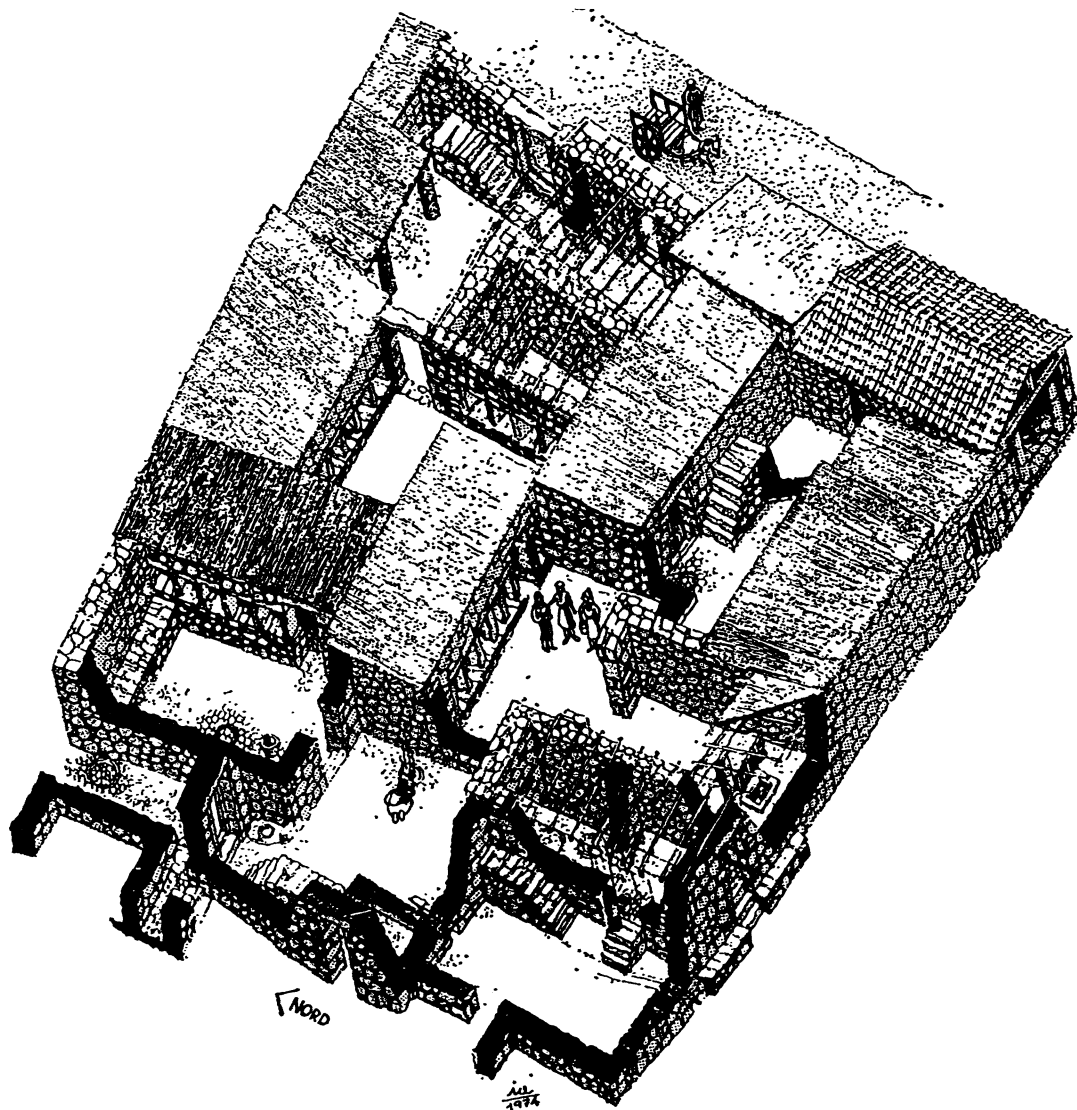
5. The House of Peter:

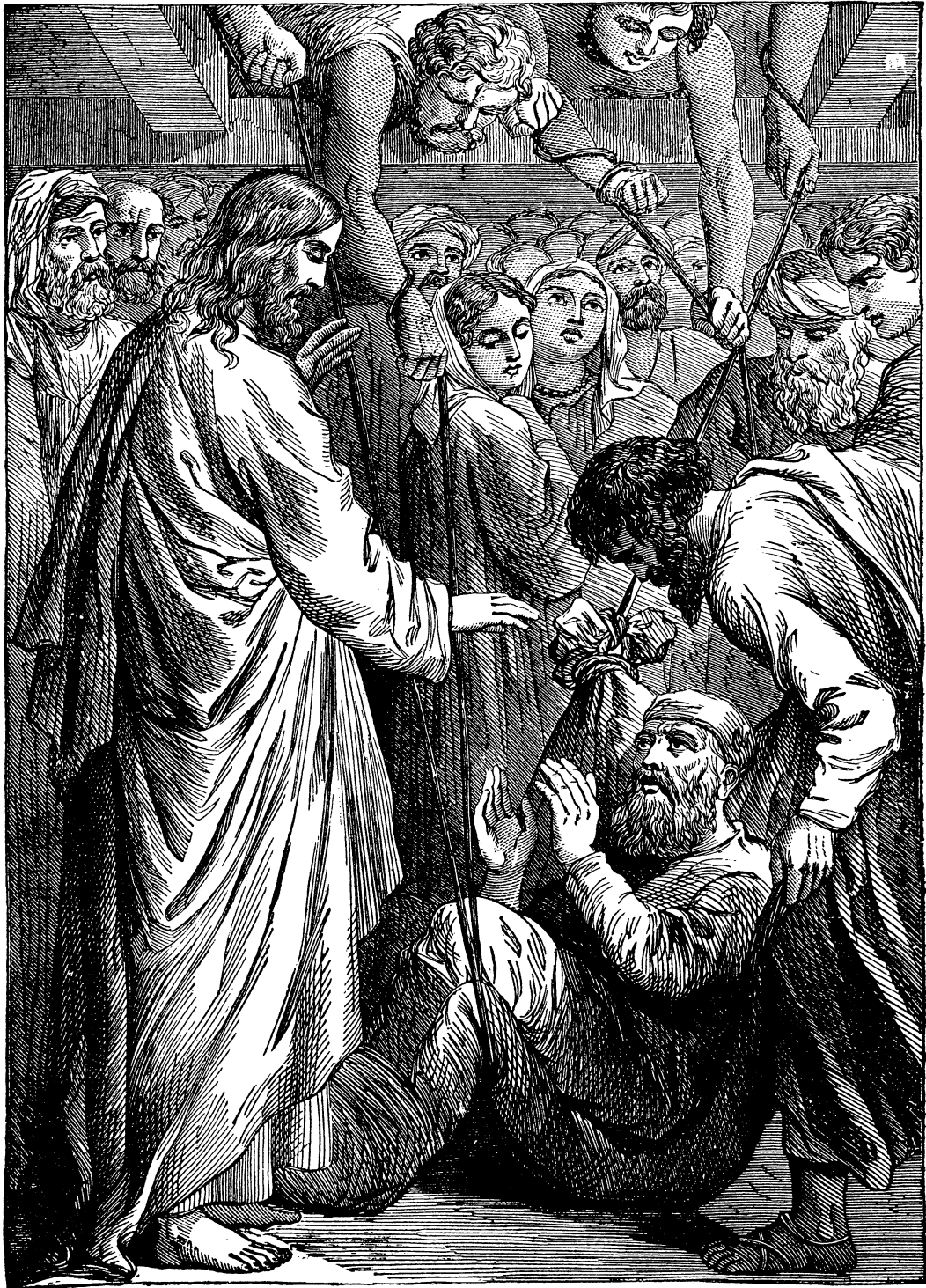
Thomson (p. 358) gives an illustration of the oriental house. These buildings were low, very low, with flat roofs, reached by a stairway from the yard or court. Christ probably stood in the open lewan or entrance hall (see picture), with the crowds around and in front of Him as He healed. The roofs of houses were made of beams about three feet apart, across which short sticks are arranged, close together, covered with a thickly-matted thorn bush called bellan. Over this was spread mortar, covered with marl or earth. Sections of the roof could easily be removed.

Abb. 27: Einfaches Wohnviertel in Kapernaum

Die Rekonstruktionszeichnung gibt eine etwa 30 m × 30 m große »Insel« in Kapernaum in unmittelbarer Nähe zum traditionellen Haus des Petrus wieder. Derartige »Inseln« waren von allen Seiten mit Straßen umgeben. Verschießbare Türen befanden sich nur an den Straßenmauern, während im Inneren der Anlage die einzelnen Höfe frei zugänglich waren. Dies spricht dafür, daß in einer derartigen Insel jeweils eine Großfamilie lebte. Die Häuser sind allenfalls 10 m × 5 m groß und eingeschossig. Das Dach wurde häufig als zusätzlicher Lagerplatz genutzt; teilweise finden sich noch Treppenstufen, die auf die Dächer führten. Die Häuser in Kapernaum sind ein typisches Beispiel für die Lebensqualität der einfachen Menschen in Palästina zur Zeit Jesu.

Bildquelle: St. Loffreda, Ein Besuch in Kapernaum, Franciscan Printing Press, Jerusalem o. J., S. 24.





LOWERING THE SICK MAN THROUGH THE ROOF.

CHRIST'S FLIGHT FROM THE MULTITUDE

Mk. 1:35-45; Lk. 4:42-44

1. The Scene:

Mk. 1:35-39: "And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place and prayed there. 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 said unto them, Let us go elsewhere 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 devils."

Christ has had an extremely busy day in Capernaum, healing and teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum. As the Sabbath draws to a close, Christ comes to Peter's house for dinner. After the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, Christ enjoys the hospitality of the grateful hosts in the spacious home. But soon the tranquil atmosphere is interrupted by the approaching throngs who gather outside, bringing their sick and demon-possessed. Late into the night the Savior ministers to the physical need of the people. Exhaustedly He retires for the night.

2. The Flight:

Physical rest was less necessary for the Savior than spiritual refreshment. While it is yet dark, "a great while before day," the Savior arises and makes his way to the outskirts of the town to a "desert place" to give Himself to prayer. The "desert" might be better rendered as "lonely" or "quiet," as the country around Capernaum was cultivated at this time. Christ's departure to a quiet place seems to have been a customary activity. Public activity was always preceded by private prayer. Christ seems to have prayed generally in the dead of the night. Mark mentions three of the incidents; here, 6:46 and 14:32ff. Prayer and labor alternated in the Savior's life.

The Savior's departure was unnoticed, but before long the household started to stir. Hastily a search party was organized to look for the vanished Master. It was important that he be found, for the multitudes were starting to gather again at the house. It is Peter and "they that were with him" that went out into the chilly morning air to look for Christ. Peter is mentioned prominently because he was the head of the house and no doubt the guide. Accompanied by perhaps the other three disciples and some servants from the household, they searched the country-side. Meanwhile, the crowd at the house grew larger and impatiently it followed Peter and the disciples, instead of waiting their return with the Master. Luke indicates that "the multitudes sought after him" (4:42).

Perhaps Peter first spotted the Lord; it may have been at some place of solitude, which Peter knew the Lord preferred. Peter's first words show less concern for the Savior than compassion for the multitudes. Peter had not yet learned that complete discipleship means complete submission. Would the Savior not have returned on His own? Must He be pursued and interrupted in His prayer by Peter, James, John, and Andrew? When Peter said, "All are seeking thee," he actually implied that the Savior did not know and did not care. With a quick gesture Peter pointed behind him, as he enunciated these words, to show the multitudes approaching in the distance. Christ's reply was kind but firm: "Let us go elsewhere into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for to this end came I forth." Peter was thus informed concerning the most important aspect of the Savior's ministry. Christ came to preach, not to heal. ← The healing aspect of the ministry held only a subservient place in His program. Then, too, Christ came to preach throughout Israel, not just in one given privileged locality.

By that time the multitudes had reached him. Luke's description is very graphic. He pictures them as coming right up to Him. They have not given up till they have found Him too. And once they found Him, they held Him back (Lk. 4:42), from doing what He seemed inclined to do, i.e., from leaving them, with some of their sick still unhealed. The picture that is given is that of the Savior standing in the midst of a crowd, which has surrounded Him. In His immediate proximity are Peter, James, Andrew and John. Peter, the spokesman for the group, is attempting to convince the Savior to stay. The outer perimeter is formed by a motley crowd vigorously beseeching the Master to stay. When He does speak, it is with such authority that all are quiet. What falls from His lips is an amazing message: He came directly from God ("for to this end came I forth" Mk. 1:38) with a divine commission, to proclaim something which had become part of the most fervent expectation of godly Jews, the good news of the kingdom of God. Messiah had come. The kingdom was near. And this message must (Lk. 4:43) be preached everywhere. As the Master expected obedience from the disciples, He indicates that His obedience and allegiance was due to the exalted person with whom He had just communed. If the multitudes wish to hear Him further, they need only follow Him to the surrounding towns, as they indeed do (cf. Feeding of the 5000). He is not harsh and haughty towards the helpless multitude. But He does outline His priorities. He is here to proclaim the Messianic Kingdom.

3. The Sequel:

Christ does move on to other towns throughout Galilee. His proclamation has followed a certain pattern. In each town He first enters the synagogue. It is His guest privilege to read and expound the law as a rabbi, sitting down for the occasion (Lk. 4:38). Everywhere the people are astonished at the authority with which He preached (Lk. 4:31). The astonishment spreads, as Christ heals the sick and casts out demons.

4. The Lesson:

For Peter the lessons of the incident must have stood out very vividly. His first realization was that Jesus must have solitary prayer in order that He carry^{ies} on His public work. Peter no doubt understood that communion with God is more important than physical rest and that to be effective in a public ministry one must be faithful in private prayer.

grammar!
A second lesson for Peter was that Christ's primary purpose during His earthly ministry was not to heal but to proclaim the Kingdom of God. The joyful message of Christ was that if the people would respond, the kingdom for which they had yearned would be established soon (although Christ's death would still have been necessary: in the O.T. predictions suffering precedes triumph, cf. Isa. 53).

Peter's third lesson was that the people flocked to the Master not because of His message of the kingdom but because of His ministry as the Great Physician. The masses preferred the temporal above the eternal. Peter's future ministry would be characterized by the same balance that marked the Master's ministry: some healing to confirm the message, but primarily the proclamation of the good news. Perhaps it was at this point in Peter's relationship with his Master that He learned the priorities for his later ministry, both with the Lord before Pentecost and with the apostles after Pentecost.

A final lesson to Peter related to the scope of the Master's ministry. In His ministry there were no privileged towns or people. His offer of salvation and the kingdom needed to be preached to all of Israel. Nothing could deter Him from fulfilling this divine mission. Never at any time was Peter able to prevent the Lord from fulfilling this divine "must". There is no record of anyone ever persuading the Lord to do other than He had planned.

PETER'S THIRD CALL

Mt. 10:1-4; Mk. 3:13-19; Lk. 6:12-16

1. The Context:

The first call of Peter had been one to friendship; the second call was one to discipleship. The final call was to apostleship and it is of such importance that all three Synoptics record it. Luke alone records that the event was of such significance, that Christ spent all night in prayer before His selection (6:12).

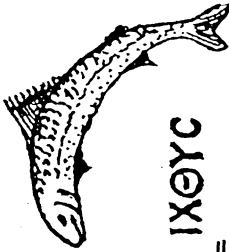
The call of the Twelve marks an important epoch in the history of Jesus. Christ had been in the habit of surrounding Himself with a group of followers. There were certain close disciples but also a larger group developed, which now accompanied Him wherever He went. There arose an urgent need to limit the number of followers. Several reasons for this selection of the Twelve may be suggested. (1) His followers had grown so numerous as to be an encumbrance and an impediment to His movements, especially in the long journeys which mark the later parts of the Master's ministry. It was impossible that all who believed could continue henceforth to follow Him, in the literal sense, wherever He might go. (2) It was the Savior's desire that there be a group of men who would be witnesses of His life, work, death, and resurrection, who would continue His work on earth long after His departure. This fact gives significance to their being called apostles, sent-ones. The resurrected Christ would send them with a special message to the world. (3) But even while Christ was still on earth, the apostles had an important function. Matthew relates the fact that the disciples received power over demons, sickness, and various infirmities. They were endued with Messianic authority and sent as forerunners, two by two, to the house of Israel, to proclaim that the Messiah was in their midst to establish the kingdom. Their task was therefore to saturate the little nation with the good news of the kingdom (Mt. 10:1-10). The apostles were therefore Christ's close associates, His temporary missionaries, and His future witnesses.

2. The Time:

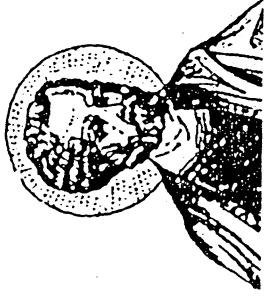
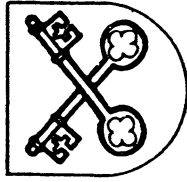
The time when this selection was made, though not absolutely determined, is fixed in relation to certain leading events in the Gospel history. John speaks of the Twelve as an organized company at the period of the feeding of the five thousand. Since the miracle took place, according to John (6:4), shortly before the Passover season, the Twelve must have been chosen at least one year before the crucifixion. Matthew speaks for the first time of the Twelve as a distinct body in connection with their mission in Galilee. Luke, on the other hand, gives a formal record of the selection, as a preface to his account of the Sermon on the Mount, and he gives the impression that the one event immediately precedes the other. Mark confirms Luke's view that the Twelve were called just before the Sermon on the Mount was delivered, and some considerable time before they were sent forth on their preaching



The Three Calls of Peter



IXΘΥC



	First Call	Second Call	Third Call
Scripture:	John 1:35-40	Mt. 4:18-22; Mk. 1:16-20; Lk. 5:1-11	Mt. 10:1-4; Mk. 3:13-19; Lk. 6:12-16
Purpose:	ACQUAINTANCESHIP	DISCIPLESHIP	APOSTLESHIP
Place:	AT THE JORDAN	SEA OF GALILEE WEST SHORE	MOUNTAIN ON THE W. SHORE OF SEA OF GALILEE
Relationship:	OCCASIONAL COMPANIONSHIP	ASSISTING IN CHRIST'S MINISTRY	CONTINUOUS PRESENCE AND AUTHORITY
Something New:	NEW NAME PETER	TOTAL DEVOTION TO CHRIST	GIVEN THE MESSAGE, MINISTRY AND AUTHORITY OF CHRIST
Quote:	"You shall be called Cephas (Peter)" Jn. 1:42	"From now on you will catch men" Lk. 5:10	"He chose twelve which he also named apostles" Lk. 6:13



Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.

and healing mission. It is tolerably certain that this calling was a prelude to and gave cause to the great sermon on the principles of the kingdom. The Sermon was delivered towards the close of Christ's first lengthy ministry in Galilee, during the time which intervened between the two visits to Jerusalem on festive occasions mentioned in the second and fifth chapters of John's Gospel.

3. The Circumstances:

Luke already mentioned more than once the need of prayer, which so often drew Jesus into solitude (4:42; 5:16). But the expression, which he uses in reference to Christ's prayer before the selection of the Twelve carries special weight. Christ went out into the mountain to pray and he continued all night in prayer to God (6:12). The word translated "to pass the night in watching" is a word rarely used in Greek and found only here in the N.T. The participle is connected with an imperfect verb (continuous action in the past), which expresses the persevering energy of Christ's vigil. The picture before the reader is that of a concerned Master, separating Himself from His disciples at the foot of the mountain and wandering alone into the mountains as the twilight falls upon the rugged Galilean scene. All night He agonizes in prayer. His work has reached a climax and has arrived at a critical point. The Master takes counsel with His Father and the choosing of the twelve apostles is the fruit of this lengthy season of prayer. During this profound communion the disciples are presented one by one to God whose finger then points out those to whom He was to entrust the salvation of the world. The Father and Son reached a perfect harmony.

The mountain to which Jesus retreated was evidently some well-known mountain, for all three Synoptics make reference to it and it is called the mountain. It is now usually identified with the Horns of Hattin, two lofty peaks not far from the western shore of the Sea of Galilee.

And when morning dawned He summoned to Him "whom He Himself would," a striking phrase which suggests forcibly the free exercise of the Savior's will; and out of those who answered His summons in these early morning hours He again "appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach, and to have authority to cast out devils" (Mk. 3:14-15, R.V.) The picture here is that of Christ addressing a large group of disciples who had followed Him: "He called His disciples: and He chose from them twelve, whom also he named apostles" (Lk. 1:13). In this one act the men were chosen; they received the title of Apostle; and they were given a commission which they were later to fulfill. The apostles ("ones sent forth") were to be ambassadors who would not only carry a message but who represented the sender and had a definite work to fulfill. Hitherto the men had been learners only; henceforth they were to be apostles, missionaries, carrying to others the truth that they themselves had learned.

As the morning went along, Christ saw the multitudes which were coming as at other times to look for Him. But He had a special message for His disciples only, not to be shared with the crowd. Thus "he went

up into a mountain; and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying. . ." (Mt. 5:1-2). It was, it appears, an exclusive company which listened to the sermon in which He outlined His program. The King is ready to present Himself to the nation in full-scale effort on His part and that of His newly-appointed apostles. He communicates His plan to His followers. He first outlines for His inner circle that Kind of citizens that are necessary for His kingdom, their character, and nature. He explains how His program is contrary to that of the religious leaders of His day but consonant with the true spirit of the Old Testament. There follows certain warnings and exhortations and an emphasis on the supernatural righteousness which alone will secure an entrance into His kingdom--a righteousness which is obtained by the reception of Him as the Messiah (7:24-29).

4. The Locality:

As already indicated, the Mount of Beatitudes was what is now called the Horns of Hattin, between Mount Tabor and Tiberias. Robinson gives the following description of this mountain (ii. p. 370, as quoted by Lange, Matthew, p. 100):

The road passes down to Hattin on the west of the Tell; as we approached, we turned off from the path toward the right, in order to ascend the Eastern Horn. --As seen on this side, the Tell or mountain is merely a low ridge, some thirty or forty feet in height, and not ten minutes in length from east to west. At its eastern end it is elevated forming a point or horn, perhaps sixty feet above the plain; and at the western end, another not so high; these give to the ridge, at a distance, the appearance of a saddle, and are called Kurun Hattin, "Horns of Hattin." But the singularity of the ridge is, that, on reaching the top, you find that it lies along the very border of the great southern plain, where this latter sinks off at once by a precipitous offset, to the lower plain of Hattin, from which the northern side of the Tell rises very steeply, not much less than 400 feet. . . . The summit of the eastern Horn is a little circular plain; and the top of the lower ridge between the two horns is also flattened to a plain. The whole mountain is of limestone.

The Mount of Beatitudes lay in a southwesterly direction, about seven miles from Capernaum. It can be easily imagined that, when Jesus returned from His journey through Galilee, having reached this point, He dismissed the multitudes who had followed Him. The description of the top of the mountain and of the plain agrees with the requirements of the case. It is of special interest to note that on the very spot where Jesus had described the kingdom of heaven, and pronounced the meek and peacemakers blessed, the most bloody battles have been fought! On the 5th of July, 1187, the celebrated battle of Hattin took place, in which the last remnant of the Crusaders was destroyed on the height of Tell Hattin, after the army had been beaten by Sultan Saladin in the valley. Again, on the plain of Jezreel, Bonaparte defeated, in 1799, with 3000 men, an army of 25,000 Turks.

5. The Classification of the Disciples:

It is noteworthy that all four catalogs or lists of the disciples arrange their names into three classes, of which each class includes the same names and is headed by the same name, viz. the first by Peter, the second by Philip, and the third by James the son of Alphaeus.

	Matt. 10:2-4	Mk. 3:16-19	Lk. 6:14-16	Acts 1:13
1	SIMON PETER			
2	Andrew	James	Andrew	James
3	James	John	James	John
4	John	Andrew	John	Andrew
5	PHILIP			
6	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
7	Thomas	Matthew	Matthew	Bartholomew
8	Matthew	Thomas	Thomas	Matthew
9	JAMES THE SON OF ALPHEUS			
10	Lebbaeus	Thaddaeus	Simon the Zealot	Simon the Zealot
11	Simon the Canaanite	Simon	Judas brother of James	Judas brother of James
12	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Vacant

* Based on Lange's Commentary, "Matthew," p. 181.

* [I subjoin the following synoptic table which exhibits the agreement and the difference, and the fact that all the four catalogues arrange the names into three classes, of which each class includes the same names and is headed by the same name, viz. the first by Peter, the second by Philip, the third by James the son of Alphaeus.—P. S.]

	Matthew x. 2-4.	Mark iii. 16-19.	Luke vi. 14-16.	Acts i. 13.
1	Σίμων Πέτρος			
2	Ἀνδρέας	Ἰάκωβος	Ἀνδρέας	Ἰάκωβος
3	Ἰάκωβος	Ἰωάννης	Ἰάκωβος	Ἰωάννης
4	Ἰωάννης	Ἀνδρέας	Ἰωάννης	Ἀνδρέας
5	Φίλιππος			
6	Βαρθολομαῖος	Βαρθολομαῖος	Βαρθολομαῖος	Θωμᾶς
7	Θωμᾶς	Ματθαῖος	Ματθαῖος	Βαρθολομαῖος
8	Ματθαῖος	Θωμᾶς	Θωμᾶς	Ματθαῖος
9	Ἰάκωβος ὁ τοῦ Ἀλφαίου			
10	Λεβθαῖος	Θαδδαῖος	Σίμων ὁ καλ. Ζηλωτής	Σίμων ὁ Ζηλωτής
11	Σίμων ὁ Καναναῖος	Σίμων	Ἰούδας Ἰακώβου	Ἰούδας Ἰακώβου
12	Ἰούδας Ἰσκαριώτης	Ἰούδας Ἰσκαριώθ.		Vacant.

Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, VIII, 181.

5. The Classification of the Disciples:

It is noteworthy that all four catalogs or lists of the disciples arrange their names into three classes, of which each class includes the same names and is headed by the same name, viz. the first by Peter, the second by Philip, and the third by James the son of Alphaeus.

	Matt. 10:2-4	Mk. 3:16-19	Lk. 6:14-16	Acts 1:13
1	SIMON PETER			
2	Andrew	James	Andrew	James
3	James	John	James	John
4	John	Andrew	John	Andrew
5	PHILIP			
6	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
7	Thomas	Matthew	Matthew	Bartholomew
8	Matthew	Thomas	Thomas	Matthew
9	JAMES THE SON OF ALPHEUS			
10	Lebbaeus	Thaddaeus	Simon the Zealot	Simon the Zealot
11	Simon the Canaanite	Simon	Judas brother of James	Judas brother of James
12	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Vacant

6. The Names of the Apostles:

From the occurrence of so many double names of the Apostles, one is naturally led to infer that each had his peculiar designation. But Judas the traitor had none: in the deepest sense he remained anonymous--the man of Kerioth. These additional names serve in many respects to indicate the characteristics of the Apostles. (For a detailed explanation of the names cf. Lange, "Matthew," pp. 182-184).

7. The Number of the Apostles:

The biblical symbolism of number is worthy of more serious attention than it has received in biblical interpretation. There is room here for fanciful theories; but the main points hardly admit of serious doubt. The careful student of the Scriptures is struck with the frequency of the use of certain numbers, especially 3,4,7,10, and 12, in significant connection with holy ideas and things, from Genesis to Revelation. It is impossible to resolve all this into a mere accident or an unmeaning play. God is "the wonderful Numberer, the Numberer of secrets" (Dan. 8:13) and "doeth all things in number and measure and weight"(Wisdom 11:20). The numbers are expressive of order, symmetry, proportion, and relativity. Lange (Matthew, p. 183) suggests that the number 3 is the symbol of synthesis and trinity, while 4 is the symbol of humanity or the created world. He adds that 12, being the product of 3 and 4, symbolizes, from the twelve patriarchs and twelve tribes down to the twelve foundations and twelve gates of the heavenly Jerusalem, the indwelling God in the human family, or the interpenetration of the world by God. Twelve then seems to symbolize God's presence among men. A.B. Bruce (The Training of the Twelve) p.33, follows a similar train of thought when he observes that 12 expressed in figures what Jesus claimed to be, and what He had come to do, and thus furnished a support to the faith and stimulus to the devotion of His Followers. The number 12 hints that Jesus was the divine Messiah who had come to set up His kingdom over Israel. That the number 12 was intended to have a such symbolic meaning can be seen from Christ's own words to His disciples: "Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28). Summing up the significance of the number 12, it seems to indicate God's presence among men in the person of the Messiah who came to establish His kingdom over His nation.

§ 58. THE STILLING OF THE TEMPEST.

MATT. 8: 18' 23-27.

18 Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side. (§ 86)

23 And when he was entered into a boat, his disciples followed him. 24 And behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the boat was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. 25 And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Save, Lord; we perish. 26 And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. 27 And the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?

MARK 4: 35-41.

35 And on that day, when even was come, he saith unto them, Let us go over unto the other side. 36 And leaving the multitude, they take him with them, even as he was, in the boat. And other boats were with him. 37 And there ariseth a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the boat, insomuch that the boat was now filling. 38 And he himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion: and they awoke him, and say unto him, 1Master³, carest thou not that we perish? 39 And he awoke, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 40 And he said unto them, Why are ye fearful? have ye not yet faith? 41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

LUKE 8: 22-25.

22 Now it came to pass on one of those days, that he entered into a boat, himself and his disciples: and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake: and they launched forth. 23 But as they sailed he fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filling *with water*, and were in jeopardy. 24 And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, master, we perish. And he awoke, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm. 25 And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And being afraid they marvelled, saying one to another, Who then is this, that he commandeth even the winds and the water, and they obey him.

THE STILLING OF THE TEMPEST

Mt. 8:23-27; Mk. 4:35-41; Lk. 8:22-25

1. The Departure from the Shore:

Without doubt the stilling of the tempest took place on the same evening on which the Savior had delivered the parable of Mt. 13. The long day--one of the few in the public life of the Lord where we find ourselves in a condition to follow Him almost from step to step--was visible hurrying towards evening, but still Jesus notices around Him numerous throngs desiring instruction and help. If, therefore, He is to enjoy the rest which at last has become absolutely necessary, He must withdraw Himself from the throng and give the multitude opportunity to reflect upon the parables they have heard. Accordingly He gives immediate command to His disciples as to the departure, after He had previously left behind on the shore the scribe who had desired to follow Him and another whom He called in vain (Mt. 8:19-22). His disciples took Him with them in their vessel, according to the graphic expression of Mark, "as he was" or "even as he was" (Mk. 4:36), that is, without any further preparation for the journey. They had spent the day on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee and were headed for the less populated eastern shore.

2. The Danger of the Storm:

The boat into which they entered must have been a definite boat, for ploion has a definite article. Perhaps it was a specific vessel, held ready by the disciples for such a time as this. Mark observes (4:36) that "other boats were with Him," indicating the fervor of the multitude, who wanted to be with Him at all times. Matthew gives the order of embarkation. Christ entered into a boat and "his disciples followed him" (8:23). Thus, the immediate disciples were in the boat with Him and a large company of disciples followed Him at a distance, probably close enough to see the Lord, for, according to Matt. 8:27 the men marveled at Christ's miracle, but far enough away so as not to endanger their and the Savior's safety.

The need for this withdrawal from the multitude is seen in the Evangelist's description of the Savior: "And he himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion" (Mk. 4:38), "but he was asleep" (Matt. 8:24), "but as they sailed he fell asleep" (Luke 8:23). Exhaustion overcame the Lord. Apparently soon after leaving the shore, the Savior retired to the back of the boat, and after this exhausting day, placed his tired head on the cushion, a specific cushion on the boat, belonging to it, for Mark uses the definite article. It was thus not a soft pillow on which He rested but either the boat seat itself or a cushion which covered the seats of the boat.

With multitudes following Him even on the sea, Christ was sleeping (imperfect, continuous action). Nothing disturbed Him and He found some relief from the arduous labors of the day.

The scene is very picturesque. The disciples, with Peter as their leader, are rowing the sleeping Lord across the sea, while they no doubt are rehearsing the day's activities. The sun is setting behind the western hills, when suddenly there comes a storm with the ferocity of an earthquake, descending on the lake with great force from the summit of Hermon. Matthew uses seismos, which is the technical word for an earthquake (Trench, II, 110n.) and is often so employed in the N.T. Figuratively and literally it is used of any other great shaking. The other two Evangelists use the word lailaps, a whirlwind which, Luke informs us, comes down, no doubt from the snowy summit of Mt. Hermon. A giant quaking and furious gusts trouble the waters of the lake. The old Palestine traveler of another generation, the renowned Dr. Thomson, who himself witnessed violent storms on the lake which lasted for three days, writes concerning the storms:

To understand the causes of these sudden and violent tempests, we must remember that the lake lies low (katabe lailaps, Luke viii. 23), six hundred feet lower than the ocean, that the vast and naked plateaus of Jaulan rise to a great height, spreading backward to the wilds of Hauran, and upward to the snowy Hermon; that the watercourses have cut out profound ravines and wild gorges, converging to the head of the lake, and that these act like gigantic funnels to draw down the winds from the mountains. (The Land and the Book, part ii, ch. xxv; cited by Trench, II, 113, p. 374.)

Elsewhere Thomson remarks:

Small as the lake is, and placid, in general, as a molten mirror, I have repeatedly seen it quiver, and leap, and boil like a caldron, when driven by fierce winds from the eastern mountains; and the waves ran high--high enough to fill or "cover" the ships, as Matthew has it. In the midst of such a gale "calmly slept the Son of God," in the hinder part of the ship, until awakened by the terrified disciples. (Ibid., 329).

Christ was not aroused by the tumult and confusion of the moment. The disciples could not understand this. They were frantically trying to keep the boat from capsizing and Peter, the expert fisherman, no doubt issued one order after another above the roaring of the wind and the slashing of the waves. Some of the disciples probably started to drain or empty the water from the boat, as one wave after another inundated the bow of the ship. Finally, they gave up in frustration. Nothing helped. Mark has the graphic description of the incident: "the waves beat into the boat." The imperfect tense vividly pictures the waves rolling over the sides of the boat "so that the boat was covered with the waves" (Matt. 8:24) and "the boat was now filling" (Mark 4:37).

Finally, with haste and terror the disciples roused their Master. The double compellation, "Master, master" (Luke) always marks a special earnestness on the part of the speaker, and as God's speakings to man are ever of this character, it will often be found in them (Gen. 22:11; Ex. 3:4; I Sam. 3:10; Lk. 10:41; Acts 9:4); as also in man's to God

(Matt. 7:22; 27:46). In Mark the disciples rouse their Lord with words almost of rebuke, as if He were unmindful of their safety, "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" though in their "we" they included their beloved Lord as well as themselves. Matthew records another of their cries for help: "Lord, save us at once (aorist), we are perishing (present linear)." Mark still uses a different word. Here the disciples address Him as "Teacher." These various expressions and titles for the Savior give evidence of their utter faintness of heart: "Master, master!" "Lord!" "Teacher!" There must have been a confused shouting and pleading. Without a doubt the storm must have been very unexpected and violent, for the experienced sailors--at least four of them were present--like these to be attacked by such a violent terror. There was something beyond the natural danger which brought terror to their hearts. Satan himself was the instigator of this sudden storm.

3. The Displeasure of the Lord:

Matthew relates that as soon as the Savior awoke, while still in a sitting position, he rebukes the disciples for their little faith. They were not wholly without faith; for, believing in the midst of their unbelief, they turned to Christ in their fear. They had faith, but it was not quick and living. It was not at hand, as the Lord's question (Luke 8:25) sufficiently implies: "Where is your faith?" They had it, as the weapon which a soldier has, but cannot lay hold of it at the moment when he needs it most. Their sin lay not in seeking help of Him; for this they were not faulted. Their sin lay in the excess of their terror, "why are ye so fearful," in the counting it actually possible that the ship which bore their Lord could ever perish.

They were shake in their very being. The magnitude and severity of the storm can be gauged by their reaction. Their fear indicated their spiritual state. They had the Lord of the wind and waves with them in the boat. He was still Master even if asleep in the storm. They had not yet come to feel that Jesus was really Lord of nature. They had accepted His Messiahship but all the conclusions from it they had not yet drawn.

4. The Display of Omnipotence:

Matthew records that after the Savior rebuked His disciples He arose (having sat during His admonitions) and rebuked a two-fold: the wind and the sea. The force of the word "rebuked" must not be missed. It is used by all three Evangelists. Mark alone adds another direct address to the elements, "Peace, be still." As Thomson observes, "To regard this as mere oratorical personification would be absurd;. . . rather is there here. . . a distinct tracing up of all the discords and disharmonies in the outward world to their ultimate ground, even as this person can be no other than Satan, the author of all disorders alike in the natural and in the spiritual world." (Ibid., 112.)

Undoubtedly the powers of evil, while the wearied Jesus was lying asleep, were trying to make the boat sink along with Him and His disciples through the violence of the storm. For by these means, as they thought, God's whole plan of salvation could be frustrated. This

MATT. 14:13-23.

13 Now when Jesus heard it, he withdrew from thence in a boat, to a desert place apart: and when the multitudes heard thereof, they followed him ¹on foot from the cities. 14 And he came forth, and saw a great multitude, and he had compassion on them, and healed their sick. 15 And when even was come, the disciples came to him, saying, The place is desert, and the time is already past; send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves food. 16 But Jesus said unto them, They have no need to go away; give ye them to eat. 17 And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. 18 And he said, Bring them hither to me. 19 And he commanded the multitudes to ¹sit down on the grass; and he took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake and gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitudes. 20 And they did all eat ¹, and were filled: and they took up that which remained over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. 21 And they that did eat were about five thousand men, beside ² women and children.

MARK 6:30-46.

30 And the apostles gather themselves together unto Jesus; and they told him all things, whatsoever they had done, and whatsoever they had taught. 31 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. 32 And they went away in the boat to a desert place apart. 33 And the people saw them going, and many knew them, and they ran there together ² ¹on foot from all the cities, and outwent them. 34 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. 35 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: 36 send them away, that they may go into the country and villages round about, and buy themselves somewhat to eat. 37 But he answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred ²pennyworth ³ of bread, and give them to eat? 38 And he saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes. 39 And he commanded them that all should ¹sit down by companies upon the green grass. 40 And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties. 41 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

LUKE 9:10-17.

10 And the apostles, when they were returned, declared unto him what things they had done. And he took them, and withdrew apart to a city called Bethsaida. 11 But the multitudes perceiving it followed him: and he welcomed them, and spake to them of the kingdom of God, and them that had need of healing he healed ². 12 And the day began to wear away; and the twelve came, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals ⁴: for we are here in a desert place. 13 But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more than five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy food for all this people. 14 For they were about five thousand men. And he said unto his disciples, Make them ¹sit down in companies, about fifty each. 15 And they did so, and made them all ¹sit down. 16 And he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake; and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude. 17 And they did eat ⁴, and were all filled: and there was taken up that which remained over to them of broken pieces, twelve baskets.

JOHN 6:1-15.

1 After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. 2 And a great multitude followed him, because they beheld the signs which he did on them that were sick. 3 And Jesus went up into the mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. 4 Now the passover, which was at hand. 5 Jesus therefore lifting up his eyes, and seeing that a great multitude cometh unto him, saith unto Philip, Whence are we to buy ²bread, that these may eat? 6 And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. 7 Philip answered him, Two hundred ²pennyworth ⁶ of ³bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little. 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, 9 There is a lad here, which ⁵ hath five barley loaves, and two fishes: but what are these among so many? 10 Jesus said, Make the people sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. 11 Jesus therefore took the loaves; and having given thanks, he distributed to them that were set down; likewise also of the fishes as much as they would. 12 And when they were filled, he saith unto his disciples, Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, that nothing be lost. 13 So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with broken pieces from the five barley loaves, which remained over unto them that had eaten.

22 And straightway he constrained the disciples to enter into the boat, and to go before him unto the other side, till he should send the multitudes away. 23 And after he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into the mountain apart to pray: and when even was come, he was there alone.

among them all. 42 And they did all eat, and were filled. 43 And they took up broken pieces, twelve basketfuls, and also of the fishes. 44 And they that ate the loaves were five thousand men.

45 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. 46 And after he had taken leave of them, he departed into the mountain to pray.

14 When therefore the people saw the ¹sign which he did, they said, This is of a truth the prophet that cometh into the world.

15 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.

explains why Christ rebuked the winds and the waves. He did not regard them as evil spirits but by rebuking them He actually rebuked the powers of Satan which at the moment were active in the elements.

The miracle was two-fold. Immediately the raging winds abated. There was no slow diminishing but a sudden cessation of the roaring cyclone. Even when the storm was subsided, a disturbed movement of the water and the air continues for some time. This was not the case here. Both the air and the water returned to a supernatural calmness. And this valuable point was not missed by Peter and the others.

5. The Declarations of the Disciples:

Fear gives way to astonishment. He, the Lord of nature and its laws, had performed another miracle in the sphere with which the disciples and especially Peter were most familiar, that of the elements. In Luke 5:8 they were astonished at the miraculous draught of fish, at which they were experts. Here they witness another miracle of nature of such magnitude, that the men who had lived on the lake all their lives and knew every mood and nuance could only marvel. Two reactions are recorded of them: they feared and they marveled. This was true also of the men in the boats behind them. Matthew observes (8:27) that "the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" This is not a question of doubt but of deepest astonishment. They knew that Christ could perform miracles but they had never yet conceded to Him His full power, His omnipotence.

6. The Design of the Miracle:

The miracle served a three-fold purpose. First of all, it rebuked the powers of Satan which he had unleashed to destroy the Savior and His disciples. Its effect was thus in the spiritual realm. Satan lost yet another battle. A second, and no doubt primary purpose was that the faith of the disciples might be strengthened. With them was the omnipotent Lord of creation. Geldenhuis is correct in observing: "The sudden and complete calm which fell over the lake proved the reality of the miracle, especially in the eyes of the veteran fishermen who knew how impossible such a thing is in the natural course of events." The second purpose was thus related to the natural realm. A third purpose had to do with the future. As their little ship had been thrown around in the lake, while they were guiding it, so would they as the young leaders of the church be thrown about in the world. But at the right time the Omnipotent Pilot would come to aid. He would be on board the ship of His church as He was on board of the frail boat. The gates of hell would never overcome the church nor any individual person in the church. As long as the Pilot is on board there is safety.

THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND

Mt. ¹⁴ 14:15-21; Mk. 6:35-44; Lk. 9:12-17; Jn. 6:5-14.

1. The Priority of the Miracle:

Among the miracles of Jesus the feeding of the five thousand seems to have been particularly important. Its importance is indicated by the fact that it is narrated in all four of the Gospels (Matt. 14:13-21 and parallels). Even the Gospel of John, which is concerned for the most part with what happened in Judaea, here runs parallel with the Synoptic Gospels and narrates an event which happened in Galilee. There is yet another reason for the importance of the miracle. It is not only recorded by all the Evangelists, the only miracle with this honor, but it is the miracle which left the greatest impact on the people of Christ's time. While the raising of Lazarus showed most clearly His Deity, the miracle of the loaves had the greatest number of witnesses--well over 5000--who also partook of the immediate benefits. Experience is the greatest teacher and the miracles must have left a deep impression on those who experienced it. Finally, the miracle climaxes the popularity of Christ and marks the beginning of His rejection.

2. The Period of the Miracle:

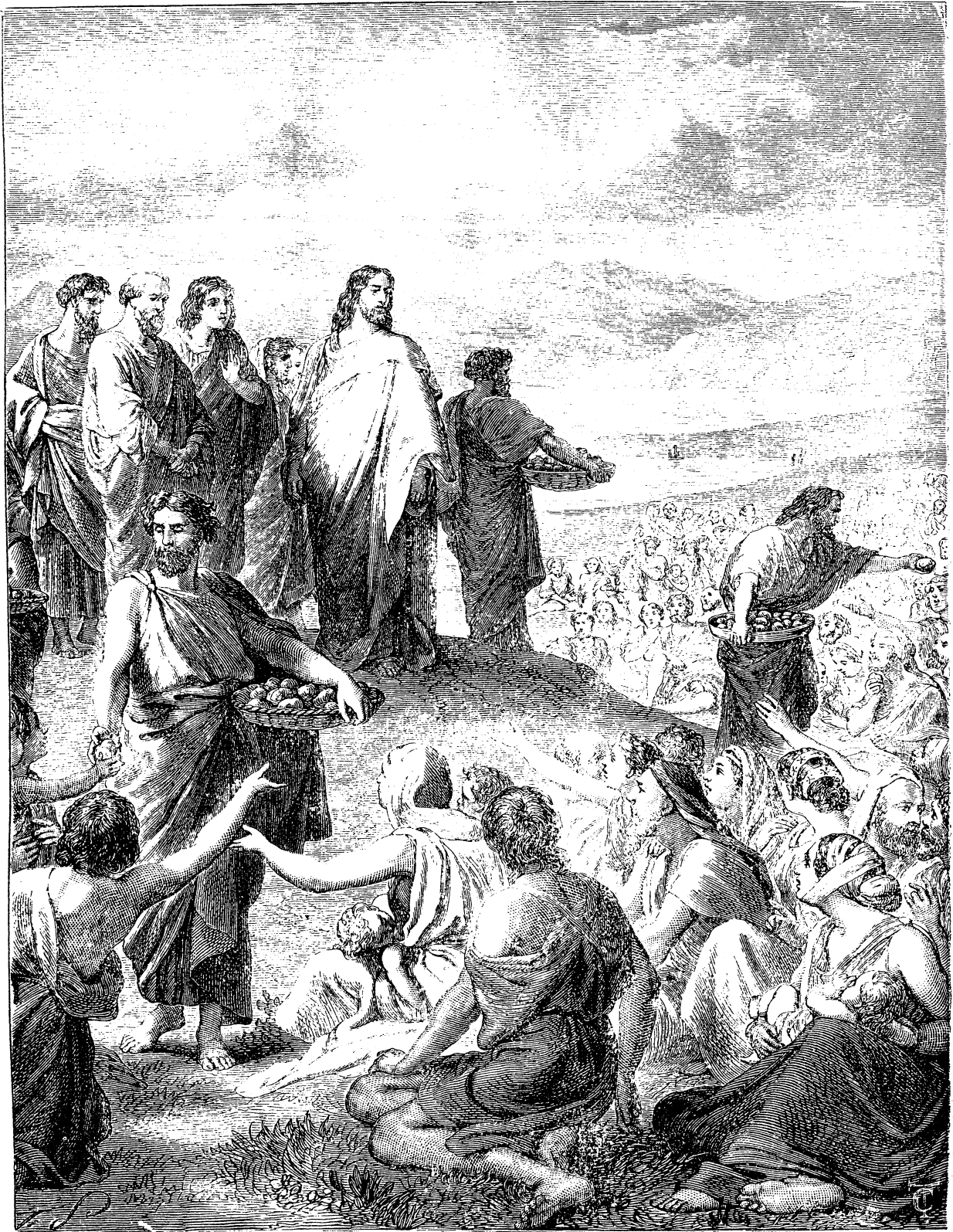
Two reasons prompted Christ and His disciples to leave the crowds of the western shore and retire to the relatively tranquil and deserted eastern shore. Matthew connects the Lord's retirement to the desert place on the other side of the lake with the murder of John the Baptist. Word had reached Christ and the disciples that Herod had put to death John and because of this, or because of Herod's unwelcome interest in Jesus Himself, it was best that He withdrew to a "lonely place" out of Herod's jurisdiction.

Then too, the return of the twelve from their mission and their report to Christ (probably in Capernaum) showed the Savior that they needed spiritual and physical refreshment, far away from the hustling crowd.

At the time of the feeding of the five thousand the popular favor had reached its height. Jesus had been rejected by some before this. The scribes and Pharisees had opposed Him. The members of His own family had misunderstood Him. His home town had rejected Him twice. But for the most part He had enjoyed the favor of the people. They were flocking to Him wherever He went. To get rest for Himself and His disciples, therefore, Jesus withdrew from the crowds into a lonely place across the lake.

3. The Place of the Miracle:

From the four narratives of this stupendous miracle it can be gathered that: (1) the place where the multiplication of the loaves took place was near Bethsaida (Luke 9:10); (2) that it was a desert or at least deserted place; (3) that there was a mountain close at hand; (4) that it was near the shore of the lake, for they came to it



CHRIST FEEDING THE MULTITUDE.

“HE BLESSED, AND BROKE, AND GAVE THE LOAVES TO HIS DISCIPLES, AND THE DISCIPLES TO THE MULTITUDE.”—Matt. 14 : 19.

by boat, and (5) that it was a smooth, grassy spot, capable of seating many thousand people. Thompson and others suggest, therefore, that the Bethsaida was that of the eastern area, at the extreme north-eastern tip of the lake.

Trench quotes Stanley (p. 205) as to the locale of the city:

"Bethsaida" is the eastern city of that name, which, from the importance of the new city Julias, built there by Philip the Tetrarch, would give its name to the surrounding desert tract. The desert place was either one of the green tablelands visible from the hills on the western side, or more probably part of the rich plain at the mouth of the Jordan. In the parts of this plain not cultivated by the hand of man would be found the "much green grass" still fresh in the spring of the year when this event occurred, before it had faded away in the summer sun,--the tall grass, which, broken down by the feet of the thousands there gathered together, would make as it were "couches" (κλισῖας) for them to recline upon.

This Bethsaida must be carefully distinguished from "Bethsaida of Galilee" (Matt. 11:21; John 1:44; 12:21).

4. The Passage across the Sea:

The disciples and the Lord, distraught at the news of the death of someone whom they loved, John the Baptist, and exhausted from their labors in Capernaum, decided to cross the sea to a safer place, a place of rest in the area in which the mild ruler Philip held sway, the only one of Herod's sons who deserved the name of a good prince. Christ Himself gave the command to depart and it is surprising that the disciples themselves did not suggest that they leave. After all, "there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat" (Mark 6:31). But they were joyful in their labor and it was their Master who not only saw to the physical and spiritual well-being of the multitudes but also to that of the disciples.

The small group must virtually tear itself away from the crowd and enter into a boat. However, the retirement they look for will not come. They are followed by the multitude who come "afoot" or "by land" (Mark 6:33). Their desire to be with the Savior is seen in their haste. Although they had to travel a greater distance than the boat, they arrived there first (Mark 6:33 "outwent"). When Christ "comes forth" He sees a great multitude and has "compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd" (Mark 6:34). The Savior is well aware of their spiritual and physical needs and immediately resumes to teach them the glad tidings of the kingdom of God.

The large crowds in this somewhat remote area can best be explained by John's comment (6:4): "And the passover, the feast of the Jews, was nigh". The time must have been fairly early in the day as the small group landed on the north-eastern shores of the sea, to be welcomed by a large motley crowd of pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem for the principal feast of the Jews. Luke comments that the

Lord graciously welcomed the throng, when there would have been every reason for irritability and complaint. Christ proceeded to "speak to them of the Kingdom of God, and them that had need of healing he healed" (9:11). The picture given by John is that of Jesus going up into the mountain, probably very close to the water's edge, and sitting with His disciples to teach the multitudes (6:3) before beginning His healing ministry.

5. The Preparation for the Miracle:

When the day "began to wear away" (Luke 9:12), probably shortly after midday, the disciples, no doubt from fear that the weaker persons in the multitude might collapse through hunger and fatigue if they had spent the afternoon and the night in the open without provisions, asked Him to send the people to the surrounding towns and villages to find lodging and provisions. Jesus answers that they must give the necessary food to the multitude.

Perhaps somewhat earlier, the conversation with Philip took place. According to John, Christ enquired of Philip how the multitude might be fed. He asked the question in order to test Philip's faith, whose response should have been, "Lord, you take charge of the situation. You can still the storm, heal the sick--certainly provision for such a multitude is not beyond your power." But Philip, who represents the group of the disciples here, thought in purely materialistic terms. Since Judas carried the purse, one can imagine Philip asking Judas how much their total supply was. The answer was that they possessed hardly enough for the crowd. Their fund was depleted. Not even 200 denaries (200 days' wages) could buy enough supply for such a throng.

The other disciples, perhaps listening in on the conversation, now come to the same conclusion. It is high time that the multitude eat. Two reasons are proffered for the need for food. "It is late in the day, way past lunch time (Luke 9:12) and we are in a desert place (Matt.14:15). Lord, send the people to nearby villages around where they can lodge and obtain provisions. After all, you have labored long enough and it is time for you to take a rest. Bethsaida is too small for everyone, so give them enough time to find a place for food and rest overnight, before then continue on their pilgrimage to Jerusalem tomorrow.

The Savior tells the disciples that the people have no need to leave. They are tired enough after the hasty pursuit across the northern shore earlier in the day. "You give them to eat!" The disciples pick up Philip's proverbial sum of 200 denaries and ask if they should go and purchase food for that sum, for them an impossible outlay. Christ knows well the depleted common fund could not purchase enough provisions. He asks them, "How many loaves have ye? Go and see." They disperse among the crowd and finally Andrew, the brother of Simon, returns with a little lad who possesses 5 barley loaves and two small fishes. Now this was the homeliest of fare (2 Kings 7:1; Jud. 7:13; Ez. 4:12). Wordsworth rightly remarks: "One person, and he a child; and he has only five loaves, and they of barley; and two fishes, and they small." Cited by Lange, John, p. 210n. Barley was the food of the poorer people. The lad was perhaps a bread vender accompanying the caravan. The loaves were baked in Jewish

fashion; bread cakes, in the shape of a plate. The sense of the disciples' remark is thus: "There is only one little trader here and he has only so much." The fishes were small roasted fish which went with relish and bread. As Andrew found the lad he no doubt negotiated with him about the sale, for when the disciples return in Matt. and Luke, they reply, "We have here five loaves and two fishes." The Master took the small morsel, placed it before Him,--Himself evidently on some elevated place on the hillside, making that the head of His table.

6. The Performing of the Miracle:

The command goes forth to the disciples: "Make all the companies sit down in the green grass," literally, "make them recline." The "green grass" and "much grass" indicate that it was spring. The miracle probably took place during the second half of March. Spring commences in the middle of February and the feast of Purim occurred around March 19 in that Year. (Lange, Matthew, p.266a).

The disciples are commanded to tell the people to sit down in an orderly fashion, by hundreds and by fifties, in distinct groups. It was a wise precaution, says Trench. "The vast assemblage was thus sub-divided and broken up into manageable portions; there was less danger of tumult and confusion, or that the weaker, the women and the children, should be past over, while the stronger and ruder unduly put themselves forward; the Apostles were able to pass easily up and down among the groups, and to minister in orderly succession to the necessities of all." (Trench, p.208).

These companies (the word is related to square garden plots) probably formed two semi-circles, an outer semi-circle of thirty hundreds and an inner semi-circle of forty fifties. It was the men (lit. males; John 6:10) who sat in these plots. The women and children were perhaps seated apart, according to Eastern manners. At any rate, they were not numerous, for it was a crowd of Passover pilgrims, who were mostly males. (Laidlaw, The Miracles of our Lord, p. 77)

Christ is thus pictured in an elevated position, overlooking the orderly arranged multitude on the grassy incline, all of them reclining as directed, with eyes expectantly on the one who could not elude them and who now promises to meet their need.

Two actions characterize our Savior. He took the loaves and first prayed the prayer of blessing, so customary for the Jews. He may have used the ancient Jewish form of thanksgiving: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who bringest forth bread from the earth" (Geldenhuys, Luke, p.271). After the usual grace before the meal he blessed the bread and fishes, so that through His divine power they were increased. The multiplication of the loaves and fishes must have taken place immediately after the prayer of Christ as He distributed the bread through the apostles to the eaters. Each apostle went to the head of a company with a basketful. He returns to the Lord for more. And each time, to the astonishment of the disciples and people, there was plenty to take away. The wondrous meal went on until they were filled.

The disciples finally joined in the eating, when at last the Master arose and said to them, "Gather up the fragments in baskets." These unused pieces were picked up and preserved for subsequent meals. The baskets were those commonly used by the Jews on a journey. More fragments were left than constituted the original portion. The miracle thus shows God's abundant liberality which provides enough for all but is far removed from waste. "Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, that nothing be lost" (John 6:12). God is a God of orderly arrangement, abundant provision, and judicious preservation.

7. The Purpose of the Miracle:

Beyond doubt, this miracle is the most significant in our Savior's ministry. This can be seen by the fact that all four Evangelists mention it. And besides, more people were experientially acquainted with the miracle and would subsequently promulgate it than any other. What was the special purpose of the miracle? After all, it was not actually necessary that the multitudes be fed. Although they were tired by this time, they could have found provisions in the surrounding villages.

Two major purposes seem to be in the mind of the Master. He wants to test His disciples and to teach them and the multitude. The disciples, including Peter, had just returned joyfully from their ministry, where they had proclaimed the good news of the kingdom. The miracle demonstrated that those who first seek this kingdom of God would never suffer any lack. The multitudes who had been without food for apparently three days (at least some of them) were desirous to be with the one whom they recognized as "that prophet" predicted by Moses in Deut. 18. Christ demonstrated to them that as their Messiah He could add all these things unto them, supply every physical need, once the spiritual condition was right.

Primarily, however, the miracle was directed towards the disciples who, like the multitude, once again saw that Jesus was the Lord over nature. They further saw that these who followed Christ would never be left forsaken. Christ Himself is the Bread of Life, both spiritually and physically--an important lesson for them to learn in light of their future ministry. In the case of Philip, representing no doubt the rest of the disciples, the Lord wanted to test the faith. They were to rely on Him in all situations of life. Their meager supply of food should have caused them to come to Him for the necessary provisions though they could not understand the "how" of the ultimate supply. Instead, Philip and the disciples still thought in a purely material way. They did not have enough money and the lunch available was just a small one. Christ performed the miracle to elevate their thinking to a higher plane and uses the miracle in the future to teach them that it is He who can meet every exigency of life--an important lesson not just for the disciples but for every believer today (Mark 18:14-18).

§ 67. JESUS WALKING ON THE WATER.

MATT. 14: 24-36.

24 But the boat² was now in the midst of the sea, distressed by the waves; for the wind was contrary. 25 And in the fourth watch of the night he came unto them, walking upon the sea. 26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is an apparition²; and they cried out for fear. 27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid. 28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee upon the waters. 29 And he said, Come. And Peter went down from the boat, and walked upon the waters, ¹to come to Jesus. 30 But when he saw the ²wind, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, Lord, save me. 31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and took hold of him, and saith unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? 32 And when they were gone up into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 And they that were in the boat worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.

34 And when they had crossed over, they came to the land, unto Gennesaret. 35 And when the men of that place knew him, they sent into all that region round about, and brought unto him all that were sick; 36 and they besought him that they might only touch the border of his garment: and as many as touched were made whole.

MARK 6: 47-56.

47 And when even was come, the boat was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. 48 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: 49 but they, when they saw him walking on the sea, supposed that it was an apparition¹, and cried out: 50 for they all saw him, and were troubled. But he straightway spake to them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.

51 And he went up unto them into the boat; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves; 52 for they understood not concerning the loaves, but their heart was hardened.

53 And when they had ³crossed over, they came to the land unto Gennesaret, and moored to the shore.

54 And when they were come out of the boat, straightway *the people* knew him, 55 and ran round about that whole region, and began to carry about on their beds those that were sick, where they heard he was. 56 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 as many as touched ¹him were made whole.

JOHN 6: 16-21.

16 And when evening came, his disciples went down unto the sea; 17 and they entered into a boat, and were going over the sea unto Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. 18 And the sea was rising by reason of a great wind that blew. 19 When therefore they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they beheld Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the boat: and they were afraid. 20 But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid.

21 They were willing therefore to receive him into the boat: and straightway the boat was at the land whither they were going.

WALKING ON THE WATER

Matt. 14:24-36; Mark 6:47-56; John 6:16-21

1. The Departure of the Disciples and Christ:

The narrative follows immediately that of the feeding of the 5000, an event with deep spiritual significance. Jesus is revealed as the second Moses, the Prophet of the end-time (cf. Deut. 18:15-19), feeding His people in the wilderness, and as the true Messiah, giving them (in symbol at least) the food which sustains the life of the age to come. There is a first-century evidence for the Jewish expectation that the gift of manna would be renewed when the Messiah would be revealed. The "twelve-baskets" (John 6:43) correspond, probably intentionally to the sum-total of the tribes of Israel (as also do the twelve apostles). F. F. Bruce, Matthew, pp. 48-49. As a result of this miracle, the people were planning to take Jesus by force in order to make Him king instead of Herod, and to lead Him to Jerusalem in a triumphal procession. They were correct, of course, in expecting an earthly Messiah who would rule over them. But they erred in allowing their wills to be swayed by purely physical considerations. They wanted Jesus because of the loaves and fishes (John 6:26) not because He could first of all, give them redemption (John 6:27). Thus while their aim was noble, their efforts were misplaced. For Christ to be their Messiah, He would first of all have to be their Savior. Then, too, He would establish the kingdom for which they longed in His own good time. As in so many instances, the multitude was wrong as to emphasis (the material rather than the spiritual) and as to time (their time rather than God's).

According to both Matthew and Mark, Christ acted to put a stop to this public fanaticism by leaving them. But first, He straightway "constrained His disciples to get into the ship." They were to precede Him to the western shore until "he should send the multitudes away" (Matt. 14:22). Peter and the others had to be literally constrained to enter the boat. No doubt they shared the popular enthusiasm of the multitude. They must have been most reluctant to leave their Master at the moment of His approaching exaltation. After all, they had just returned from their preaching mission, proclaiming the Kingdom of Heaven as at hand. And now the largest crowd they had ever seen was ready to coronate Christ. This was the moment they had been waiting for. They failed to understand, and that very consistently, that for Christ there must first be suffering before glory, humiliation before exaltation. The multitudes wanted to use Him for their own ends. The ultimate consequence would have been rebellion and ruin.

Reluctantly the disciples departed. Christ Himself sent away the multitudes and "withdrew again into the mountain himself alone" (John 6:15) to pray. The word "again" indicates that a special mountain is in view. Christ spent the night in prayer, as He did on so many occasions before special public ministries. One can picture the crowds as dispersing at the foot of the mountain. After all, they saw Jesus remaining behind and probably expected to find Him easily in the morning.

2. The Destination of the Disciples:

Mark records that Christ "constrainedⁱⁱ his disciples to enter into the boat, and to go before him unto the other side to Bethsaida (6:45). There is no contradiction here between St. Mark's Bethsaida and John's statement that they "went over the sea towards Capernaum" (6:17), since this Bethsaida is not identical with that just before mentioned by Luke (9:10), called Bethsaida Julius. Their new destination was the city of Philip and Andrew and Peter (John 1:44), which lay on the western shore of the lake, in the same direction as, and near to, Capernaum. It is indeed generally supposed to have been a sort of fishing suburb of that town. (Trench, p. 216). Thompson is the only one who insists that there was just one Bethsaida, and that it was situated at the entrance of the Jordan into the Lake, a few miles north^{east} of Tell Hum, the supposed present site of Capernaum. Bethsaida would have been located both on the eastern and western banks of the river and the name of the eastern part would have been changed by Philip the tetrarch. (Land and Book, p. 374).

3. The Danger on the Sea:

The time of their departure was at even (Matt. 14:23). This actually was the second evening, the first being equivalent to our afternoon (Luke 9:12 "evening" which is described by Matt. and Mark as the season "when the day began to wear away"). The second evening was the twilight, or from six o'clock to twilight, on which absolute darkness commenced. On the first evening, or early afternoon, preparations for the feeding of the five thousand began. On the second evening, at twilight, the disciples took the ship and Christ withdrew to a quiet place on a favorite mountain.

The disciples were rowing from a NE direction to a NW direction along the northern shoreline. The distance would have been about six miles. As darkness fell upon the moody lake, these expert mariners encounter grave difficulties. The Synoptics tell us that the wind was contrary. John merely refers to it as a great wind. It was powerful enough to cause sore distress to the disciples (Mark 6:48). As the gray of dusk had deepened into the darkness of night the storm became worse. They were toiling in rowing. On the last such occasion Christ had been in the boat with them and it was probably still light. Now they were alone in the middle of the night. Perhaps one of the reasons why the Savior sent them away was to teach them to trust Him when He was absent. From the slighter trial of trusting a sleeping Savior with them in the ship, Peter and the other disciples were trained to trust a Savior distant on the land. It was a lesson to live altogether by faith and not by sight. But the Master only teaches by degrees.

From the mountain, with a watchful eye of love, "He saw them toiling in rowing" (Mark 6:48). The situation is most suggestive. They are in the ship amid the waves; He stands high upon the shore and views them from afar. They are laboring at the oar; He is praying on the mount. To Him the struggling speck among the waters was not invisible; and as He saw them He thought of them and hastened to their aid. (Laid-law, p. 90).

Thomson has graphically described the way in which these sudden storms arise on the lake (p. 374):

My experience in this region enables me to sympathize with the disciples in their long night's contest with the wind. I spent a night in that Wady Shukaiyif, some three miles up it, to the left of us. The sun had securely set when the wind began to rush down toward the lake, and it continued all night long with constantly increasing violence, so that when we reached the shore next morning the face of the lake was like a boiling caldron. The wind howled down every wady from the north-east and east with such fury that no efforts of rowers would have brought a boat to shore at any point along that coast. In a wind like that, the disciples must have been driven quite across to Genessaret, as we know they were.

The severity of the storm should not be minimized. First, these experienced fishermen were "distressed" and, secondly, the wind blew with unabated force all night, until daybreak. Then too, in "the fourth watch of the night," between the hours of three and six in the morning, they were still in the midst of the sea and had rowed only about "five and twenty or thirty furlongs" (John 6:19), the whole distance between the two shores along the northern part of the lake being probably about fifty furlongs. At least ten hours of rowing had enabled them to row only past the half-way point, less than three miles. And they had been tired to begin with. (A furlong, stadion, was about 600 feet. The greatest breadth of the lake is 61 stadia but they were not crossing at the greatest breadth. Leon Morris, John, p. 349).

4. The Disclosure of Christ:

"In the fourth watch of the night" deliverance comes through Christ. While Christ was absent, all progress was arrested. The lesson to be learned by the disciples was a spiritual one. They must walk by faith, not by sight. It was further a soteriological lesson. At the same hour the Master had saved Israel from Egypt (Ex. 14:24). He is a present help in time of trouble. There is also a symbolic aspect to the experience. The church is tossed to and fro upon the waves of the troublesome world. It seems as though the Lord has forgotten it, so little headway does it seem to make, so baffled and tormented it is by opposing waves. But His eye is still on it; He is praying for it. And at just the right time, when the hour seems the darkest, He comes to deliver it. (Trench, p. 218).

"And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were troubled, saying, It is an apparition; and they cried out for fear" (Matt. 14:26). They had been told to "go before him" to Bethsaida, where they could expect Him. A. B. Bruce rightly remarks: "What to faith would have been a source of intense joy, became, through unbelief, only a new cause of alarm" (p. 129). Christ appeared far away so as not to drive them mad by His sudden appearance. His first revelation is by sight, His next by the familiar sound of His voice.

The puzzling comment that "he would have passed them by" (Mark 6:48) was due to His delicate consideration for their weakness. He wished to attract their attention at a safe distance. But primarily, as Trench so aptly stresses (pp. 219-220), "He will seem to pass them by, seem to forsake them; and so evoke their prayer and cry, that He would not pass them by, that He would not forsake them." This is what He had done with the two disciples walking to Emmaus (Luke 24:28). The thoughts are similar to those in the parable of the Unjust Judge (Luke 18:2) and the Importune Friend (Luke 11:6). He delayed His help to the sisters at Bethany until the extremity of their need (John 11:6). By delaying and seeming to pass them by, He quickens their faith and effects their prayers that He would come to them soon, and abide with them always.

"They all saw him" (Mark 6:50), were probably all pointing in the direction in which they perceived Him in the distance. He dispels their fears at once with the comforting words, coming across the raging waves, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid" (Matt. 14:27). It is possible that these words are meant to give a hint of deity. "It is I" (ego eimi) or "I am" is often the style of deity, especially in the O. T. but also in John 8:58). The assertion of deity, if it be that, is confirmed by the miraculous march over the waters.

5. The Daring of Peter:

Matthew alone records Peter's demand, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me to come unto thee on the water" (14:28). The "if" is a first class condition, better translated "Since it is thou, command me to come unto thee," for Peter rightly feels that Christ's command must go before his coming. The request mirrors Peter's promptness and forwardness of love which made him desire where His Lord was (as also in John 21:7). Perhaps Peter also wanted to compensate for that exclamation of terror in which he had joined with the rest. This heroic act of courage would demonstrate that he is braver than the others. A. B. Bruce reflects that "it was the rebound of an impetuous, headlong nature from one extreme of utter despair to the opposite extreme of extravagant, reckless joy. . . . The proposal was altogether like the man--generous, enthusiastic, and well-meant, but inconsiderate." (p. 130). Schaff says (Lange, Matthew, p.272) that "Peter's fault lay in his words: 'Bid me,' which betray an ambitious and overconfident desire to outdo and outdare the other disciples, and may be regarded as a prelude of the boastful: 'Though all shall be offended at Thee, yet will not I.'"

Peter had said, "Bid me;" there is no "I bid," in the Lord's reply. Peter had said, "come unto Thee;" the "unto Me" disappears from the Lord's answer, which is only "Come;" "Come," that is "if thou wilt; make the experiment, if thou desirest." It is merely a permissive "Come." There was no ^a guarantee for the successful issue of the feat. Peter's courage was not the pure courage of faith but that of carnal overboldness, which would be exchanged, when stress and trial came, for fear and unbelief.

"When Peter was come down out of the ship, he **walked** on the water, to go to Jesus." He did this for a while; so long as he looked on the Lord and only on Him. But when he saw something else besides Jesus, then,



Der versinkende Petrus.

Charles Foster, *The Story of the Bible*, (1884), 553.
C. Ninck, *Auf biblischen Pfaden*, (1888), 280.

Key gems from the experience of Peter:

1. At Christ's walking on the water the disciples confessed for the first time Jesus as the Son of God.
2. Peter's ability to walk on water was due to his faith on the Son of God (p. 39)
3. When Christ taught the necessity of faith in Him many forsook him (p. 39)
4. Christ brought the disciples to the spiritual high point in a Gentile area, a possibly because of Jewish hostility and Gentile neutrality (p. 40)
5. The location of Peter's confession was Caesarea Philippi but has always been known as Baniyas named after the Greek god Pan (40)
6. Two gods were worshipped at Caesarea Philippi, Pan and Caesar (41)
7. The permanence of spiritual realities is displayed at the location by two permanent entities: the massive Mt. Hermon and the everlasting spring of water (42).
8. The reason for Christ's question was not for information but for conveying spiritual truth (42).
9. Peter's confession was a firm declaration from the heart (43)
10. Peter's recognition of the deity of Christ came not from Judaism nor reason but from revelation (44)
11. Peter is honored by Christ for his promptness and earnestness (45-46)
12. Peter is the petros while petra is a reference to the ledge or quarry (46)
13. "Upon this rock" refers to the confession concerning the person and work of Christ.
14. The keys are a reference to Peter's privilege of opening the gospel to the Jews (Acts 2), Samaritans (Acts 8) and Gentiles (Acts 10) (47)
15. Peter's power of the keys is also granted to the other apostles (Mt. 18:18) (47)

because, "he saw the wind, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, Lord, save me." His wish had been to show a courage which transcended that of the disciples. In their presence now he confesses his terror and reveals his weakness. As he walked across the water a gust of wind may have caught him off balance, for "he saw the wind" and looking down into the murky deep below him, he started to sink. At this moment his skill of swimming (John 21:7) profitted him nothing. Matthew says literally, "when he saw the boisterous wind"--a sudden blast brought Peter to the place of despair. High waves, impelled by the wind, rushed against him. It was then that Jesus immediately "stretched forth his hand, and caught him." And he speaks with a gracious rebuke: "O thou of little faith!" not "O thou of no faith!" and "Wherefore didst thou doubt?" not "Wherefore didst thou come?" Trench has well observed that Christ was

not checking, as He then would have done, the future impulses of His servant's boldness, but encouraging them rather; showing him how he could do all things through Christ strengthening him, and that his fault lay not in having undertaken too much, but in having too little relied upon the strength that would have upheld him in his undertaking. And not until by that sustaining hand He has restored confidence to the fearful one, and made him feel that he can indeed tread under foot those waves of the unquiet sea, does he speak even this word of a gentle rebuke. The courage of the disciples has already returned, so that the Master speaks of his doubt as of something which is already past: "Wherefore didst thou doubt?" Before the doubt arose in the heart, thou didst walk on these waves, and now that thy faith has returned, thou dost walk on them again; thou seest that it is not impossible, that it lies but in thy faithful will; that all things are possible to him that believeth. (p. 222).

6. The Disposition of the Disciples:

John writes that "they were willing therefore to receive him into the boat" (6:21), implying that they actually did. "And straightway the boat was at the land whither they were going." A second miracle quickly followed the walking on the water. Instantaneously the boat arrived on the other shore, at Gennesaret (Matt. 14:34; Mark 6:53). In characteristic fashion Mark describes the feelings of the disciples immediately after Christ had come to them into the boat: "And he went up unto them into the boat and the wind ceased: and they weresore amazed in themselves; for they understood not concerning the loaves, but their heart was hardened." Matthew adds that "they that were in the boat worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God" (14:33). Through this miracle the hardened, unbelieving disciples, and Peter with them, acknowledged for the first time that Jesus was the Son of God. They must have felt that here was one who had a special relationship to the Father of whom it is written "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known" (Ps. 77:19); "Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, through the heap of great waters" (Hab. 3:15); "Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea" (Job 4:8; cf. 38:16-17).

The question which naturally arises is "How was it possible for Christ and Peter to walk on the water?" Trench offers the most plausible explanation. Radical Bible critics had suggested that Christ either walked on the shore to which the disciples were closer than they supposed, or that He walked on a sand-bank, known only to Him. Trench, however, writes,

It was the will of Christ, which bore Him triumphantly above those water; even as it was the will of Peter, that will, indeed made in the highest degree active and potential by faith on the Son of God, which should in like manner have enabled him to walk on the great deep, and, though with partial and transient failure, did so enable him. It has been already observed that the miracle, according to its true idea, is not the violation, nor yet the suspension of law, but the incoming of a higher law, as of a spiritual in the midst of natural laws, and the momentary assertion, for that higher law, of the predominance which it was intended to have, and but for man's fall it would always have had, over the lower; and with this a prophetic anticipation of the abiding prevalence which it shall one day recover. Exactly thus was there here a sign of the lordship of man's will, when that will is in absolute harmony with God's will, over external nature. (p. 225).

7. The Discussion with the Multitude:

As soon as the boat arrived on the land, the men of Gennesaret dispatched messengers into the region to gather the sick, because they recognized the Savior from His previous visits. Before long the 5000 came again, many of whom crossed the sea by boats that had come to the eastern Bethsaida from Tiberias (John 6:23). They had noticed that one boat with the disciples had gone on the evening. Apparently a second boat along the shore was still there, so that they were unable to explain what happened to the Savior. They thus followed the disciples, still longing to make the Master their king. They may have come upon Him as He was teaching in Capernaum and asked Him, "When camest thou hither?" (John 6:25) As a result of this, Christ teaches them concerning Himself, the true bread of life. Their primary responsibility was to believe on Him (6:29) and He, in His own good time, would establish the kingdom. His serious doctrine of discipleship cooled the ardor of many, so that "upon this many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with Him" (6:66).

§ 75. PETER'S CONFESSION.

MATT. 16: 13-20.

13 Now when Jesus came into the parts of Cæsarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say ⁴that the Son of man is? 14 And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. 15 He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 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 which ¹is in heaven. 18 And I also say unto thee, that thou art ¹Peter, and upon this ²rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. 19 I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: ^{*}and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. 20 Then charged he the disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ.

MARK 8: 27-30.

27 And Jesus went forth, and his disciples, into the villages of Cæsarea Philippi: and in ²the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Who do men say that I am? 28 And they told him, saying, John the Baptist: and others, Elijah; but others, One of the prophets. 29 And he asked them, But who say ye that I am? Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. 30 And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.

LUKE 9: 18-21.

18 And it came to pass, as he was praying alone³, the disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Who do the multitudes say that I am? 19 And they answering said, John the Baptist; but others say, Elijah; and others, that one of the old prophets is risen again. 20 And he said unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Peter answering said, The Christ of God. 21 But he charged them, and commanded *them* to tell this to no man;

[Paragraph continued in § 76.]

PETER'S CONFESSION OF CHRIST

Matt. 16:13-18; Mark 8:27-29; Luke 9:18-21

1. The Historical Context of the Event

After the defection of the multitude, which furnished the occasion for Peter's first confession of his belief in the Messiahship of Jesus (John 6:69; "and we have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God"), the Lord went to the region of Tyre and Sidon (Matt. 15:21-28), where, in answer to her believing importunity, he healed the daughter of the Syrophenician woman. From there He returned to the shore of Gennesaret and crossed into the district of Decapolis (Matt. 15:39), where He healed one "who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech," and where he fed the four thousand with the seven loaves. From Decapolis He crossed to Magdala (Matt. 15:29-38; Mark 7:31-37), on the western side of the lake, and thence (Mark 8:22) He went northward to Bethsaida, where He opened the eyes of one who was blind. From Bethsaida, He passed up, probably along the bank of the Jordan, until He came "into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi," (Matt. 16:13) where were beyond the boundary of Galilee.

Thus, just at this crisis of His ministry, the Lord spent His time, for the most part, in districts which were outside the limits of the land of Israel. It is not possible to say with certainty why He adopted this course, but it may be conjectured that He was induced to take it, by one or other, or all of the following considerations. He may have desired in this practical way to administer a reproof to the Galileans, by showing them and the Jews generally that their rejection of Him would be immediately followed by the calling of the Gentiles. Then again, perceiving the influences that were at work among the people, He may have determined to withdraw His chosen apostles, for the time, from the sphere of their operation, and to secure leisure and opportunity for instructing them in the things of the kingdom. Finally, Dr. Robinson has suggested that He may have chosen these localities because they were all beyond the limits of jurisdiction of Herod, whose attention had been directed to Him after the death of John the Baptist, and perhaps, also, because the temporary presence of Herod in that province might, at the moment, have increased His personal danger. It was a retreat from Jewish hostility to the neutrality of Gentile ground. (Peter the Apostle, pp. 78-79).

2. The Beautiful Country of the Event:

- a. The city: Peter's confession was made at a most beautiful spot near Mt. Hermon. Thomson describes the history of the town nearby:

It is evident that Baniyas was a remarkable place before the age of Augustus. Philip the Tetrarch called it Caesarea in honour of Tiberius, and Philippi in his own, and to distinguish it from Caesarea Palestina. Herod Agrippa beautified it, and complimented that monster Nero by giving it the name of Neroneas. But all these foreign titles soon fell off, and it resumed its old name, Baniyas, by which alone it is now known. (p. 231).

The latter changed from Paneas to Baniyas because the Arabs have no "p" in their tongue.

b. The caves:

Right next to the ruins of Banias are the main sources of the Jordan. George Adam Smith gives a picturesque description of that site where the major arm of the Jordan emerges and where perhaps Peter made his confession:

You pass a well-watered meadow, covered by trees, and a broad Terrace with oaks, like an English park, till you come to the edge of a gorge, through which roars a headlong stream, half stifled by brush. A Roman bridge takes you over, and through a tangle of trees, brushwood, and fern your bread into sight of a highcliff of limestone, reddened by the water oozing over its face from the iron soil above. In the cliff is a cavern. Part of the upper rock has fallen and from the debris of boulders and shingle below bursts and bubbles along thirty feet a full-born river. The place is a sanctuary of water, and from time immemorial men have drawn near to worship. As you stand within the charm of it, a charm not uncommon in the Lebanons, you understand why the early Semites adored the Baalim of the underground waters even before they raised their gods to heaven, and thanked them for the rain. This must have been one of the chief seats of the Baalim, perhaps Baal-god of the Book of Joshua. (11:17; 12:7; 13:5; also a Baal-Hermon. Judges 3:3). When the Greeks came they also felt the presence of deity, and dedicated the grotto, as an inscription testifies, to Pan and the Nymphs. () Hill, cavern and fountain were called the Paneion, the town and district Paneas. In 20 B.C. Herod the Great received the district from Augustus, and built him a temple of white marble, setting the bust of Caesar hard by the shrine of Pan. (pp. 304-305)

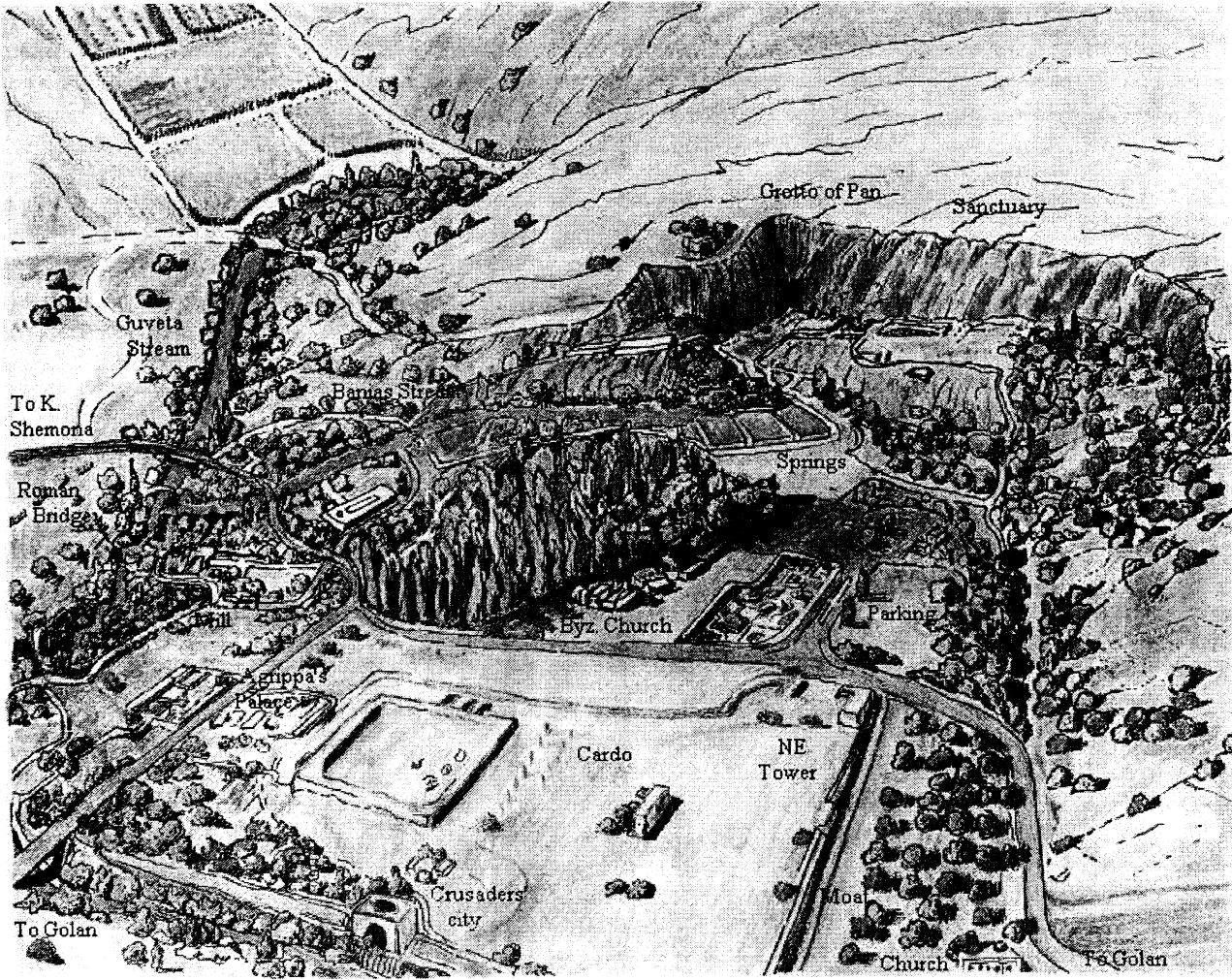
Two factors are of special importance for the biblical narrative. The one is that this locale where Peter made his confession was an ancient site dedicated to various deities. In Christ's day, two systems of religion were carried on together, Pan was worshipped in the grotto, whose riches still bear his name. Josephus records of this cave that it contained a pool of water of unfathomable depth. Eusebius records that at these headwaters on a certain festival day there was usually a victim thrown into the stream, and that this, by the power of some demon, in some wonderful manner, entirely disappeared. Astyrius, a pious Roman senator, put a stop to such pagan practices by imploring God through Christ, upon which the victim floated on the stream and afterward (after the 3rd cent.) Nothing ever happened again. (Thomson, 230)

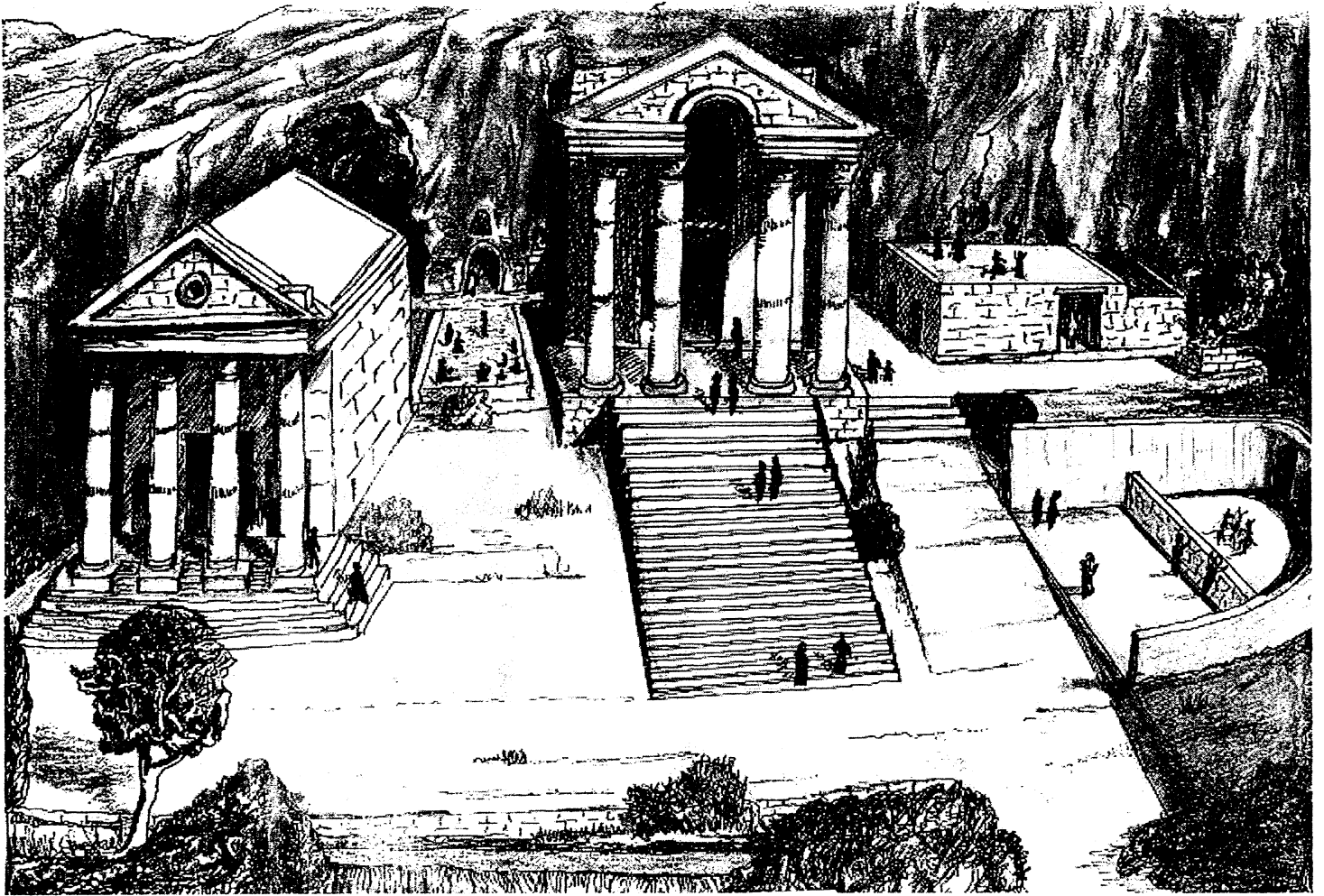
While Pan the god of nature was worshipped in the cave, divine honors were paid to Caesar in the white temple that stood perhaps on the cliff above, the site of the present Mohammedan shrine of Sheikh Khadr, or St. George.

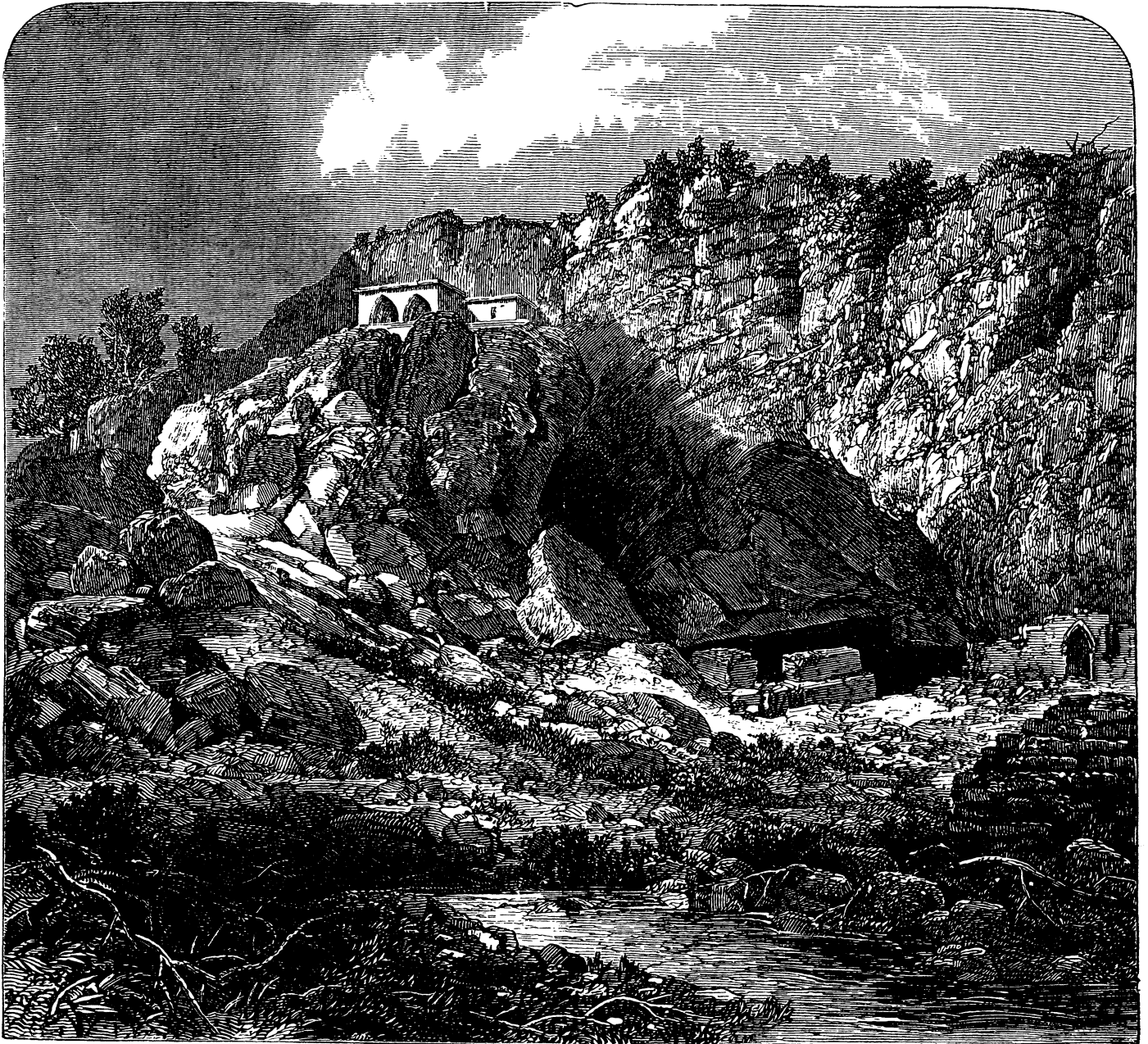
A second significant fact is the inscription on the rock of the grotto: "Pan and the Nymphs," as well as probable references to other pagan deities. And it is here that Christ, resting by the cool waters, asked the pointed question. The conversation just prior to this may well have revolved around the idols, emperors, and objects of deification in the vicinity, a sight which must have brought disgust and indignation to these monotheistic Jews.

c. The country-side:

Banias itself was situated just at the most easterly source of the river Jordan, where the water flows from the base of a high limestone rock in several rivulets, which presently unite into a considerable stream. One







Jordanquelle von Baniyas.

C. Ninck, Auf biblischen Pfaden, (1888), 301.

writer rightly observes:

All travelers speak in terms of glowing admiration of the beauty of the place. Stanley affirms that "in its situation, in its exuberance of water, its olive groves, and its view over the distant plains," it is "almost a Syrian Tivoly:" and Porter has thus graphically described it: "Baneas occupies one of the most picturesque sites in Syria. A broad terrace on the mountain-side looks out over the rich plain of Huleh, westward to the castellated heights of Hunim. Behind it rises, in bold and rugged peaks, the southern ridge of Hermon, wooded to the summit. Two sublime ravines descend from the ridge, having between them a conical hill, more than a thousand feet in height, and crowned by the ruins of the ancient castle of Subeibeh. On the terrace at the base of this cone lie the ruins of Caesarea Philippi. The terrace is covered with groves of evergreen, oak, and olive trees, with intervening glades of the richest green turf, and clumps of hawthorn and myrtle here and there. A cliff of ruddy limestone, nearly one hundred feet high, rises on the north sides of the ruins.... Here, then, at the base of Hermon where today there is such a startling contrast between the transitory nature of man's proudest works and the permanent outflowing of that life giving fountain that feeds the sparkling river, Jesus spake those words which described the indestructible character and enduring influence of that Church which he came to earth to found. (Peter, the Apostle, pp. 80-81).

3. The Supernatural Confession of Peter:

It was at this place, perhaps sitting at the foot of the cliff, by the gushing waters, that the Lord, not for purpose of eliciting information, but in order that He might have an opportunity of giving emphasis to the truth about Himself, said to His followers, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" Luke notes that this was at a time when Christ was praying apart and His disciples were with Him. It was another crisis in Christ's life. He would now fully disclose to them who He was as well as something about the Church and the crucifixion. Thus, the confession, the Church, and the crucifixion may be said to form the contents of Christ's prayer.

a. The echo of the peoples' opinion.

Christ's inquiry was first concerning the opinion of the multitude who (as it has already appeared frequently) were wrong again. The question is merely introductory, however, to the question of Matt. 16:15, "But who say ye that I am?" This again only leads up to His important instructions concerning His suffering and death.

The title "Son of Man" which Christ gives to Himself, though pregnant with deeper meaning, has not yet been identified in the minds of the people with the Messiah. Daniel undeniably designated the Messiah as such. But it was only implied. The simple questions

therefore is: "What does the multitude think of this lowly person who has appeared in their midst with His words and works?"

The answers expressed indicate that the Jewish leaders have been immensely successful in their attempt to weaken and dissipate the faith of the people. The question expressed the contrast: What do men in general (not even Israel alone) think--in contrast to you, my disciples. And the men were wrong, although all the answers agreed that Christ was a man of supernatural powers and unusual ability. There were no negative, insulting opinions, as was the case with the Jewish leaders. Some suggested that He was John the Baptist. For a time this had been the opinion of the courtiers of Herod (Matt. 14:2), and Herod himself. Their opinion was that Christ was the forerunner of the Messiah, the most exalted of all the prophets. The other opinions are listed in a descending order. Others suggested that here was Elijah the forerunner and reformer of Israel (Mark 15: 35; John 1:21), a somewhat lower opinion. Jeremiah was another guess. Christ's ministry of denunciations of the corruptions of the times reminded the people of the weeping prophet. Some merely suggested that He was a prophet. Long before this people had recognized Christ as the Son of David (Matt. 9:27; 12:23; 15:22), as the one who was to come (John 7:26,31,44) and as the Messiah (John 4:24), but all these people were already counted among the disciples. Nor was the view of the enemies of Christ asked for. What these answers of the multitude suggest is that (1) the enemies of Christ had been successful in lowering the estimate of the people concerning Him, (2) divergent opinions were now entertained concerning Him, (3) this inconstancy and wavering led to a decreasing measure of homage and yet (4) Christ was still considered a supernatural person.

b. The expression of the disciples' faith.

"And he said unto them, But who say ye that I am?" The you is emphatic. It is a crucial question for disciples, as well as for any of us today. Everything depends on the proper answer to this question. Peter answers with accustomed promptness as the spokesman of the twelve, without hesitation and misgiving, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Peter did not say, "We think thou art the Christ." His was a firm declaration from the heart. A persuasion that had gradually come to Him and the other disciples, from whom Peter did not expect any contradiction to his views. It is surprising that none of the multitudes had ever said, "We have heard it affirmed that thou art the Christ." Some twelve or eighteen months before while John's testimony was still remembered vividly, there may have been some who said, "Thou art the Christ." But while the influence of the antagonists had swayed the crowds and the tide had begun to ebb toward the crucifixion, Peter and the disciples, despite all the contrary opinions (John 7:27;41; 8:48; 9:22; 10:24), had acknowledged the deity of Christ.

Though Nathaniel (John 1:49) as well as Caiphas (Matt. 26:63) knew from the Scriptures that the promised Christ was at the same time the Son of God, while the Scribes ignored this (Matt. 22:42), and even some people seemed to realize this (Matt. 14:33), and John testified concerning this (John 3:28, 35), most people failed to understand the significance of the person of Christ.

In contrast to this, Peter said, "Thou art the Christ," i.e. the Messiah, the One in whom all the O.T. hopes have been placed. The thou has reference to His true humanity. You, a man, are really the Anointed One. "The Son of God" explains that Peter understood something vastly different from the current idea about the Messiah who would be merely a man, though a very superior one, the ideal man endowed with extraordinary gifts. Peter said thus, "Thou art not merely a prophet come to prepare Christ's way. But thou art deity Himself." Finally, Peter prefixed the epithet "living" to the divine name, to express his consciousness that he was making a very momentous declaration, and to give that declaration a solemn, deliberate character. A.B. Bruce has well observed how meaningful Peter's confession really was:

It was as if he said: "I know it is no light matter to call any one, even Thee, Son of God, of the One living eternal Jehovah. But I shrink not from the assertion, however bold, startling, or even blasphemous it may seem. I cannot by any other expression do justice to all I know and feel concerning Thee, or convey the impression left on my mind by what I have witnessed during the time I have followed Thee as a disciples." In this way was the disciples urged on, in spite of his Jewish monotheism, to the recognition of His Lord's divinity. (p. 162).

That this simple confession really contained in germ the doctrine of Christ's deity can be seen from the simple fact that Jesus was satisfied with it, He, who repeatedly claimed to be deity. Further more, Christ's words to Peter confirm this: "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 which is in heaven." These words imply that Peter confessed something that was extraordinary. His recognition of the deity of Christ did not come from Judaism and its traditional established belief concerning the Messiah. Nor was it attained by the unaided effort of his own mind. The confession came as a result of revelation. When Peter spoke he was inspired. These were not the words of the rude fisherman but of the Holy Spirit speaking through his mouth, a truth hitherto hidden and as yet partially comprehended by the one who spoke it.

The remaining portion of the Lord's address to Simon shows that this confession of the deity of Christ is of fundamental importance for the Christian faith and the church.

The reference to the "living God" may have been related also to their previous conversation about the pagan temple overlooking their resting place and the cave dedicated to Pan immediately behind them,

glorifying dead heathen idols. There is just one living God and the Son of Man as the Son of God, shared in the Father's essence.

The title "Bar-Jonas" which Christ gives to Peter speaks of his humanity in contrast to the name Peter which speaks of his changed life. Schaff observes in Lange, Matthew, p. 295.:

But there may be in this use of the patronymic an allusion to the title Son of Man in verse 13, which would give additional emphasis to the counter confession, in this sense: That I, the Son of Man, am at the same time the Messiah and the eternal Son of God, is as true as that thou, Simon, art the son of Jona; and as thou hast thus confessed Me as the Messiah, I will now confess thee as Peter, etc. If the Savior spoke in Aramaic or Chaldaic, as He undoubtedly did on ordinary occasions, and with His disciples, He used the term Bar in verse 17 with reference to Dan. vii.13, the prophetic passage from which the Messianic appellation Son of Man was derived, so that Bar-enahsh (Son of Man) and Bar-Jona would correspond.

Slowly the deity of Christ had dawned upon Peter. He had been deeply impressed by some of the miracles which he had seen, and some of the discourses which he had heard; and he could not help but be overwhelmed by the sinless life which he had witnessed for many months. The Spirit had finally fully opened his eyes as to the true nature of the Son of Man.

4. The Prophetic Comments of Christ:

The Lord is here not giving primarily a reward to Peter but rather is describing his blessed spiritual condition. The "flesh and blood" is often used in Jewish literature for humanity in contrast to God (Gal. 1:16; Eph. 6:12; Heb. 2:14). Peter's condition was called blessed because he had been sensitive to the divine voice instead of human opinion.

The object of the remarkable statements which follow is not to assert the supremacy of Peter, as the Romanists contend, but to declare the supremely important nature of the truth Peter has confessed. In spite of all the difficulties of interpretation, this remains clear and certain. Christ's words to Peter have been the cause of disarray among theologians and despair among novices:

"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. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then charged he the disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ." (Matt. 16:18-20).

The first observation to be made is that it is undeniable that the Lord wished to confer a special honor upon Peter. While the other disciples had agreed with Peter's confession, his promptness and earnest-

ness were singled out for commendation and reward. The words "thou art Peter" and the frequent recurrence to the second personal pronoun throughout the sentence, clearly indicate that the Savior's design was to confess Peter before the apostles even as Peter had confessed him.

Following Peter's revelation by the Father and his consequent confession, the Lord goes to reveal some matters pertinent to His program and work. The first revelation He makes involves the building of His church on this rock (petra). "Thou art petros, and upon this petra will I build my church." One of the greatest problems of Bible students for centuries has been the identification of te petra in Matt. 16:18. Generally speaking there are three positions which are held--the rock is Peter, the rock is Christ, and the rock is the truth of Peter's confession. There are several facts which tend to do away with the first view. In the first place, the Lord would easily have said unto you to remove the ambiguity. Why should the Lord use this if He were speaking directly to Peter as He is in the immediately preceding and following contexts? A second objection is found in the distinctive meanings of petra and petros. Invariably petra is used of a shelf or ledge of rock or of a mass of rock, while petros is used of a stone. On this rock (petra), the same mother rock, of which petros is just a smaller detachment, the wise man in Matt. 7:24 had built his house. It is interesting to note that in the O.T. petra is never used of men.

A second view holds that the rock is Christ. While the Bible speaks of Christ as the rock and the O.T. uses the term symbolically for God, the third person in the context makes this view rather untenable.

A better view is the one which holds that the rock is the truth of Peter's confession. It is the truth of Christ's person and work upon which the church shall be built. This fits the use the Lord makes of this and also the sense of petra. It is large enough to include the former two positions. Peter is the first man who professed that faith and was singled out and honored by being called the rock. That only shows that the faith, and not the man, primarily, is after all the true foundation. That which makes Simon a Petros, a rock-like man, fit to build on, is the real Petra on which the Ecclesia is to be built. This Petra is the confession concerning the person and work of Christ which forms the foundation and very corner stone of the church (Rom. 9:33; Eph. 2:20; I Pet. 2:5-8). Bruce has well paraphrased Christ's comments to Peter:

Thou, Simon Barjonas, art Petros, a man of rock, worthy of thy name Peter, because thou hast made bold, a good confession; and on the truth thou hast now confessed, as on a rock, will I build my church; and so long as it abides on that foundation it will stand firm and unassailable against all the powers of hell. (p. 165).

Christ was revealing to Peter and the disciples for the first time that He would build a new entity, the Church, which would consist of men adopting the confession as their own, and acknowledging Him to be the Christ, the Son of God. The "gates of hell" (lit. death) would not prevail against the church. Christ anticipates His own and the saints resurrection. He alludes to the keys of the kingdom. The keys either

refer to the opening of the doors of the new age. Peter, as the first confessor of his Lord, was to have the honor of opening the dispensation of the Gospel to men. And how remarkably this prediction was verified. It was Peter who introduced the Gospel to the Jews on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and to the Gentiles (Acts 10). The keys may also refer to Peter's apostolic authority, keys being a symbol of authority. Thus the Lord is perhaps promising Peter an exalted position of great authority in the coming earthly kingdom. In Matthew 19:28 the twelve disciples are promised a throne from which they shall judge the twelve tribes of Israel. In fact, Paul asserts that the saints of this age shall judge the world (I Cor.6:2).

The privilege of binding and loosing, in rabbinical writings, has reference to forbidding and permitting. The future paraphrastic of the two verbs make this translation necessary: "and whatsoever thou shalt forbid on earth shall have been forbidden in heaven and whatsoever you permit on earth shall have been permitted in heaven." Whether the reference is to Peter's millennial authority or his earthly apostolic authority, the fact remains that as an apostle Peter would possess a clear understanding of the mind of God and on the basis of this understanding of God's will he would teach and judge.

It should be noted that the parallel passage in Matt. 18:18 gives this authority of church discipline to all the disciples. By way of honorable mention Peter is first given this power and authority; later it is bestowed on all the disciples and the church. (John 20:23; Matt. 18:18). And while he is called the rock upon which the church is built, he, or rather, his confession is the foundation of the church only in the same sense as all the apostles are called the foundation by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:20; Rev. 21:14). Peter is thus not the primate of the church as Rome had pictured him. The same rights and privileges were bestowed upon all of the apostles. He himself claimed no preeminence, for he designates Christ as the corner-stone and Christians as living stones (I Pet. 2:5-6). Peter knew of no succession of his office in the sense of the papacy, for he exhorts the presbyters not to be lords over God's heritage (I Pet. 5:3) and it is doubtful that he was ever bishop in Rome.

5. The Spiritual Condition of Peter:

Peter's confession is the high point of his life. His sensitive mind has grasped divine truths and the Lord praised him for his spiritual understanding. While Peter yielded to the Spirit, he spoke words of deepest spiritual import. Unfortunately, just a while later, Christ had to rebuke him for acting as Bar-Jonas instead of Peter. The part which Peter plays in this incident at Caesarea Philippi prepares the reader for Peter's significant part in the early church when again, under divine inspiration, he proclaims the deity of the person of Christ and His redemptive work. Acts 2 and 10 may be considered the fulfillment of the prophecy made at the head-waters of the Jordan. At this place of idolatry, where paganism had exalted in a marble temple a mere man to the place of God, and this deification of Augustus had no doubt filled the disciples with indignation, where Pan, the god of nature, was worshipped instead of the true Lord of creation, it was there that the first clear confession

of Christ's divine Sonship was made. The choice lay with the disciples as it stands before us today; who is this Son of Man, just an imposter or the eternal God Himself, come in human flesh?

The Lord commanded the disciples to tell no one that Jesus is the Christ. This revelation was to be given by the Father to those whose hearts were spiritually conditioned to the truth (Matt. 11:27). Since the disciples did not know the hearts of men, they would cast this pearl before swine. Later, at Pentecost, the message was proclaimed to the representatives of most nations. It was Peter who again confessed his Lord openly.

§ 76. CHRIST FORETELLS HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION.

MATT. 16: 21-28.

21 From that time began ³Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how² that ^bhe 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. 22 And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, ⁴Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee. 23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art a stumblingblock unto me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men. 24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, ^aIf any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 25 ^bFor whosoever would save his ¹life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his ¹life for my sake shall find it. 26 For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his ¹life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his ¹life? 27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he render unto every man according to his ²deeds. 28 Verily I say unto you, There be¹ some of them that stand here, which² shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

MARK 8: 31-9: 1.

31 And he began to teach them, that ^bthe Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 And he spake the saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. 33 But he turning about, and seeing his disciples, rebuked Peter, and saith, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men. 34 And he called unto him the multitude with his disciples, and said unto them, ^aIf any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 35 ^bFor whosoever would save his ¹life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his ¹life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it. 36 For what doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and forfeit his ¹life? 37 For what should a man give in exchange for his ¹life? 38 ^cFor whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man also shall be ashamed of him, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. 9: 1 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There be¹ some here of them that stand *by*, which² shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power.

LUKE 9: 22-27.

22 saying, ^bThe Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up.

[Paragraph continued on next page.]

23 And he said unto all, ^aIf any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. 24 ^bFor whosoever would save his ¹life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his ¹life for my sake, the same shall save it. 25 For what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose or forfeit his own self? 26 ^cFor whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my *w*ords, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in his own glory, and *the glory* of the Father, and of the holy angels. 27 But I tell you of a truth, There be¹ some of them that stand here, which² shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.

THE REBUKE OF PETER

Matt. 21-28; Mark 8:31-9:1; Luke 9:22-27

1. The Revelation by Christ:

Not until this advanced period in Christ's public ministry did He speak in plain unmistakable terms of His death. There had been earlier allusions and veiled utterances. Jesus had spoken of a temple, which, if destroyed, He should raise again in three days (John 2:19); He had mentioned the lifting up of the Son of Man, like unto that of the brazen serpent in the wilderness (John 3:14); and on yet another occasion, of a sad separation of the bridegroom from the children of the bridechamber (Matt. 9:15), of the giving of His flesh for the life of the world (John 6), and of a sign like that of the prophet Jonas, which should be given in His own person to an evil and adulterous generation (Matt. 16:4). But at length, after the conversation in Caesarea Philippi, Jesus changed His style of speaking on the subject of His sufferings, substituting for dark hidden allusions, plain, literal, matter-of-fact statements (Mark 8:32, "he spake that saying openly"). From the farthest corner of Israel the Savior began to set His face towards Jerusalem and spoke plainly concerning the death which He must suffer there.

Altered circumstances made it necessary that He fully disclose another aspect of His work besides the foundation of the church--His death and resurrection. This revelation was now natural, necessary and safe. It was natural, because from now on everything pointed towards Jerusalem and the work which He would accomplish there. It was a necessary revelation, in order that the disciples might be prepared for the approaching tragedy. And it was safe, for now the subject might be spoken of plainly without serious risk to their faith. Now that the disciples had a clear understanding of the doctrine of the person of Christ, it was time to clearly disclose the doctrine of the work of Christ. In consideration of their weakness, Jesus maintained a certain reserve respecting His sufferings, till their faith in Him as the Christ should have become sufficiently rooted to stand the strain of the storm soon to break upon them.

Wherefore, "from that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day" (Matt. 16:21). Every clause in this solemn announcement demands reverent study. Jesus showed unto His disciples (1) "that he must go unto Jerusalem." It was dramatically proper that the Son of Man should die in that "holy" unholy city, which had earned a most unenviable notoriety as the murderers of the prophets. "It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem" (Luke 13:33). It was due also to the dignity of Jesus and to the design of His death. The Lamb of God must be slain in the place where all the legal sacrifices were offered, in the most public place of the nation.

(2) "And suffer many things." They were too many to enumerate, too painful to speak of in detail, and better passed over in silence for the present. The bare fact that their beloved Master was to be put to death, without any accompanying indignities, would be sufficiently dreadful to the disciples. He thus only hinted by a passing word that He should be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon. (Mark 10:34; Luke 18:32).

(3) "Of the elders and chief priests and scribes." While it is true that the Gentile rulers and the people of Israel were to have a hand in evil-treating the Son of Man as well as the Jewish leaders, the latter were, however, the prime movers and most guilty agents in the nefarious transaction. A.B. Bruce has eloquently expressed the pathos:

Grey-haired elders sitting in council would solemnly decide that was worthy of death; high priests would utter oracles, that one man must die for the people, that the whole nation perish not; scribes learned in the law would use their legal knowledge to invent plausible grounds for an accusation involving capital punishment.

These men who ought to have taught the people to recognize in Jesus the Lord's Anointed, would hound them on to cry, "Crucify Him, crucify Him," and by importunities and threats urge heathen authorities to perpetrate a crime for which they had no heart.

(4) "And be killed." Jesus simply states, in general terms, the fact of His death. To what purpose speak of the theology of the cross, of God's great design in the death which was to be brought about by man's guilty instrumentality, to disciples unwilling to receive even the matter of fact, the truth of the revelation?

(5) Finally, Jesus told His disciples that He should "be raised again the third day." Christ knew how harsh the announcement of His death would be to the feelings of His faithful ones. It was natural that He should add that His death would be succeeded, after a brief interval of three days, by resurrection.

2. The Remonstrance of Peter:

The grave communications made by Jesus were far from welcome to His disciples. They could see no grounds for such dark anticipations, and their Messianic ideas did not include the conception that Christ had to suffer. On the contrary, a crucified Christ was a scandal and a contradiction to them, quite as much as it continued to be to the majority of the Jewish people after the Lord had ascended to glory. They failed to see that their prophets had written concerning a Messiah whose suffering would precede His glory.

As before, Peter is the eloquent and energetic interpreter of the sentiments of the rest of the disciples. His action and speech at this time were characteristic of him in the highest degree. "And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him." Literally, Peter "took him to himself," aside and apart, as if by a right of his own. He acted with greater familiarity after the acknowledgement which the Lord had just given him. The action

is very graphic. Peter took the Master, as if he, a student of disciple had exchanged roles. He took hold of the Master's arm or garment, pulled Him to the side, and with sincerity and severity he rebuked the Lord, at least began to rebuke Him, for the Lord did not allow him to finish his remonstrance. Peter's words are to instruct the Lord to reconsider, to be less pessimistic. His words, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee" are better rendered, "God have mercy on you. This shall never be. God forbid!" It is the strongest kind of negation possible, as well as a proverbial expression.

Bruce has captured well the psychological aspect of Peter's hasty exclamation:

What a strange compound of good and evil in this man! His language is dictated by the most intense affection: he cannot bear the thought of any harm befalling his Lord; yet how irreverent and disrespectful he is towards him whom he has just acknowledged to be the Christ, the Son of the living God! How he overbears, and contradicts, and domineers, and, as it were, tries to bully His Master into putting away from His thoughts those gloomy forebodings of coming evil! Verily he has need of chastisement to teach him his own place, and to scourge out of his character the bad elements of forwardness, and undue familiarity, and presumptuous self-will.

3. The Rebuke of Peter:

Interrupting Peter, the Lord turned away from Peter in revulsion, and toward the other disciples (Mark 8:33). The "turned" of Matt. 16:23 (strapheis) is a second aorist passive participle, referring to a quick ingressive action. (Robertson, Matthew, p. 136). His words are a stinging rebuke to Peter: "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art a stumblingblock unto me; for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men" (Matt. 16:23). What makes the rebuke all the more severe was the presence of the other disciples (Mark 8:33) and the probable presence of other people who had slowly gathered from Caesarea Philippi. (Luke 9:23, "and he said unto them all").

Peter here appears in a new character. A minute ago he spoke under inspiration from heaven; now he speaks by inspiration from the opposite quarter. "Get thee behind me Satan!" seem strong words to the loving apostle who would spare his Master all trial and affliction. Undoubtedly Peter was extremely startled when the rebuke came. But behind his words was a satanic suggestion. It was the kingdom without the cross. Peter saw no necessity for the dying of the Messiah. His suggestion was that he should ascend to His throne in some other way than by that of Calvary. He besought the Redeemer to choose some easier means for the attainment of salvation. Thus his words were to the Lord a repetition of the temptation which the arch-fiend had put before Him when on the mountain top he shewed Him "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them" and said, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Recognizing the source from which the suggestion came, He said, "What! is Satan come again with his old lure? Get thee hence tempter!" Peter had

become momentarily and unconsciously a representative of the cause of Satan. Christ's words are very emphatic: "You are a stumblingblock unto me!" Peter was acting as Satan's catspaw, in ignorance, surely, but none the less really. He had set a trap for Christ that would undo all His mission to earth. As Morison had put it (quoted by Robertson, Matthew, p. 136): "Thou art not, as before, a noble block lying in its right position as a massive foundation stone. On the contrary, thou art like a stone quite out of its proper place, and lying right across the road in which I must go--lying as a stone of stumbling." The "stumbling stone" is related to the metaphorical petros, a "foundation stone." Peter was a stumbling stone instead of a foundation stone. The satanic character of his advice was substantially this: "Save thyself at any rate. Sacrifice duty to self-interest, the cause of God to personal convenience."

Christ adds, "Thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." The words clearly indicate that Peter was not aware that he was being used as a tool of Satan and Christ spoke to alleviate somewhat the harshness of His stinging rebuke. Peter followed his human inclination rather than the divine illumination which he had received earlier.

4. The Remarks Concerning Discipleship:

"And he called unto him the multitude with his disciples" (Mark 8:34) which had gathered in meantime and to them the Lord makes another hard announcement. He had told them that He must be put to death one day. Now He tells them, that as it fares with Him, so it must fare with them also. The second announcement was naturally occasioned by the reluctant way in which the first had been received. Peter had said and the others had felt that this would not happen to their Master. Christ explains now that not only would He be crucified but His disciples too had to bear their cross. The purpose of this passage is to show that glory follows suffering. It was so with God's program for the Messiah, who would first be cut off (Dan. 9:26), at a later time a period of intense trouble would begin (Dan. 9:27), and finally the Son of Man would come in glory to judge the world (Dan. 7:13-14). The disciples must endure suffering, and yet, Christ promised that "there be some of them that stand there, which shall in no wise taste death, till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom" (Matt. 16:28). This was fulfilled at the transfiguration which follows immediately. Christ demonstrated there to a select group of His disciples that while suffering preceded glory in His life as well as in that of the disciples, glory would ultimately result. And some of them would be privileged to have a foretaste of this millennial glory.

§ 77. THE TRANSFIGURATION.

MATT. 17:1-13.

1 And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart: 2 and he was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as the light. 3 And behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with him. 4 And Peter answered, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, I will make here three ¹tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah. 5 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. 6 And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. 7 And Jesus came and touched them and said, Arise, and be not afraid. 8 And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one, save Jesus only.

MARK 9:2-13.

2 And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them: 3 and his garments became glistering, exceeding white; so as no fuller on earth can whiten them. 4 And there appeared unto them Elijah with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. 5 And Peter answereth and saith to Jesus, Rabbi, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three ¹tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah. 6 For he wist¹ not what to answer; for they became sore afraid. 7 And there came a cloud overshadowing them: and there came a voice out of the cloud, This is my beloved Son: hear ye him. 8 And suddenly looking round about, they saw no one any more, save Jesus only with themselves.

LUKE 9:28-36.

28 And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, he² took with him Peter and John and James, and went up into the mountain to pray. 29 And as he was praying, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became white and dazzling. 30 And behold, there talked with him two men, which³ were Moses and Elijah; 31 who appeared in glory, and spake of his² decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. 32 Now Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: but³ when they were fully awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. 33 And it came to pass, as they were parting from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three ¹tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah: not knowing what he said. 34 And while he said these things, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. 35 And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is⁴ my Son, my chosen: hear ye him. 36 And when the voice⁵ came, Jesus was found alone. And they held their peace, and told no man in those days any of the things which they had seen.

PETER AND THE TRANSFIGURATION

Matt. 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 8:28-36

1. Introduction:

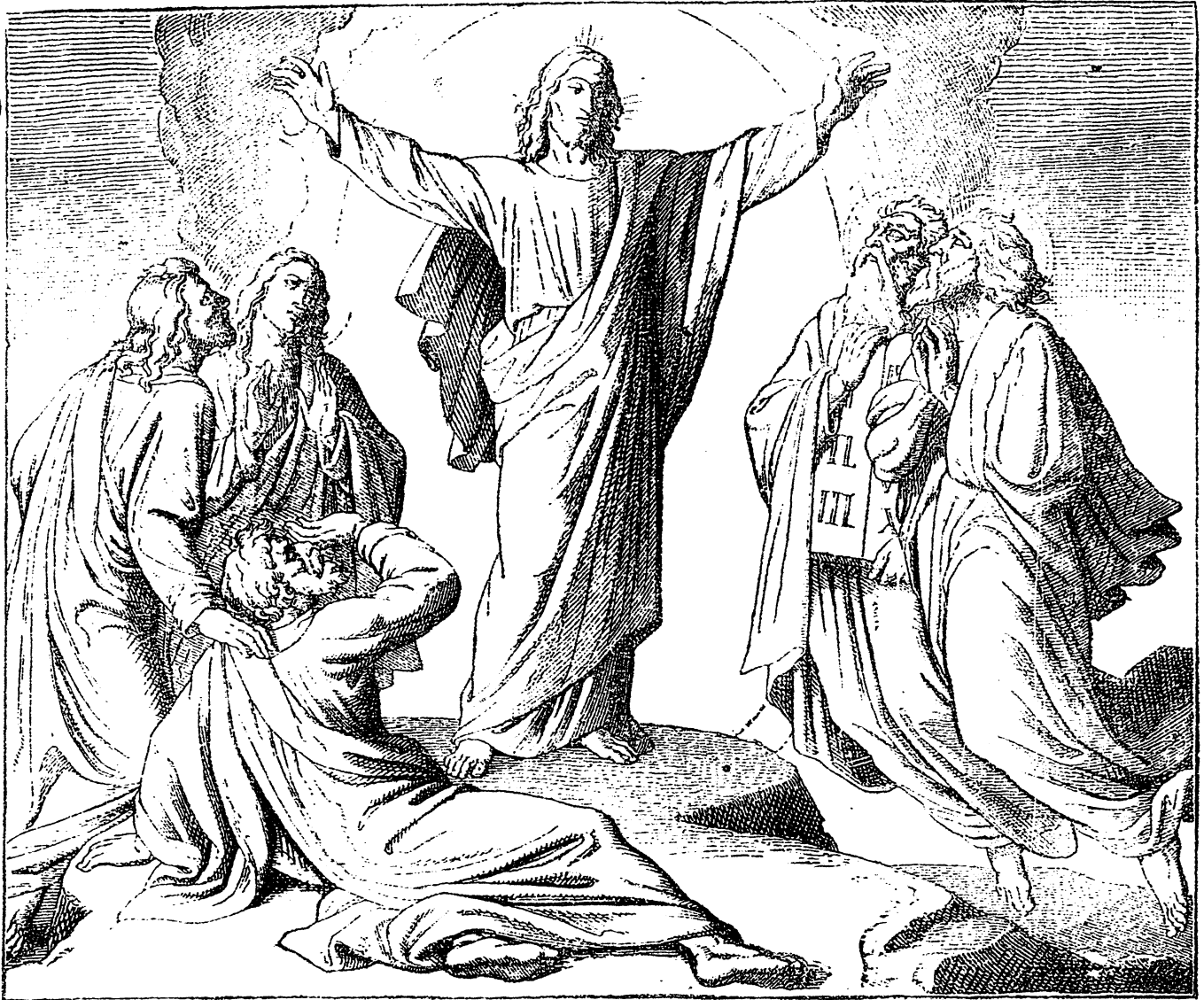
The glorious transfiguration was a significant event in the Savior's ministry. It is one of the three summits in the Lord's life: the temptation, the transfiguration, and the agony in the garden. Of these three, the transfiguration is the summit level and the division. Edersheim, II, 89, rightly entitles his discussion of the event and subsequent ministry as "The Descent: From the Mount of Transfiguration into the Valley of Humiliation and Death." The transfiguration was the one open manifestation of Christ's Godhead. His ascent to the holy mountain was for the purpose of speaking of His descent to His death. The transfiguration was, as has been mentioned, the divide in the Savior's ministry. Up to the transfiguration the faith of the disciples grew until it culminated in Peter's great confession. And up to the transfiguration the hostility of His enemies steadily advanced. Before the transfiguration miracles were numerous; after the transfiguration, few, and these few in special circumstances. Before the transfiguration there had been free and frequent speech in public; after the transfiguration Jesus talked mainly with His own disciples. It seemed as if all those who would be drawn to Him through His ministry had already come, and so from the summit of the transfiguration hill He descended quietly into the darkness of death that lay before Him in the valley.

2. The chronological references:

The transfiguration happened about eight days after the confession of Peter, subsequent to which Christ started to speak openly about His death and resurrection. Matthew and Mark say that six days had transpired but the reason for the difference between them and Luke is plain. The latter reckons both the day from, and the day to, which he is calculating. Luke gives the number of the intervening days.

Peter's confession had marked the high-point of his faith. Never afterwards, until Christ's resurrection, did it reach so high. What followed seems rather a retrogression from it. He was unwilling to receive the announcement of Christ's death. At the time of the crucifixion He was unwilling to share in Christ's suffering. Later he was not willing to believe in his Savior's resurrection.

It is Luke who remarks that the transfiguration took place after Jesus went up into the mountain to pray--a very special mountain. And accompanying Him were Peter and James and John, on whom the Savior had bestowed special privileges. Thus they were selected to be the witnesses of the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:37), and they were honored



THE TRANSFIGURATION.

to go farthest with Him into Gethsemane (Matt. 26:37). Why they were the special chosen three, we do not know. Perhaps they had more in common with the Master than the other nine. At any rate, it was they who had the blessed privilege of witnessing the transfiguration.

One week had elapsed, therefore, since Peter had uttered His profession. Christ continued His stay in seclusion to instruct His disciples. As was His frequent custom, He went apart into a mountain to pray. Chronologically, then, the transfiguration followed the revelation of His death; His promise of the kingdom; "Verily I say unto you, There be some of them that stand here, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." (Matt. 16:28) and, immediately, His prayer for comfort.

3. The traditional place:

Commentators are in great disagreement as to the identity of the mount of transfiguration. Traditionally, Mt. Tabor has been pointed out as "the mountain." This tradition existed even at the time of Jerome and empress Helena for this reason erected a church on Tabor. There seem to be some insuperable difficulties with this long-cherished view, however. At the time of Peter's confession the Lord had withdrawn into the region of Caesarea Philippi; but Tabor is in the south-east of Galilee, and there is no record of any journey intervening between the incidents referred to and the transfiguration. Matthew 17:22 implies that the change of residence to Galilee took place at a later period, while in Mark 9:30 it is distinctly stated that after these events Jesus had secretly passed through Galilee. It seems unlikely that Christ would return to Galilee where He had been persecuted before and there to find rest on a mountain, which many maintain, was crowned with a fortress without intermission between the times of Antiochus the Great in 218 B.C. and the destruction of Jerusalem under Vespasian in A.D. 70. While it cannot be demonstrated beyond the shadow of any doubt that in the time of Jesus the fortifications were actually standing (Lange, Luke, p. 153), the mountain would hardly have been the scene of peace and solitude where one would flee to escape the turmoil of the world.

It has also been suggested that Panias, the mountain close to Caesarea Philippi, has been the place of the transfiguration. But the fact that Christ went apart into a "high Mountain" seems to militate against this view. Panias is a steep cliff, to be sure, but can hardly be considered a high mountain.

The most likely locality for the event is Mt. Hermon, or, more correctly, one of the mountains of Hermon. It has already been observed that there is no notice of Christ's departure from the area, such as is generally made by Mark. On the contrary, the departure is mentioned by Mark as after the transfiguration (9:30). And the likelihood of a fortified city on Mt. Tabor at the time would render it unsuitable for the scene.

Edersheim, II, 94 is correct in noting that it could not have been to one of the highest peaks of Hermon that Jesus departed, most modern commentators notwithstanding. There are three such peaks: those north and south, of about equal height (9,400 feet above sea level, and nearly 11,000 above the Jordan valley), are only 500 paces distant from each other, while the third, to the west (about 100 feet lower), is separated from the others by a narrow valley. To none of these three peaks did Jesus retreat, as Edersheim correctly observes:

Now to climb the top of Hermon is, even from the nearest point, an Alpine ascent, trying and fatiguing, which would occupy a whole day (six hours in the ascent and four in the descent), and require provisions of food and water; while, from the keenness of the air, it would be impossible to spend the night on the top. To all this there is no allusion in the text, nor slightest hint of either difficulties or preparations, such as otherwise would have been required. Indeed, a contrary impression is left on the mind.

Edersheim suggests, with some reason, that the Lord took His three disciples up to one of the mountains of Hermon, although not all the way:

We know not the exact direction which the climbers took, nor how far their journey went. But there is only one road that leads from Caesarea Philippi to Hermon, and we cannot be mistaken in following it. First, among the vine-clad hills stocked with mulberry, apricot, and fig trees; then through corn fields where the pear tree supplants the fig; next, through oak coppice, and up rocky ravines to where the soil is dotted with dwarf shrubs. And if we pursue the ascent, it still becomes steeper, till the first ridge of snow is crossed, after which turfy banks, gravelly slopes, and broad snow patches alternate. The top of Hermon in summer--and it can only be ascended in summer or autumn--is free from snow, but broad patches run down the sides, expanding as they descend. To the very summit it is well earthed; to 500 feet below it, studded with countless plants, higher up with dwarf clumps. (II, 95).

4. The remarkable prayer:

As to the time of the transfiguration, it probably took place at night. The transfiguration could be seen to better advantage than in daylight. Further, Jesus usually went to mountains to spend there the night in prayer (Luke 6:12; 21:37; 22:39; Matt. 14:23-24). Also, the disciples were asleep and are described as having kept themselves awake through the act of transfiguration (Luke 9:32). Finally, they did not descend till the next day (Luke 9:37).

The time references in the Synoptics, linking the event with Christ's prediction of His death, as well as the subject matter discussed between Christ and the two heavenly messengers, suggest strongly that Christ ^{prayed} primarily for Himself as the end approached, and for His disciples, that they would not lose faith. As afterward in Gethsemane, Christ probably prayed apart, that is, some distance separated from His disciples. His prayer for comfort and calmness amidst the gathering clouds of opposition and death was immediately answered by a heavenly sign.

5. The complete transfiguration:

"And as he was praying, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became white and dazzling" (Luke 8:29). In the act of praying this transformation took place. Two things were changed: the Lord's appearance and His garments. A glorification of the Lord's person took place, so that He appeared not in veiled humanity but in the form (morphe) of God. Matthew compares His face with the brightest object he knows when he writes, "and his face did shine as the sun." Mark describes Christ's garments as becoming glistening, exceeding white; so as no fuller on earth can whiten them" (Mark 9:3). He appears to be compounding an illustration from nature (snow, of which there was an abundance nearby) with an illustration from everyday life (fuller) to express the outer change brought about by the inner metamorphosis of the Lord. There were white garments in the East, worn only by nobility, which glittered splendidly, but Christ's garments outshone these. Starke, cited by Lange, Mark, p. 61, writes of such raiment:

They used in the East to make linen garments so beautiful that they glistened with whiteness; but such as these the Lord's garments now outshone. The white color was that which the Romans called candorem, and which was so clear and so deep as to glisten splendidly. Materials prepared for such linen or other materials were, among the Jews, appropriated to priests and kings. Such garments also were in high estimation among other people, especially among the Romans. They were worn only by the highest personages, who were by such garments distinguished from those below them;

hence, when they were seeking high offices of state, they distinguished themselves by such clothing, and were called candidati. And since among the Romans the glittering white upon their garments was refined to the highest lustre by art, and the Jews had been long in the habit of endeavoring to imitate it, we can understand the phrase, That no fuller on earth could so whiten them.

For a brief flash of time, Christ's deity is manifest in Him as a person, as it had been before only through His words and works. The form of God shone through the form of a servant. And this divine glory bathed His whole figure in a dazzling light, whose brightness the evangelists found it impossible to describe completely. The manifestation of His glory was an anticipation of His future glory, which would presently become one of the subjects under discussion.

6. The heavenly companions:

While the amazed disciples, half asleep, saw the metamorphosis of the Savior before their eyes, witnessed a display of His inherent glory on His face and the resultant external illumination of His garments, there suddenly appeared two heavenly comforters, Moses and Elijah. Apparently the disciples recognized them immediately, although it is vain to speculate about the way by which they were recognized. Where revelation is silent, the imagination must be held in check.

Christ's companions represented the law and the prophets. In His own person Christ combined these two offices and fulfilled them. As lawgiver He called the people back to God and as prophet He proclaimed the kingdom of God. While there is this similarity between these three personages, there are weightier differences. While Moses represented the law and Elijah the prophets, Christ represented the gospel or grace.

Luke alone notes their condition and conversation. They appeared in glory and spake of his decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). Moses and Elijah appear in heavenly glory and are met by the Master in a state of celestial array. The disciples had been fatigued by the day's activity while Christ prayed nearby, as was His custom. The glow of His glorification awoke them and suddenly, becoming somewhat accustomed to the light, see the two glorified messengers.

The three disciples, privileged spectators, not only see the heavenly messengers but overhear the heavenly message. The conversation centers around Christ's decease

(exodus) in Jerusalem. While undoubtedly the death of Christ is primarily meant by this exodus, many commentators also see reference to the resurrection and ascension. It is used elsewhere for a departure from the world (2 Pet. 1:15; Wisd. 3:2), in Peter's case it is a reference to his own death. A.B. Bruce has some comments on the conversation:

How long the conference lasted we know not, but the subject was sufficiently suggestive of interesting topics of conversation. There was, e.g., the surprising contrast between the death of Moses, immediate and painless, while his eye was not dim nor his natural force abated, and the painful and ignominious death to be endured by Jesus. Then there was the not less remarkable contrast between the manner of Elijah's departure from the earth--translated to heaven without tasting death at all, making a triumphant exit out of the world in a chariot of fire, and the way by which Jesus should enter into glory--the via dolorosa of the cross. Whence this privilege of exemption from death, or from its bitterness, granted to the representatives of the law and the prophets, and wherefore denied to Him who was the end both of law and prophecy? On these points, and others of kindred nature, the two celestial messengers enlightened by the clear light of heaven, may have held intelligent and sympathetic converse with the Son of Man to the refreshment of His weary, saddened, solitary soul. (pp. 184-185).

The scene foreshadows Gethsemane. Christ's three favorite disciples are with Him there as well. He is spending the night in prayer while they sleep. He is asking the Father for grace to endure the sufferings. In the garden the angels come in answer to the prayer; here it is Moses and Elijah. The transfiguration scene is thus seen as an aid to cheer the Son of Man on His sorrowful path towards Jerusalem and Calvary. Three distinct aids to His faith were supplied to Him on that memorable night. The first was a foretaste of the glory with which He would be rewarded after His passion, for His voluntary humiliation and obedience unto death. The second source of comfort was the assurance that the mystery of the cross was understood and appreciated by the saints in heaven, which Moses and Elijah represented. The darkened minds of sinful men on earth failed to understand His passion but it must have given Him comfort to realize that the hosts of heaven were watching His ministry on earth. They understood that their presence in heaven was due to the merits of Him who was about to be offered up.

7. The foolish proposition:

The spectacle before the disciples was such, that they were lifted up out of themselves. Peter, in the ecstasy of the moment, and in his own impetuous manner, the best of motives, but without considering what was involved in his request, exclaimed, "Master, it is good for us to be here, and let us make three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." Bruce paraphrases Peter's foolish speech thusly:

He thought to himself: "How much better to abide up here with the saints than down below amidst unbelieving captious Pharisees and miserable human beings, enduring the contradiction of sinners, and battling with the manifold ills wherewith the earth is cursed! Stay here, my Master, and you may bid good-bye to all those dark forebodings of coming sufferings, and will be beyond the reach of malevolent priests, elders and scribes. Stay here on this sun-lit, heaven-kissing hill; go no more down into the depressing, sombre valley of humiliation. Farewell, earth and the cross; welcome, heaven and the crown!" (p. 189).

The visible glory had made him forget for the time the cross through which alone it could be made permanent. While one must make due allowance for his being dazed with sleep and for the startling splendors of the midnight scene, it nevertheless remains true that the idle suggestion was an index of the disciple's present mind. Peter really did not yet believe that Christ's death was imperative. And he actually thought that he could detain the heavenly visitors. Luke notes that Peter made his strange request just "as they were departing from him" (9:32). He wanted to make three tabernacles with the other disciples, so that Jesus and Moses and Elijah would always stay there, and he and James and John would serve them. His desire was to stay in heavenly company rather than endure earthly conflict.

Mark excuses Peter's rash statement with the observation that Peter "wist not what to answer; for they became sore afraid" (9:6, cf. Luke 9:34). Fear had gripped the disciples' heart, which climaxed with their falling on their face (Matt. 17:6).

8. The divine recognition:

Matthew relates that while Peter "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" (17:5). God prevented Peter from making any further rash statements by sending the Shekinah glory which, like the pillar of cloud and of fire, had a two-fold purpose: to bring light to one party (the departing messengers) and concealing them from the other (the distraught disciples). Furthermore, the cloud signified the presence of God Himself. In Matthew there is a three-

fold progression of miracles, each introduced with the word "behold" (17:3,5): the transfiguration of Christ, the appearance of the cloud, and the revelation from the Father.

With the miraculous cloud comes the mighty voice. The Father first brings comfort to the Son before He gives a commandment to the disciples. Bruce expounds on the Father's words:

That voice, uttered then, meant: "Go on Thy present way, self-devoted to death, and shrinking not from the cross. I am pleased with Thee, because Thou pleasest not Thyself. Pleased with Thee at all times, I am most emphatically delighted with Thee when, in a signal manner, as lately in the announcement made to Thy disciples, Thou dost show it to be Thy fixed purpose to save others, and not to save Thyself." (p. 187).

Instead of departing with Moses and Elijah, Christ had remained behind, laying aside His glory once more and voluntarily facing His suffering and death. God therefore spoke once more with commendation, as He had done before, "This is my beloved Son."

With the comfort and commendation comes a commandment to the three disciples: "Hear ye him!" It is in the emphatic sense. Lange summarizes the meaning of the commandment:

The divine attestation of Jesus which they had just witnessed, implied the duty of perfect obedience, and of complete self-surrender. At the same time, this command would also convey to the disciples that ideas such as those which Peter entertained, about the kingdom of the Messiah and about the Church, must be laid aside." (Matthew. p. 308).

9. The immediate effect:

"And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid" (Matt. 17:6). The cloud which had come upon them seems to have been visible as it came and then as it enveloped the disciples and they heard the Father's voice immediately next to them, out of the cloud, they fell on their faces to the ground with a terror which had been culminating with the miracles. At the appearance of the messengers "they became sore afraid" (Mark 9:6). "And they feared as they entered the cloud" (Luke 9:34), which was approaching them. In near panic they fell on their face, being "Sore afraid" (Matt. 17:6).

10. The immediate restoration:

It is impossible to determine how long the silence lasted and the last rays of the departing Shekinah glory were visible. But it is certain that the three remained prostrate until Jesus came and touched them. The terror of death, which must have overcome them as they realized themselves to be in the very presence of God, prevented them from making the slightest movement. It was Jesus who "came and touched them, and said, Arise and be not afraid" (Matt. 17:7). They must have been extremely startled when they removed their hands from their eyes, having had their faces buried in their hands, for Mark explains that "suddenly looking round about, they saw no one any more, save Jesus only with themselves" (9:8). The heavenly visitors had departed. The last glow of the light-cloud had faded away. The echoes of the heavenly voice had died out. It was dark night again, and they were on the mount with Jesus, and with Jesus only.

11. The final prohibition:

Peter had actually expected that the heavenly messengers to remain because it becomes clear from the disciples' question. "And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of Man be risen from the dead. And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elijah must first come? And he answered and said, Elijah is come already, and restored all things: but I say unto you, that Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but did unto him whatsoever they listed. Even so shall the Son of man also suffer of them. Then understood the disciples that he spake unto them of John the Baptist" (Matt. 17:9-13). The questions "why then say the scribes that Elijah must first come?" relates to the fleeting character of the whole scene on the mountain. The three were disappointed and perplexed in the shortness of the stay and suddenness of the departure of Moses and Elijah. Since Elijah would come to restore the kingdom, they thought that this was surely the time. While the Savior and the celestial messengers had discussed the cross, Peter and the two other disciples had been dreaming of crowns.

Christ prohibited His disciples from telling anyone of the vision. They were coming slowly down the mountain side, probably just as it began to dawn, when Christ turned to the favored three and asked them to keep the experience a secret until after His resurrection. Both John and Peter make reference to the event in their writings, however. John wrote probably with the transfiguration in mind when he witnesses: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,

(and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (1:14). And Peter, reflecting upon the event, wrote:

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. (2Pet. 1:17-19).

While Peter was on that "holy mount" he may not have known what he said but he certainly knew what he saw. And he was convinced Moses and Elijah were here to stay to introduce the kingdom. Christ had promised just prior to this that "there be some of them that stand here, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matt. 16:28). For a brief moment the King had been revealed in all His glory and the fore-runner of the kingdom was present. From this vantage point one can understand the disciples' question. Elijah indeed would have to come first to restore the spiritual state of Israel (Mal. 4:5-6). In a sense, Christ answers, John was Elijah. However, because of Israel's spiritual blindness and lack of response, John could not restore all things. Rather, John was killed. A suffering fore-runner is to be followed by a suffering Messiah. John's death is attributed, in part, to Israel. They are partly held responsible for his imprisonment and subsequent death. "Even so shall the Son of man also suffer of them." Their rejection of John and Jesus meant the postponement of the kingdom. Since John did not accomplish the spiritual restoration of the nation, the coming of Elijah is still future, and so is the kingdom.

12. The primary confirmation:

In relation to Christ, the transfiguration was primarily for comfort and confirmation. It confirmed, first of all, the reality of a future kingdom. The presence of the Old Testament saints on earth with Christ, taken in conjunction with the promises of Matthew 16:27-28, as an earnest of the coming Kingdom, allows no other interpretation. Secondly, the transfiguration confirms the person of Jesus as the Messiah. "He was transformed (metamorphothe) in His very form and the Father's attestation was one of clearly Messianic import. "This is my beloved Son" is taken from Psalm 2:7, a clearly Messianic psalm. So also is the second phrase Messianic, being taken

from Isaiah 42:1. Even the imperative, Hear Him, is Messianic, referring to Deut. 18:15: "A prophet from your brethren like unto me shall the Lord thy God raise up unto thee, him ye shall hear." The transfiguration was, finally, a confirmation of the Messiah's sufferings. This is obvious from the subject of the conversation on the mountain, namely, the exodus (Luke 9:31).

13. The intended lesson:

Christ had a specific purpose in mind when He took Peter, James and John with Him to the high mountain to witness His transfiguration. The first result of the experience was that Peter and the others had external proof that Christ was indeed the Messiah. This, in addition to their internal persuasion expressed six days earlier, made it impossible for them to ever doubt the deity of the Master. No further proof was ever necessary.

A second result of the experience was the heavenly injunction for perfect obedience. Peter, James and John were asked to recall all that had fallen from their Master's lips on the unwelcome topic of His death and suffering. The Father rebuked them with the implied words, "Murmur not, but devoutly and obediently hear." They might not understand all that they were taught, but they were to obey.

Finally, the event assured them that there would be a future glory. The kingdom would be established. Elijah would come again. Christ would be glorified.

With these lessons of admonition and assurance the disciples returned from the mountain, just as the morning sun bathed the snow-capped Hermon behind them. This experience would never be forgotten.

§ 80. THE SHEKEL IN THE FISH'S MOUTH.

MATT. 17:24-27.

24 And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received the half-shekel came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay the half-shekel? 25 He saith, Yea. And when he came into the house, Jesus spake first to him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? the kings of the earth, from whom do they receive toll or tribute? from their sons, or from strangers? 26 And when he said, From strangers, Jesus said unto him, Therefore the sons are free. 27 But, lest we cause them to stumble, go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a shekel: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

'MARK 9:33c.'

'33 And they came to Capernaum:.' (§81)

THE COIN IN THE FISH'S MOUTH.

Matt. 17:24-27

A. The Request for the Tax:

1. The time of the event:

Christ had come from the utmost borders of the land, at Caesarea Philippi, where Peter had made his confession. Nearby the Lord was transfigured, probably on one of the lesser peaks of Mt. Hermon. It was during the subsequent travels throughout Galilee that Christ revealed to His disciples what would await Him in Jerusalem (Matt. 17:22). While waiting for the next festive days, the Feast of Tabernacles, which would bring Him to Jerusalem, He retired with His disciples to His city, Capernaum.

2. The tribute in question:

His arrival in Capernaum might have brought the authorities to the conclusion that He now intended to settle down in Galilee. At any rate, no sooner had the news reached the town that Christ had returned, the tax-collectors paid Him a visit. Literally, it was "those who received the didrachmas" (v.24), the collectors of the temple dues. They are not the publicans or tax collectors as in Matt. 22:17. Thus, "those who received the didrachmas" or the double drachma, did not collect tribute to Caesar but dues to the temple. The didrachmas which the collectors here demand was exactly the ransom of souls, the half shekel (Ex. 30:11-16) to be paid by every Israelite above twenty years old to the service and current expenses of the tabernacle, or, as it afterward came to be, of the temple. (Trench, p. 295). These temple-contributions were in the first place devoted to the purchase of all public sacrifices, that is, those which were offered in the name of the whole congregation of Israel, such as the morning and evening sacrifices (Edersheim, II, 112.)

This temple tax amounted to an Attic drachma or the Jewish half-shekel, about one-third of a dollar. It was not a compulsory tax like that collected by the publicans for the government. No one could be forced to pay. At **the** time this incident took place, shekels were no longer coined and it became the custom to estimate the temple-dues as two drachms, a sum actually somewhat larger than the half shekel. Thus the money-changers did a thriving business in charging a small premium for the Jewish coin, the half-shekel, with which the payment had to be made. Their profit has been estimated to some forty-five thousand dollars a year. Robertson, Matthew, p. 142.

It is significant that tax collectors approached Peter rather than Jesus. The explanation is perhaps found in the fact that Christ and the disciples were staying at Peter's house, as

appears to have been their custom. Peter met the collectors at the door or in the courtyard to inquire as to their wishes. It was there that they asked him, "Your teacher, does not he pay the didrachmas?" The question implies that they perhaps wished to refrain from embarrassing the Teacher, that the tax was now overdue, and that Jesus had been in the habit of paying it. The tax was due in the month of Adar (our March) and it was now nearly six months later. (Robertson, ibid.)

B. The Reply by Peter:

1. The retort:

Peter, without consulting the Master, who is inside the house, replies with a hasty "yes." The Lord had paid the tax before and Peter assumed that He would pay it again. But Peter failed to take into consideration the fact that matters had now completely changed.

2. The rashness:

Peter, counting simply on precedent and zealous for the Lord's honor, answers without hesitation. But Christ had been revealed quite lately as the Son of God and Peter seems to have lost sight of his Lord's true position and prerogative. Christ was a Son over His own house and not a servant in another's. He was the Head of the theocracy of Israel, not one of its subordinate members. It was to Him that offerings were to be made, not from Him to be received. By his rashness, Peter had placed the Lord in the difficulty of either giving offense or else of virtually declaring Himself subject to tribute, when he should have received it.

C. The Response of Christ:

1. The prescience of Christ:

Peter turned to enter his house and get the didachma for the waiting collectors. Christ had been inside the house but was cognizant of all that transpired outside, for we are told that "Jesus prevented him, saying. . ." (v.25), literally, Jesus anticipated (prophthano, only here in the N.T., "to get before one in doing a thing") him (Robertson, Matthew, p. 143). Christ was anticipating Peter's communication concerning the conversation outside and immediately gives him a lesson to prevent serious misunderstanding on Peter's part and that of the disciples nearby.

2. The parable of the tribute money:

Addressing him in kind language as "Simon," Christ points out the real state of matters by giving an illustration: "What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children or strangers?" In other words, whom does a king intend to tax for the maintenance of his palace and officers? Does he

tax his own family or other folks (an old English rendering of ton allotrion)?

Peter, ever ready with an answer, replies correctly, that taxes would be exacted from strangers. And Christ completes the parable with "then are the children free?" The lesson is all too obvious to demand lengthy elaboration. An earthly king does not demand customs (telē, i.e. duties on merchandise) or taxes (kēnsos, i.e. capitation or land tax; cf. Matt. 22:17; Mk. 12:14) from his own family. The children of royalty are untaxed. There is an implied comparison here between "the kings of the earth" (which is emphatic in the passage) and the King of heaven (Ps. 2:2).

Had Peter forgotten his distinct confession (16:18) that Christ was the Son of God? As the Son in the house of His Father, the temple, Christ claims exemption from the temple tax, just as royal families do not pay taxes, but get tribute from foreigners and aliens. God is king of the temple city, therefore His Son is free from any tribute.

3. The payment of the tax:

a. The concern:

Logically Christ was free from the temple tax, but practically He was not. This is the doctrinal aim of the whole passage. Christ demonstrated that as the Son of God He owed no temple tribute. But the tax is paid anyway "in order that we might not offend them" (v. 27). The Master does not want to give any offense needlessly, for the tax collectors and people would not have understood the principle involved. He does not wish created the impression that He and the disciples despise the temple and its worship. As with His baptism, while Christ was above the law, yet He did not come to destroy it but in His infinite condescension He submitted to its demands. (Lange, Matthew, p. 319.) He put Himself under the law that in due time He might deliver men from the law.

b. The command:

Christ orders Peter to secure the tax money in an unusual way: "Having gone to the sea, cast a hook, and the fish first coming up take, and having opened its mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee." (v.27).

Peter, probably still puzzled about the Lord's knowledge concerning his conversation with the tax collectors, is asked to leave his house and walk the few feet down to the shore, to catch a fish, which would have the money in its mouth.

c. The casting:

The Lord is very specific as to how the fish is to be caught. With Him the means are just as important as the end. Peter is

told to take along a fishing rod with a hook. No doubt he kept it with some other fishing implements near his house. The word "hook" (agkistron) as used here comes from agkizō, to angle, and that from agkos, a curve. This is the only example in the N. T. of fishing with a hook. (Robertson, Matthew, p. 143.)

d. The catch:

Christ did not even have thirty cents to pay his tax. In His ordinary expenses He lived on alms (Luke 8:3) and in extraordinary ones on miracles. He did not order Judas to pay this out of the bag which he carried. That was intended for the benefit of the poor. It is not unlikely that Judas, being present in the house, reached for his bag to pay the tax. But Christ had no need of this meager sum. The money would be secured in a way that once again would demonstrate His diety. The Comprehensive Commentary well states:

Those creatures that are most remote from man are at the command of Christ, even the fishes of the sea; (Ps. 8:5) and to evidence his dominion, and to accomodate Himself to His present state of humiliation, He chose to take it out of a fish's mouth, when He could have taken it out of an angel's hand. (Matthew, p. 175).

Peter had to catch the fish by angling. The miracle was especially for him. Christ had on no other occasion performed a miracle in His own behalf. Peter needed to learn another lesson on the omnipotence of Christ. Christ's omnipotence put the fish there. It was not merely a miracle of omniscience. Trench, p. 303, puts the matter into focus:

Peter went to the neighboring lake, cast in his hook, and in the mouth of the first fish that rose to it found, according to his Lord's word, the money that was needed. As little here as at Luke v. 4, 6, did the miraculous part that this first fish should bear the coin in its mouth: He did not merely foreknow; but by the mysterious potency of His will, which ran through all nature, drew such a fish to that spot at that moment, and ordained that it should swallow the hook.

Trench has some further comments about the type of fish this may have been, according to popular tradition:

The dory, called St. Peter's fish in several countries of Europe, contends with the haddock the honour of bearing the marks of the Apostle's fingers, an impression transmitted to posterity as a perpetual memorial of the miracle. The name of the dory is hence asserted to be derived from the French adoré, worshipped. (P. 302).

e. The conclusion:

Peter would find a stater (four drachmas) in the fish's mouth, enough for two persons to pay the tax. Peter was to take the coin and, in the Lord's words, he should give it to them "for me and thee." The import of those words must not be missed. He does not say "for us" but "for me and thee" as elsewhere, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God" (John 25:17). While Christ has things in common with His disciples, they must never lose sight of the fact that there is an infinite difference between them and Him. They are the delivered and He is the Deliverer. They are the ransomed and He is the Ransomer.

There is an interesting speculation by Bengel that since only Christ and Peter paid the tax, they alone were over twenty years of age. Every Jewish man twenty years of age and over was expected to pay it. (Laidlaw, Miracles, 121n).

D. The Result of the Catch:

1. The importance of the incident:

It should be observed that Matthew records the orders which Christ gave to Peter, but the catch itself is not actually mentioned. It is taken for granted, and rightly so, for with Christ, saying and doing are the same thing. Furthermore, the most important element of the event is the lesson to Peter and the disciples, not the miracle itself. Both Trench (p. 305) and Edersheim (II, p. 114, 115) relate true and apocryphal stories of similar incidents, as well as fanciful interpretations of this miracle.

2. The instruction for Peter:

The first instruction for Peter deals with the christological aspect. The Son of God's divine claim exempted Him de jure from an exaction of taxes. As the sinless redeemer of a sinful people, He was not personally chargeable with that poll-tax which suggested an atonement for sin.

Beside this doctrinal instruction there is the moral lesson for Peter. The key to this lies in the words, "But lest we cause them to stumble." It was a lesson of meekness and wisdom. The foremost disciple needed to learn a lesson of humility and self-effacement. Christ waives His right to abstain from paying taxes because offense would be sure to follow a premature or punctilious assertion of His divine right. In the same manner, while Peter as a disciple and apostle would have many rights, they must frequently be made subservient to the spiritual welfare of others.

It must not be forgotten that "at the same time" (Matt. 18:1) the disciples put their question to Jesus as to who would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Mark (9:33f) relates that they had disputed

along the way and when they arrived at the house the Lord asked them about the quarrel, but for a while they would not answer. Perhaps meanwhile the tax collectors came and then, Peter having paid them with the coin, Christ "sat down and called the twelve," teaching them a lesson in true humility by taking a child before them as an object lesson. In this context the present story becomes more lucid and Jesus' words about the temple tax take on new meaning.

A third and final lesson for Peter was a practical one. Christ as King has an inexhaustible supply at His command. He can meet the needs of the moment. He may not shower us with abundance, but He will secure that which will meet our need. He could as easily have commanded the fish to bring a bag of money as a piece of money. But Peter and we must learn that while we may not experience superfluity in possessions, we may expect supply of our needs.

MATT., CHAP. 18.

1 In that hour came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who then is ²greatest in the kingdom of heaven? 2 And he called to him a little child, and set him in the midst of them, 3 and said, ⁴Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. 4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the ¹greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 ⁶And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me:

[Paragraph continued below.]

⁶ but whoso shall cause one of these little ones which ¹ believe on me to stumble, it ³ is profitable for him that ² a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and *that* he should be sunk in the depth of the sea. 7 ⁸ Woe unto the world because of occasions of stumbling! for it must needs be that the occasions come; but woe to that man through whom the occasion cometh! 8 ⁹ And if thy hand or thy foot causeth thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee: it is good for thee to enter into life maimed or halt, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into the eternal fire. 9 And if thine eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is good for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into the ¹hell of fire. 10 See that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which ¹ is in ²heaven. 12 ¹³ How think ye? if any man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and go unto the mountains, and seek that which goeth astray? 13 And if so be that

MARK 9:33-50.

33 And they came to Capernaum: and when he was in the house he asked them, What were ye reasoning in ¹ the way? 34 But they held their peace: for they had disputed one with another in ¹ the way, who *was* the ²greatest. 35 And he sat down, and called the twelve; and he saith unto them, ³ If any man would be first, he shall be last of all, and minister ² of all. 36 And he took a little child, and set him in the midst of them: and taking him in his arms, he said unto them, 37 ³⁸ 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.

38 John said unto him, ³⁹ Master, we saw one casting out ⁴ devils in thy name: and we forbade him, because he followed not us. 39 But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which ⁵ shall do a ⁵ mighty work in my name, and be able quickly to speak evil of me. 40 For he that is not against us is for us. 41 ⁴² For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink, ⁶ because ye are Christ's, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward. 42 ⁴³ And whosoever shall cause one of these little ones that believe ⁷ on me to stumble, it were better for him if ² a great millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea. 43 ⁴⁴ And if thy hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off: it is good for thee to enter into life maimed, rather than having thy two hands to go into ³ hell, into the unquenchable ⁴ fire. 45 And if thy foot cause thee to stumble, cut it off: it is good for thee to enter into life halt, rather than having thy two feet to be cast into ³ hell. 47 And if thine eye cause thee to stumble, cast it out: it is good for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into ³ hell; 48 where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. 49 For every one shall be salted with ⁶ fire. 50 ⁵¹ Salt is good: but if the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace one with another.

LUKE 9:46-50.

46 And there arose a reasoning among them, which of them, should be ²greatest. 47 But when Jesus saw the reasoning of their heart, he took a little child, and set him by his side, 48 and said unto them,

[Paragraph continued on p. 124.]

⁴⁹ Whosoever shall receive this little child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: ⁴ for he that is ⁵ least among you all, the same is great.

49 And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out ⁴ devils in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. 50 But Jesus said unto him, Forbid *him* not: for he that is not against you is for you.

[c Luke 15:4-7. 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? 5 And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his

he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth over it more than over the ninety and nine which have not gone astray. 14 Even so it is not ¹the will of ²your Father which ¹is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

15 ^aAnd if thy brother sin ^aagainst thee, go, shew him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16 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. 17 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. 18 Verily I say unto you, ^bWhat things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. 19 Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which ¹is in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

21 Then came Peter, and said to him, ^aLord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times? 22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until ¹seventy times seven.

shoulders, rejoicing. 6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and his neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. 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, which ¹need no repentance.] (§102)

THE LESSON IN FORGIVENESS
(Matt. 18:1-22; Mark 9:33-50; Luke 9:46-50)

A. The Introduction to the Narrative:

1. The Context:

In Matt. 17:24 Christ returned once more to the town and house he loved. He had come with His disciples from Galilee to Capernaum and made His home in Peter's house. This was perhaps His last visit there before beginning that long and final journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51). No sooner had the company arrived than the tax collectors came to ask Peter whether or not the Master would pay the temple tax. (Matt. 18:24-27). Peter's hasty answer resulted in an important lesson taught him by Christ concerning the elevated position of the Messiah in relation to the temple. Then Peter is dispatched to catch a fish with a coin in its mouth so that the yearly tax might be paid and no offense might be given to anyone.

2. The Conflict:

In the tax-collection incident Jesus had claimed exemption from the tax for Himself and the disciples because they were sons of the Father. Apparently as a result of the realization of their lofty position, the disciples came "unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" The dispute was nothing new, because Mark (9:33) represents Jesus as asking them about their conflict on the way into the house. Perhaps just after their question of Matt. 18:1 He asked them, "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest" (Mark 9:33-34).

Ever since the words of commendation which Jesus spoke to Peter after his confession near Caesarea Philippi (Matt. 16:17-19), Peter seems to have felt a sense of leadership and superiority on the basis of which he had dared even to rebuke Jesus for speaking of His death (Matt. 16:22). Subsequently, Peter was one of the three (including James and John) taken by the Lord up on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 9:2-10). Peter on that occasion had again spoken rashly. And just now, the tax collectors had singled out Peter as the one who seemed to represent the group. (Robertson, Matthew, p. 145). It was almost inevitable that a dispute should arise as to who would be the most prominent person in the kingdom. And the conflict would break out again and again (Matt. 20:20-28; Luke 22:24). The primacy of Peter over the other disciples had not yet been admitted by the rest. It is a sad discovery to find the disciples more concerned about their place in the kingdom than the person of the King.

3. The Correction:

To correct such jealousy and ambition among the disciples, "Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:2). Mark gives a more detailed description of the scene. It seems as though the tax collectors had just left and the question arose as to who would be the greatest in the kingdom, followed by Christ's searching question concerning their disputation on the road to Capernaum. "They held their peace" (Mark 9:34) probably for some time. Thereupon Christ sat down "and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all" (Mark 9:35). To illustrate the lesson of humility and to correct their misconception as to true greatness, "he took a child, and set him in the midst of them; and when he had taken him in his arms" (v. 36) He continued to instruct them.

The mind can easily picture the scene. Since Christ was in Peter's house, the little boy whom He called probably belonged to Peter. He drew him very close to Him and "set him by him" (Luke 9:47), perhaps on the carpet right in front of Him. It is a tender picture of the Savior, showing concern for the pride among the disciples and compassion for the souls of children (Matt. 18:3-14). Peter and the disciples learned that true greatness did not depend on earthly superiority but on spiritual service.

B. The Importance of the Incident:

Matthew alone records the revealing question which Peter put to the Lord concerning the number of times one should forgive his brother. Peter's question revealed a curious mixture of childlikeness and childishness. It gives us another clue in the development of Peter, who undoubtedly spoke as the representative of the other disciples as well. The question betrayed the child-like faith of a son of the kingdom who wished to be obedient to the law. But the question also disclosed the childish notion that forgiveness can be reduced to the external and numbers rather than the internal and the spirit of the heart. Peter had yet another lesson to learn in the course of his spiritual pilgrimage, namely that forgiveness is qualitative, not quantitative. The question of forgiveness arose because of the Lord's admonition concerning forgiveness given just prior to this. To understand Peter's preoccupation with the question, it is necessary to study in some detail the Lord's discourse on church discipline and forgiveness which gave rise to Peter's question.

C. The instruction concerning discipline:

1. The Affrontery by a Brother:

The Lord had just cautioned His disciples against offending the little ones and immediately proceeds to tell them how to act when they were not the givers, but the receivers of offenses. The question arose, What if actual wrong had been done and offense given by a brother? If someone "commit a sin" (lit.) against a Christian, how should he respond?

2. The Action by the Offended:

Christ had come to Peter's house and taught two important lessons. By paying the temple tax He taught the necessity of not causing someone to stumble. By answering the query as to who would be the greatest in the kingdom He taught the imperative of humility and self-forgetfulness. Now in this lesson on church discipline He is teaching the positive side of self-forgetfulness, namely, the service of love.

Jesus outlines the course of action one should take when "thy brother shall trespass against thee" (Matt. 18:15). First, the offended Christian needs to "go and tell him his fault" privately. This does not involve a loss of dignity but hopefully the gain of a brother.

Even if this first approach should fail, the offended must not desist from his service of love. Two or three witnesses are to accompany the Christian to convince his erring brother that the complaint against him is not the result of personal vindictiveness or prejudice.

Should this course of action fail, a final appeal can be made to the congregation of believers which would judge the matter. A rejection of the church's admonition would necessitate that the brother be treated like "a heathen man and a publican" (v. 17). As Edersheim says (II, 124), the person should be "persecuted, despised, or avoided, but not received into Church-fellowship (a heathen), nor admitted to close familiar intercourse (a publican)."

3. The Authority of the Believers:

A. B. Bruce rightly remarks that strange as the idea might seem to many, the law of love is the basis of church discipline. One believer is not only entitled but bound to be earnestly concerned about the behavior of the other. A church is more than "a hotel, where all kinds of people meet for a short space, sit down together at the same table, then part, neither knowing nor caring anything about each other; while in truth, it is rather a family, whose members are all brethren, bound to love each other with pure heart fervently" (Training, pp. 203-204).

Church censures carry with them eternal consequences because Christ adds in most solemn words, "Verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (v. 18).

By a solemn adjuration the power of the keys are given to all of Christ's disciples and with them to the church in general. The passage has direct connection to Matt. 16:18 which relates the giving of the keys to Peter. Here the exercise of the authority is broadened to include the disciples and the church. Peter was the first to make confession and to bear witness (Acts 5:8-11). But whenever Peter stepped outside of the scriptural and ecclesiastical bounds, he also subjected himself to the discipline and reproof of the church (Gal. 2:11).

The binding and loosing is future passive periphrastic perfect indicative and should thus be translated, as in 16:19, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." The binding and loosing is the exercise of judgment on conduct and in this conduct refers to the matter of judging another believer's sin. In a day when churches are more interested in members than in morality, the spiritual right to discipline erring believers has been reduced to pious platitudes from the pulpit. God, however, declares that certain sins warrant the exclusion of believers from fellowship and friendship. God makes the decision and mature believers who judge (bind or loose) these matters follow only that pattern which God has already instituted. Thus the unusual form of the "shall have been bound" and "shall have been loosed."

4. The Answer to Prayer:

Vv. 19-20 introduce a new thought of parallel importance to the former. The previous verse deals with authority from God. These verses promise the power and presence of God: "Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name there am I in the midst of them." When Christ spoke these words He was undoubtedly pointing to the disciples around Him, pointing at them as He spoke of the two or three gathered in His name. The time would come when He would no longer be physically present but the disciples had at their disposal, wherever they met even in small groups, the power of the Father and presence of the Son. His promise "I am in their midst," spoken in the present but referring to the future, makes His presence axiomatically certain. (Expositor's Greek NT, Matthew, p. 16). And if His disciples agreed on any matter--the offenses committed by brethren included, of course--God the Father would hear them. Even here the theme of forgiveness is present because the prayer of the believers gathered would probably revolve

around the erring, unrepentant brother. It was this idea that forgiveness should be practiced and prayed for which no doubt troubled Peter as he pensively listened to his Master's words. He finally arose from his seat, sat down beside the Lord, and posed the question of v. 21.

D. The Inquiry by Peter:

1. The Attitude of Peter:

The concluding part of Christ's discourse in Peter's house at Capernaum was occasioned by a question put by Peter, the usual spokesman of the Twelve, who sat down beside Jesus and said, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" (18:21).

The question shows, first of all, that Peter has a sensitive conscience and Jesus probably welcomed the interruption because the question indicated that He had not spoken in vain. Peter had been a good listener. He also wanted to learn more about the duty of forgiving. Peter's proposal "till seven times" is very characteristic of the attitude of his mind. It showed his childlikeness in wanting to practice the new law of love which came with Christ. He no doubt thought that he was generous in his willingness to forgive seven times. The Jewish rabbis would only forgive three times, based on the mention of three transgressions, and four, which God would no more pass by (Amos 1:6,9; 2:6; cf. Job 33:29-30). Peter magnanimously extended the three to seven, realizing that Christ required men to be more longsuffering than the legalistic rabbis.

While one can detect here Peter's magnanimity, one also notices a misapprehension of Christ's teaching. It apparently did not occur to Peter that the very act of numbering the times that he had forgiven marked an externalism which was not consistent with the spirit of Christ. Peter had yet to learn that as Christ's forgiveness, so that of the Christian, must not be computed by numbers (Edersheim, II, 125).

2. The Admonition of Christ:

Christ's reply was that forgiveness should not be practiced merely "until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven." It is not clear whether this idiom means seventy-seven or, as the Revised Version has it, four-hundred and ninety times. Robertson (Word Pictures, Matthew, p. 150) observes that the same ambiguity is seen in Gen. 4:24, the LXX text by omitting kai. Gen. 4:24 reads that "If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamach seventyfold and seven." Jerome already observed this significant contrast of the Lord's seventy times seven of forgiveness to the antediluvian Lamech's seventy times seven

of revenge. But it really makes little difference whether Christ said to forgive 77 times or 490 times (the latter figure probably being correct), because the meaning of Christ's words is clear. He clearly stresses unlimited forgiveness. "The unlimited revenge of primitive man has given place to the unlimited forgiveness of Christians" (McNeile in Robertson, p. 150).

Christ's reply lifts the subject out of the legal sphere where even Peter's suggestion left it. He would forgive seven times but no more. Christ lifts the matter to the evangelical sphere or to the level of grace. He means that forgiveness is to be times without number. Since Christ forgives all sins freely, he who has experienced this forgiveness follows in His footsteps. And this is the meaning of the explanatory parable which follows.

E. The Illustration by Christ:

The connection of "therefore" indicates that the aim of the parable is to justify the apparently unreasonable demand of unlimited forgiveness of injuries in v. 22. Jesus is saying that even if one complies with the demand to practice unlimited forgiveness, what do those remissions amount to compared to what has been forgiven one by God?

While every detail of the parable is important, three things are especially noteworthy because of their relationship to the question of Peter and the argument among the disciples. There is the contrast between the two debts, the corresponding contrast between the two debtors, and the doom pronounced on those who, having been forgiven their large debt, refuse to forgive the small debt owed to them.

1. The Debts Incurred:

The two debts are respectively ten thousand talents and a hundred denarii, being to each other in the proportion of about one million to one. (Robertson, p. 150: "A talent was 6,000 denarii or about a thousand dollars or 240 pounds. Ten thousand times this is about ten or twelve million dollars, an enormous sum for that period.") The enormous disparity is intended to represent the difference between the shortcomings of all men towards God, and those with which any man can charge his fellow-man.

2. The Debtors Involved:

The first debtor must be a person of high rank, like one of the princes whom Darius set over the kingdom of Persia or a provincial governor of the Roman Empire. (A. B. Bruce, Training, p. 210). As satrap he should have remitted the revenues of his province to the royal treasury. This is the first parable in which God appears as King. We are the servants with whom He takes account. The parable concludes the discourse which was prompted by the dispute among the disciples who would be the greatest in the kingdom. In concluding the subject, the master Teacher holds up before them a distinguished subject in a kingdom who was not

concerned about the faithful discharge of his duty. Christ is saying in effect: "See what men who wish to be great are doing!" They rob their king, abuse their position, and defraud their inferiors. The forgiven debtor showed the most cruel behavior toward his servant, because he took him by the throat and began to throttle him. Roman law allowed this indignity for those who were carried to the judgment seat (Robertson, p. 151).

3. The Doom Indicated:

A parable can never be made to walk on all fours but has primarily one main point which it stresses. This parable teaches the need of forgiveness because we have been forgiven. Peter's question at last is answered in v. 34 where forgiveness from the heart is urged. Peter's forgiveness was limited by the rules of arithmetic. If this were the true attitude of Christ's disciples, His heavenly Father would not spare them from severe chastisement. Truly great ones in the kingdom are not characterized by pride, pretension and presumption, but by humility and forgiveness. The lesson, so earnestly concluded with such stern warnings against temporal judgments of unforgiving disciples, did not fail to leave an impact on the disciples. Petty passions among them gave way to filial forgiveness. This is the lesson learned by Peter at the side of his Teacher in his own house. The results of such solemn instructions would not be lacking.

§ 105. THE RAISING OF LAZARUS.

JOHN 11:1-46.

1 Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, of the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 And it was that Mary which¹ anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. 3 The sisters therefore sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. 4 But when Jesus heard it, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby. 5 Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. 6 When therefore he heard that he was sick, he abode at that time two days in the place where he was. 7 Then after this he saith to the disciples, Let us go into Judaea again. 8 The disciples say unto him, Rabbi, the Jews were but now seeking to stone thee: and goest thou thither again? 9 Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. 10 But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because the light is not in him. 11 These things spake he: and after this he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus is fallen asleep; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. 12 The disciples therefore said unto him, Lord, if he is fallen asleep, he will¹ recover. 13 Now Jesus had spoken of his death: but they thought that he spake of taking rest in sleep. 14 Then Jesus therefore said unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. 15 And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. 16 Thomas therefore, who is called² Didymus, said unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.

17 So when Jesus came, he found that he had been in the tomb four days already. 18 Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off; 19 and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning their brother. 20 Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary still sat in the house. 21 Martha therefore said unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. 22 And even now I know that, whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give thee. 23 Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. 24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. 25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live: 26 and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die. Believest thou this? 27 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. 28 And when she had said this, she went away, and called Mary³ her sister secretly, saying, The⁴ Master² is here, and calleth thee. 29 And she, when she heard it, arose quickly, and went unto him. 30 (Now Jesus was not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha met him.) 31 The Jews then which¹ were with her in the house, and were comforting³ her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up quickly and went out, followed her, supposing that she was going unto the tomb to⁵ weep there. 32 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. 33 When Jesus therefore saw her⁶ weeping, and the Jews *also*⁶ weeping which¹ came with her, he⁷ groaned in the spirit, and⁸ was troubled, 34 and said, Where have ye laid him? They say unto him, Lord, come and see. 35 Jesus wept. 36 The Jews therefore⁹ said, Behold how he loved him! 37 But some of them said, Could not this man, which¹ opened the eyes of him that was blind, have caused that this man also should not die? 38 Jesus therefore again¹ groaning in himself cometh to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone lay² against it. 39 Jesus saith, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh¹: for he hath been *dead* four days. 40 Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou believedst, thou shouldest see the glory of God? 41 So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou heardest me. 42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the multitude which² standeth around I said it, that they may believe that thou didst send me. 43 And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. 44 He that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with³ grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

45 Many therefore of the Jews, which³ came to Mary and beheld⁴ that which he did, believed on him. 46 But some of them went away to the Pharisees, and told them the things which Jesus had done.

The Raising of Lazarus
John 11:1-54

1. Introduction:

The raising of Lazarus marks the climax in the ministry of the Lord. His person, His life, His words, His works all come into sharp focus. His deity and humanity are clearly seen as are the faith and unbelief among His witnesses. John, who expressly states that there were many miracles wrought by the Lord which were not written down (20:30-31; 21:25), lists only seven miracles to show that Jesus is indeed God. Four of the miracles are wrought in Galilee, three in Judea, and John records only one miracle of each kind. He alone mentions the raising of Lazarus, as the climactic one of the seven.

2. The Design of the Miracle:

It will always remain a mystery why this miracle, transcending as it does all the other miracles which the Lord wrought, was passed over by the earlier evangelists. Some have suggested that the three earlier evangelists, writing in Palestine, and while Lazarus or some of his family yet survived, would not willingly draw attention and possible persecution upon them (cf. John 12:10). John, who wrote much later and in Asia Minor, would have no such motive for omitting the miracle. Similar arguments could, however, be adduced for the other gospels as well, why they might have mentioned the miracle. Mark probably wrote in Rome and Luke wrote to Italy, so that this argument concerning danger to the characters of the story does not stand up. Others feel that the reason for the omission of the miracle lies in the fact that the synoptics report primarily miracles in Galilee, leaving the ones in and around Jerusalem largely untouched.

It is difficult to find an adequate explanation for the passing over of the miracle, a miracle which "is to the historical faith of the Church what the great Confession of Peter was to that of the disciples." (Edersheim, II, 309). It must never be forgotten that the evangelists did not write strict biographies but wrote with what may be called sacred selectivity. No doubt all of the evangelists knew of the miracle. Matthew was an eyewitness of it, no less than John. He and Mark record the feast in Simon's house which grew immediately from it (Matt. 26:6; Mark 14:3). The omission of the miracle by the first three evangelists does not make it a composition by the fourth. For reasons unknown to us, they passed over the most stupendous miracle much in the same way they omitted any reference to what must have been the most significant resurrection appearance of the Lord, when He manifested Himself to "above five hundred brethren at once" (I Cor. 15:6). This does not make the event an invention by Paul. (Delitzsch, p. 397).



THE RAISING OF LAZARUS.

The miracle gives fullest evidence to the person of the Lord: He is the resurrection and the life. It attests to the essence of the Lord: as deity He can raise the dead. It demands absolute faith: the miracle happened at the very gates of Jerusalem in the sight of all men, leaving no room for doubt. It marks the beginning of Christ's end: the religious leaders conspired together how they might kill Him. The revelation which Christ gave of Himself through the miracle demanded a response, as the reading about this miracle of miracles in the history of Christ does today. If this miracle be true, and one instinctively feels that it is, Spinoza was right in saying that if he could believe in the raising of Lazarus, he would tear to shreds his system, and humbly accept the creed of Christians. (Edersheim, II, 309).

2. The Disease of Lazarus:

a. The site of the narrative:

The miracle took place in Bethany, according to 11:18 about 15 furlongs from Jerusalem. The town is located about two miles east of Jerusalem on the south-east slope of Olivet and is now called El Azariyeh, from the name Lazarus. The name "Bethany" itself is probably derived from the Aramean, meaning house of the afflicted. The name fits very aptly into the theme of the narrative. Stanley, in his Sinai and Palestine (p. 186), has well described the rustic location of the village:

Bethany, a wild mountain hamlet, screened by an intervening ridge from the view of the top of Olivet, perched on its broken plateau of rock, the last collection of human habitations before the desert hills which reach to Jericho,--this is the modern village of El-Lazarieh, which derives its name from its clustering round the traditional site of the one house and grave which give it an undying interest. High in the distance are the Perea mountains; the foreground is the deep descent to the Jordan valley. On the further side of that dark abyss Martha and Mary knew that Christ was abiding when they sent their messengers; up that long ascent they had often watched His approach; up that long ascent He came when, outside the village Martha and Mary met Him, and the Jews stood round weeping." (Quoted by Trench, pp. 307-308).

b. The situation in the home of Lazarus:

John immediately introduces the reader to the problem: "Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha" (11:1). John presupposes a knowledge and an acquaintance on part of his readers with the two sisters, although they are not mentioned until 12:1ff, where the anointing took place. Luke had recorded years earlier that it was they who took the Lord into their home (10:38f). John presumed that his readers knew this and placed Mary before Martha, because of her spiritual maturity, displayed at that occasion. There is every reason to suppose that Mary was the younger sister.

The house belonged to Martha (Luke 10:38). She generally comes first as the mistress and hostess (Luke 10:38; John 11:5) and seems to resent being deprived of the power of ordering Mary about.

While it is impossible to say exactly how the household in Bethany was constituted, some have surmised that Martha was an early widow with whom Mary and Lazarus, a younger brother, dwelt. (Trench, p. 309). It is almost certain that Lazarus was the financial supporter of the family now, for the women in Christ's time had no careers. It may be, of course, that the family had some inheritance, but in any case, Lazarus was the provider and his sickness was of greatest concern to his dedicated sisters.

Had the house been obtained by inheritance from the parents, it would no doubt have been called Lazarus' house. He appears to have been younger for in v. 2 he is related to his sister Mary and the close family tie is accented: "It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick." Mary is distinguished by this noble deed from all the other Maries of the Evangelical history. In due time (12:2-8) John records this anointing. Mary is not to be confused with the unnamed sinful woman who anointed the Savior's feet (Luke 7:37ff), although some older commentators do this.

Schaff notes with real insight that Martha represents the active, practical Christian and Mary the contemplative, passive type of believer (Lange, Luke, p. 340n). During the previous visit of Christ to Bethany Lazarus is not mentioned (Luke 10:38), but between these two visits there must have been numerous times when Christ came to Bethany. In v. 3 the sisters inform the Lord that "he whom thou lovest is sick" and v. 5 indicates the strong bond of love which had grown between Christ and this close family. Their house seemed to provide for Christ the most peaceful home He had on earth. Their house was probably one of the best in the poor village, and its proximity to Jerusalem, involving only a short walk across the Mt. of Olives, together with its complete seclusion, made it an ideal and frequent resting place for the One who took upon Himself the form of a servant.

c. The sending of the servant:

At the time of Lazarus' sickness, the sisters sent to let the Lord know that Lazarus was ill. They do not name him by name but simply state that "he whom thou lovest is sick," indicating the close ties between Jesus and this family. There is no request for Him to come, for to do so would imperil His life. Nevertheless, it is a plea for help. Undoubtedly the concerned sisters waited until Lazarus' condition was rather serious. A servant is entrusted with the urgent message and hastily makes his way to the place to which Jesus had escaped from His enemies beyond the Jordan. In 10:40 the reader is informed that Christ "went

away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized and there abode." According to John 1:28 the place was "Bathabara beyond Jordan where John was baptizing." The name of the place actually varies in the manuscripts but should probably read "Bethany," so that He taught at another Bethany, this one in Perea on the eastern side of the Jordan. (Morris, p. 142). The place, not otherwise known, seems to have been a ford on the further side of the Jordan, approximately opposite Jericho.

3. The Delay in Perea.

While Christ's enemies apparently do not know where He is, His place of abode is known to the friendly family and their messenger finds his way to Him with the tidings of danger and distress. One can picture him hastily making his descent to Jericho on the old road, notorious for its dangers (cf. the story of the Good Samaritan). He passes through Jericho and fords the Jordan, to meet Christ at the place which has become so familiar through John's activity. It is only a day's journey from the one Bethany to the other and the sisters at home count on the fact that help will not tarry long. It may be that at this time Lazarus was already too ill to make the request for help himself.

As the messenger dutifully delivers his brief message, "Lord behold, he whom thou lovest is sick," Jesus said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." (11:4). This is directed to the messenger, to be taken back to Bethany, for in v. 40 Christ claimed to have said this to the sisters. These words are purposely puzzling. The sisters, servant and disciples would naturally infer that Lazarus would not die. In 9:3 it is said that the man was born blind that God should be glorified. So here Christ relates the sickness of Lazarus to the glory of God, that is, an event in which God can disclose certain of His wonderful attributes. Further, the sickness is related to His own person. Through it He can reveal to the disciples, the beloved family and all the mourners and people in and around Jerusalem that He truly is God. The sickness was not to be unto death. Lazarus did die, but he did not remain dead. Through Lazarus' death, as Robertson (p. 194) points out, Jesus is brought face to face with His own death. It would be immediately after this event that the religious court would plot His death.

These words which must have sorely tried the faith of the sisters were not spoken without regard for their desires or feelings. The following verse reveals that Jesus loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus. Here the word agapao, to have high regard, is used. In v. 3 the word phileo is employed by the sisters, stressing the love of a friend which the Lord had for Lazarus. Even His love for His friends could not interrupt His divine schedule on which He operated.

a. The reason:

It should be noted carefully that Christ stayed two days because He loved Lazarus, not despite the fact that He loved him. Had Christ so desired, He could have healed Lazarus from the distance. It was not some demanding task which kept Christ in Perea. Repeatedly the Scriptures show that Christ worked on a divine schedule and He could not be pressured. He was never in a hurry. He never lagged behind. It was time for Him to linger now because of the miracle which He would perform. This sickness was not unto death but that the Father and Son might be glorified. Lazarus did die, but his sickness was not fatal in the sense that he remained dead. The sickness and death would issue forth in life. More than that, they would bring glory to both Father and Son. Bringing glory to God means that any or all of His attributes are displayed. By performing the miracle on the one whom he loved, Christ showed that He was the Resurrection and the Life. All life and every resurrection which would ever take place were ultimately dependent on Him.

John underscores the fact that Christ "abode two days still in the same place where he was" (11:6). He apparently did not make the slightest move toward Bethany. His waiting here is a picture of His waiting for our resurrection. With Lazarus two days have gone by. With us 2000 years have gone by. His hour is not yet come. In either case, it is not human sentiment which dictates to Him the divine schedule, but rather, the will of the Father.

b. The resolve:

"Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judea again" (11:7). This mentioning of Judea emphasizes the danger more strongly than a reference to Bethany would have done. Jesus, moved by a determination to follow His Father's schedule, decides to go. On two other occasions He refused to move until His hour had come. Those near and dear to Him expected Him to act but the request even by His mother (John 2:1) at the wedding of Cana and that of His disciples (John 7:3-10) were refused.

The double time note "then" and "after this" puts great emphasis on His delay, which has now come to an end. He is ready to move into enemy territory.

c. The remonstrance:

"His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?" (v. 8). The disciples question the Master's wisdom to return to Judea, the land of unbelief and deadly enmity. Through their words, which were probably uttered almost simultaneously by several disciples, they showed a true love to their Master and an apprehension of their own safety, as is made plain by the words of Thomas in v. 16. About four months before (10:31) the Jews tried to kill Him ("Then the Jews took up

stones again to stone him") and it seemed suicidal madness to go back now. They address Him here as "Rabbi," the last time in this gospel that the term is used. At the present the disciples are not even thinking about Lazarus, perhaps assuming that he is taken care of. It may be that they feel that he has been healed from the distance.

d. The reply by Christ:

Christ first allays their concern and then (12-15) corrects a misunderstanding. His reply to their suggestion that He was heading for imminent danger and impending death is that His time as the Teacher of God (Rabbi) had not yet run its full course. He asked them: "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him" (9-10). He is really saying that there are a full twelve hours in each person's life, an allotted time for activity which cannot be cut short. And as long as it was day for Him, the time appointed for Him by His Father, there is work for Him to accomplish. Nothing and no one may cut it short and the disciples are therefore safe in His company.

When Christ mentions the twelve hours His reference is really to daytime. The men of antiquity did not have time-pieces and twelve hours did not stand for any precisely calculated period. Their procedure was to divide the day from sunrise to sunset into twelve equal parts. The actual amount of time in twelve hours would thus vary from one part of the year to another. (Morris, 541).

During the day a man may work without stumbling because he has the light of the world. In this context it must mean the sun which is the light governing the day (Gen. 1:15-16). The illustration is taken from a traveler and since the conversation was respecting the journey into Judea, the Lord, as was His custom, took the illustration from the case before Him. As long as the sun shines upon the Judean mountains we must work, He is saying. We will not stumble over rocks or into a ravine. And no harm can befall us. But then Christ changes the figure and applies it primarily to His disciples. The reference to the day had already contained an allusion to the activity which He as the light of the world came to do (cf. 9:4f). There is the thought that to be with Him is to be in the light. Those who are away from Him will certainly stumble in the darkness. These two verses then express the fact that the Father had appointed Him a specific time for activity. This time was not yet concluded. God would defend Him during this allotted time. And anyone who walked in His light would never need to fear. The fear of the disciples should have been calmed by these words but it can be seen from Thomas' remark that they did not yet understand. Perhaps they looked rather puzzled and asked each other what the Master could mean by these words.

After a while Christ said, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep" (v. 11). The attention is once again turned to Lazarus. Christ said that He would go to him, possibly implying that He left it up to them whether they would accompany Him, although He already counted on this (v. 15). Jesus speaks specifically of His friend and tells the disciples that he "is fallen asleep." In the N.T. death for the believer is characteristically spoken of as sleep. This metaphorical term is not an invention of Christians--secular writers use it--but it is only characteristic of believers. For them death is never fatal or final. There is an awaking.

The disciples, misunderstanding Christ's metaphorical reference, suggested that since Lazarus is asleep, "he shall be well" (literally, saved), for the Jews regarded sleep in sickness as a favorable symptom. It was thus said among them, "sleep in sickness is a sign of recovery, because it shows that the violence of the disease has abated." (Barnes, 107). Seeing that Lazarus had this symptom, there was now no need to go to Bethany into enemy territory to restore him. The dangerous journey became unnecessary.

John explains the situation. "Howbeit, Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep" (v. 13). It is understandable why they failed to understand the reference to sleep in its proper light. Psychologically, they had a repugnance to the journey to Bethany.

"Then said Jesus unto them plainly," now without any metaphor, "Lazarus is dead," literally, Lazarus died (v. 14). Anticipating the thought in their minds why He had not been there to save Lazarus, He adds, "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent that ye may believe; nevertheless, let us go unto him" (v. 15). The disciples must have felt a decided shock by the twofold announcement: "Lazarus died, and I rejoice." Lazarus' death would be for the glory of God, He had announced earlier (v. 4). Now He says that his joy is for the disciples "to the intent ye may believe" (which they and many people subsequently did, vv. 42, 45, 48). The aorist tense is very remarkable here, pointing really to the beginning of faith, "that ye may come to believe." Had they not believed before when they so trusted Jesus that they left all they had and followed Him? Robertson rightly stresses the aspect of belief in view: "'that ye may come to believe' (more than you do)" (p. 197). Without a doubt they already believed, yet their faith was not strong, for at the critical hour they were all to forsake Him. Morris succinctly states the case thus:

The meaning will be that faith is a progressive thing. There are new depths of faith to be plumbed, new heights of faith to be scaled. The raising of Lazarus would have a profound effect on them and would give their faith a content that it did not have before. Faith would be strengthened. (p. 544)

It was Peter who perhaps more than anyone else needed an added measure of faith. First to confess the Messiah, he was also first to deny Him. And later reflection on this momentous miracle would dispel

his doubt and bring his faith to fruition, so that he could become that which he was on the day of Pentecost: Peter the Rock.

e. The remark by Thomas:

In v. 11 Christ had expressed His desire to go to His dead friend. He repeats the proposal in v. 15. Had He been there during Lazarus' sickness, the entreaties of his sisters and friends would have prevailed with Him to restore him to health. Christ could not have refused without appearing unkind. Though restoration to health would have been a miracle, it is a much more stupendous miracle to raise him after he had been dead for four days. The miracle would give Him an opportunity to confirm their faith. Now was the time to go.

One can imagine Christ moving toward the Jordan. "Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him" (v. 16). Thomas, perhaps a few feet behind the Savior, with a wide sweeping motion of his arm, gestured to the rest of the disciples to follow. Perhaps Thomas spoke sarcastically: "Let's go, we are all going to die, but let's go." But more probably his words simply expressed his doubt about the predicted miracle. Christ wants to go back to Judea where they attempted to kill Him. This time they will be successful. But let us not forsake Him, but die with Him. To die with the Lord is better than to continue living while forsaking Him. In his words Thomas displayed a strange blending of faith and unbelief, something characteristic of his personality.

It is somewhat curious to find Thomas taking the lead in this matter, when one would really expect Peter to speak for the Twelve. There is a slight possibility that Peter was not even present at the occasion. He is not mentioned in John between 6:68 and 13:6. Morris suggests that Peter remained behind at his home in Galilee when the others went up to Jerusalem (p. 534). It may also be that during Christ's stay in Perea some of the disciples returned to their homes, so that Peter was gone for a brief season. It is difficult to argue from silence, but there is a remote possibility that while the servant came from Bethany to Christ, Peter was absent. It is interesting to speculate further that Peter providentially just returned in time from Galilee to witness the miracle. He may have met the party just as they crossed the Jordan near Jericho en route to Bethany. This, at any rate, would explain the fact that Thomas is the spokesman for the Twelve in v. 16. Others have suggested that Thomas was especially close to Lazarus, but this would not explain his apparent despairing of his life and lack of reference to his friend.

Thomas is referred to here as elsewhere (20:24; 21:2) as "Thomas, which is called Didymus." Thomas is the Aramaic name corresponding to the Greek Didymus, both of which mean "twin." It is not said to whom he was twin. Some suggest that he may have been twin to Matthew, with whom he is linked in all the lists of the apostles in the Gospels. He may have been a Galilean, as he is mentioned in 21:2

together with the Galilean fisher-apostles. (Lange, 345). Thomas is a man of weak faith and strong love. His words reflect mingled melancholy, resignation and courage, controlled by love to the Savior. This is in full accordance with the character of Thomas as it appears on other occasions, 14:5 and 20:5ff. He is ever inclined to take the dark view because of an innate melancholy. Yet he yearns for the truth and thus became the picture of the critical spirit among the disciples. In him the "twins," unbelief and faith, were contending with one another for mastery.

Thomas spoke to his "fellow disciples" (sunmathētais). The noun is used only here in the N.T. and possibly suggests that Thomas and the rest had a fellow-feeling. Thomas was not isolated in his fatalistic view. He and the others had so little understood the lesson of the twelve hours on which God's sun shone to light men on their way, that they needed the lesson of faith which the raising of Lazarus would teach them.

3. The Departure for Bethany:

a. The chronology:

A whole day's journey is passed over in silence with the opening of v. 17: "Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already."

According to this passage and v. 39 Lazarus had been dead for four days already when Jesus reached Bethany, and the journey would scarcely have taken more than a day. The four days are accounted for by allowing a day for the journey of the messengers, the two days that Jesus remained where He was, and a day for Jesus' journey. Lazarus apparently died shortly after the messenger (or possibly messengers) started on their way. Christ had delayed His coming not simply so that the miracle might be more spectacular but primarily because He only worked according to God's time, in God's will.

Burial was not usually delayed. For example, Ananias and Sapphira were buried immediately after they died (Acts 5:6, 10). As Morris shows, the four days may be significant:

There was a Jewish belief that the soul stays near the grave for three days, hoping to be able to return to the body. But on the fourth day it sees decomposition setting in and leaves finally. If this view was as early as the time of which we are thinking (it is attested c. A.D. 220 but is probably a good deal earlier) it will mean that a time had been reached when the only hope for Lazarus was a divine act of power. (p. 546).

b. The course of travel:

The party composed of Christ and the disciples must have crossed the Jordan near Jericho and then passed through the lovely heathen city of Herod's Jericho. Schofield, in his Palestine Pictured, tries to picture the environs of Jericho in Christ's time:

Nearing Jericho, we see the magnificent city stretched out before us, protected by walls and flanked by four forts; all around it waved groves of feathery palms of all sorts, gardens of roses, oranges, dates, and pomegranates, and above all the sweet-scented balsam plantations which possibly gave to the city its name Jericho, the perfumed. These balsams included the henna, or cypress-flower of the Canticles (Song of Solomon 1:14). As Christ entered the gates, He would meet a motley throng of the inhabitants, priests of the temple at Jerusalem, and of the heathen temples in Jericho, traders from all lands, robbers, fanatics, soldiers, courtiers, publicans, and the citizens of the place.

The city was built by Herod, and here he died; it was a favorite city of Cleopatra, full of heathen temples, containing a college for the students of Greek mythology, a large circus near the gate where Christ entered, baths, theatres, and also every form of oriental vice.

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Our Lord would walk on that occasion under the very walls of the Temple of Jupiter, which was in the main street that led up to Jerusalem, He never stopped in a city of the Greeks, and He never stayed a night, so far as we know, in a walled town. (pp. 226-227).

From there the toilsome journey would go through the desert of the arid Judean hills, an ascent of about 4,000 feet, which is a very arduous climb when it is traveled on foot along very dusty roads under the intense torrid heat of a burning sun. The Romans did not build a good road from Jerusalem to Jericho until after the time of Christ, so that the path could hardly have been more than a dusty trail.

When the travelers reached the caravan station or khan, known in Christ's day as "Desert Inn," (Ibid., p. 228) and now famous as the "Inn of the Good Samaritan," they no doubt rested. After a brief respite the journey was resumed and soon Bethany, indeed the "house of the afflicted," came into view.

c. The circumscription of Bethany:

John inserts a typical topographical note. He locates Bethany with precision as "about fifteen furlongs" from Jerusalem. A furlong (stadion) measured 606 3/4 feet so that it was somewhat shorter than our furlong. Fifteen furlongs come to rather less than two miles. John gives the exact distance between Jerusalem and Bethany to explain how "many of the Jews" could be there to comfort the sisters and to show that Jesus has practically reached Jerusalem for the climax.

d. The comforter from Jerusalem:

1) The custom of godly Jews:

Jesus had come to Bethany but in "the house of mourning" they did not yet know it. As Bethany was so close to Jerusalem, many from the city, who were on terms of friendship with what

was evidently a distinguished family had come in obedience to one of the most binding Rabbinic directions--that of comforting the mourners. At the funeral the family was left alone in their sorrow. But later it was expected that visits for consolation would be made, and the Jews rated this duty very highly. Edersheim (quoted by Morris, 547) speaks of a three-fold division in the time of mourning. The first three days were days of weeping, then deep mourning lasted for the rest of the week, and lighter mourning for the remainder of thirty days.

Edersheim, II, 320, describes the funeral customs in Christ's day as they relate to this godly household:

In the funeral procession the sexes had been separated, and the practice probably prevailed even at that time for the women to return alone from the grave. This may explain why afterwards the women went and returned alone to the Tomb of our Lord. The mourning, which began before the burial, had been shared by the friends who sat silent on the ground, or were busy preparing the mourning meal. As the company left the dead, each had taken leave of the deceased with a "Depart in peace!" Then they formed into lines, through which the mourners passed amidst expressions of sympathy, repeated (at least seven times) as the procession halted on the return to the house of mourning. Then began the mourning in the house, which really lasted thirty days, of which the first three were those of the greatest; the others, during the seven days, or the special week of sorrow, of less intense mourning. But on the Sabbath, as God's holy day, all mourning was intermitted....

In that household of disciples this mourning would not have assumed such violent forms, as when we read that the women were in the habit of tearing out their hair, or of a Rabbi who publicly scourged himself. But we know how the dead would be spoken of. In death the two worlds were said to meet and kiss. And now they who had passed away beheld God. They were at rest. Such beautiful passages as Ps. cxii. 6, Prov. x. 7, Is. xi 10, last clause, and Is. lvii.2, were applied to them. Nay the holy dead should be called "living." In truth, they knew about us, and unseen still surrounded us. Nor should they ever be mentioned without adding a blessing on their memory.

In this spirit, we cannot doubt, the Jews were now "comforting" the sisters. They may have repeated words like those quoted as the conclusion of such a consolatory speech: "May the Lord of consolations comfort you! Blessed be He Who comforteth the mourners!" But they could scarcely have imagined how literally a wish like this was about to be fulfilled. For, already, the message had reached Martha, who was probably in one of the outer apartments of the house: Jesus is coming!

2) The custom of the common people:

It was the custom in ancient days to hire mourners. While Mary and Martha may not have gone to such excesses, the fact that "the Jews" came to comfort them, those who are usually in the gospel the enemies of Christ, may imply that at least some of the activity in the house of Mary and Martha reflected current customs. As one group after another of comforters arrived, they may indeed have been met at the door by professional mourners, described by Thomson:

There are in every city and community women exceedingly cunning in this business. These are always sent for, and kept in readiness. When a fresh company of sympathizers comes in, these women "make haste" to take up a wailing, that the newly come may the more easily unite their tears with the mourners. They know the domestic history of every person, and immediately strike up an impromptu lamentation, in which they introduce the names of their relatives who have recently died, touching some tender chord in every heart; and thus each one weeps for his own dead, and the performance, which would otherwise be difficult or impossible, comes easy and natural, and even this extemporaneous, artificial sorrow, is thereby redeemed from half its hollow-heartedness and hypocrisy. (p. 103).

Another funeral practice was also the custom of collecting the tears of the mourners and preserving them in bottles. Thus David prays, "Put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?" (Ps. 56:8). These lachrymatories are still found in great numbers in ancient tombs. While the funeral customs at the godly home may have been less ostentatious than elsewhere, the fact that many of the unbelieving Jewish neighbors and friends came to Bethany may indicate that at least some of these practices were used.

4. The Distress of Martha and Mary:

a. The conversation with Martha:

While the Savior was approaching Bethany, Mary and Martha were being comforted. The Lord came near the place where Lazarus was buried, because when Mary rose up late to meet the Lord (v. 31), everyone assumed that she was going to the grave. Either the Lord sent to the house to announce His presence or someone saw Him and reported this to Martha, the mistress of the house. Since He did send for Mary later (v. 28), it is reasonable to infer that someone was dispatched by the Lord. Martha, being busy with the duties of hospitality, was approached by the messenger and, true to her character, as a busy and active soul, hastened to meet the Lord.

1) Her piety:

While Mary remained sitting in the house--the usual posture in which mourners received their comforters (cf. Job 2:13)--Martha quickly left the home without telling anyone where she went. She found the Lord and her greeting is an expression of

faith: "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother would not have died" (v. 21). She does not say "If only you had come--". Her remark expresses regret rather than rebuke. After all, Lazarus must have died shortly after the messenger left. Even if the Lord had left immediately, He would not have arrived in time. By the time the servant had reached the Lord, Lazarus had probably died and Martha knew that even a word of healing spoken by the Saviour in Perea would have been too late. The statement, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died" must have been repeated by the two sisters time and time again during the preceding days. It is the identical statement made by Mary in v. 32. Had the Lord been within easier reach, all might have been averted. They might have been rejoicing in a living, instead of mourning over a dead brother.

Martha's words of regret are followed by an expression of confidence: "But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee" (v. 22). On the surface she seems to say that even now she is expecting that the Lord could perform a miracle. But she probably did not mean this, for when the Lord prepares to raise Lazarus, she protests in the strongest terms (v. 39). Perhaps Morris (p. 549) is correct in suggesting that the "even now" should be understood as being logical rather than temporal. Thus the meaning would be: "If you had been here my brother might not have died, for I know that God gives the things you ask."

2) His promise:

With words purposely ambiguous in order to try her faith, the Lord assures her that the deep, though unuttered, longing of her heart shall indeed be granted: "Thy brother shall rise again" (v. 23). Martha cannot believe that the words mean more than that he, with all the other faithful Israelites, will stand in his lot at the last day, for she replies: "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (v. 24). Perhaps one can detect, as Trench put it, "a slight movement of impatience at such cold comfort, comfort that so little met the present longings of her heart, which were to have her brother now." (p. 319)

The next two verses actually comprise the center of the chapter and the narrative. In them the Lord gives another one of His ego eimi, I am's. The raising of Lazarus, as important as it is, merely confirms these words. The Lord desired faith in Him as the resurrection and the life even before the miracle, as a result of His word. Christ wanted her to know that He did not need to "ask of God" (only here used of Christ in the N. T.) before He could meet a need. This is why He replied: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (vv. 25-26). He is saying in effect that He need not ask of another what He possesses in Himself. Jesus does not simply

say that He will give resurrection and life. So much are they associated with Him that He is the Resurrection and Life. They are the outcome of Himself. This, the new teaching about the resurrection, was the object and the meaning of the raising of Lazarus. It is this which the people and particularly the disciples, including Peter needed to learn (v. 42). In v. 25 Christ shows that death is not final, in v. 26 that it is not fatal. A person who believes in Christ, though he may die and pass through the door we call physical death, will not die in the fuller sense. For him it is but the gateway to further life and fellowship with God. This transcends the Pharisaic belief in a remote resurrection at the end of time. The moment a person trusts in Christ he cannot be touched by death, because the Son has life in Himself (5:26). He is the fountain of life.

What follows shows that death is not fatal. Everyone who lives and believes on Jesus will never ultimately die. The believer may die physically but death for him has no eternal significance. The words contain a strong double negative, ou me. The believer shall by no means die eternally (literally, unto the ages) or forever. The application is not just to Lazarus but to all believers. This lesson needed to be learned by everyone.

Jesus rounds off His statement with a challenge: "Believest thou this?" His words about faith and life are not to be philosophically examined but personally believed.

3) Her profession:

Marth's reply does not always receive the attention it should. She is generally known as the one who was too anxious and troubled (Luke 10:41f) but her answer here shows that she was a woman of deep faith. With all her faults she makes one of the most outstanding confessions of the N.T. She said to Him: "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world" (v. 27). This is a significant declaration. First, she fully agrees with the Savior's words and is not choosing her own way. Then she puts her faith in her own words: "I have believed" indicates a faith once given and permanently remaining. Her "I" is emphatic. (Morris, p. 551). What is it that she believes about the person who had just revealed Himself as the Resurrection and the Life? First, Jesus is the Messiah of Jewish expectation, one of whose offices it was to raise the dead. Secondly, He is the Son of God, the one who has a unique relationship to God, namely deity (20:31). Finally, she speaks of Jesus as "he that cometh into the world," that is, the world's promised Deliverer, the One sent by God to accomplish His will. Morris is right when he observes that "Martha should be known to us from this moving declaration rather than from her worst moment of criticism and fretfulness!" (p. 552).

b. The call for Mary:

What else transpired at this meeting can only be surmised. It seems that the Lord called for Mary (v. 28). Martha hastened to deliver secretly this message. Mary was

probably sitting in the chamber of mourning, with its upset chairs and couches, and other melancholy tokens of mourning, as was the custom. (Edersheim, II, 322). No doubt she was surrounded by many who had come to comfort her. One can scarcely doubt that she herself was silent, lost in thought. Martha "called her sister secretly, saying, the Master is come, and calleth for thee" (v. 28). Martha speaks of Him as "The Teacher." The Rabbis refused to instruct women, but Jesus took a very different view. By the term "Master" or "Teacher" Christ was known in the innermost circle of His own (Matt. 23:8). Lovingly bending over her mourning sister, Martha whispers the secret into her ear: "The Master is present and is calling for you."

1) Mary's emotion:

"As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto Him" (v. 29). "When she heard it" indicates an action performed immediately without delay. Mary immediately reacted to her sister's words, on the sudden impulse of joy. Jesus wanted to speak with the sisters privately apart from the curious crowd. Since Martha is mentioned in the group again in v. 39, it may be assumed that she hastily returned to the Lord with Mary or followed soon thereafter.

V. 30 is an explanatory parenthesis: "Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him" Martha had her interview with the Lord while He was outside of town, somewhere in the vicinity of the grave. To avoid any embarrassing witnesses at the first meeting with the mourning sisters, Christ meets them at a private place.

"The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there" (v. 31). The Jews take it for granted that she is hastening in a paroxysm of her grief to the grave, to weep there. It was the custom of the Jewish women often to visit the graves of their relative, and this especially during the first days of their mourning. (Trench, p. 321). Seeing Mary's tears, her sympathetic friends follow, mistaking her tears of joy because of her Master's arrival for tears of grief because of her brother's death.

2) Her exclamation:

Mary's intense emotions are seen by the haste with which she left the house to meet the Savior, as well as her actions as soon as she saw Him. V. 32: "Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Her words, similar to those of Martha, show her deep love for Lazarus. The Greek text literally reads: "not would have died me my brother" instead of Martha's words in v. 21, "my brother would not have died." Lazarus' death was

a special loss for her, who loved him deeply. She is unable to speak further. At the feet of her Savior her tears give expression to her grief. Only He could turn her sadness to joy and dry her tears. Mary had left in haste, so that her comforters were following her only from a distance. Thus her prostration and greeting was probably private. However, her companions speedily rejoined her, as the next verse shows.

Mary's kneeling posture and her tears are more eloquent than the words of her rather matter-of-fact sister. The saying that both utter constitutes a precious trait from life. They undoubtedly made this remark to each other over and over again at the death-bed of Lazarus. "If he were only here, everything would be all right." And during the four days' interval they had repeated the words again and again.

3) The Master's excitement:

"When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled" (v. 33). Robertson correctly observes that "Mary's weeping was genuine, that of the Jews was partly perfunctory and professional and probably actual "wailing" as the verb klaio can mean." (p. 202) It was the custom of the day to express grief in a noisy, rather unrestrained fashion and this is what the mourners were doing. Notes Morris: "With a crowd of people engaged in this activity there must have been quite a scene of confusion and sorrow" (p. 55).

Witnessing this scene, Christ groaned in the spirit. The word translated "groaned" is far more expressive of indignation and displeasure than of grief. The unusual verb signifies a loud, inarticulate sound and is used of the snorting of horses. Christ was profoundly troubled, literally, "he agitated Himself." While it is difficult to discern the reason for this emotional outburst, it has been suggested that death is here the object of His wrath, death wrought by sin, death whose power He came to destroy.

His anger may also have been directed against the hypocritical tears of the Jews. Others have suggested that His unusual emotional outburst was merely one of grief or of a general perturbation of the mind (Lange, p. 353), but the groaning seems to have been due to anger and indignation at the attitude of the mourners and the power of sin and death which took from Him one of His dearest friends. The primary object of His indignation, based on the context of the passage, was the unbelief of the mourners who so completely misunderstood the nature of death and of the Person of the Son.

5. The Demands of the Savior:

a. The desire of the Lord:

Christ has Himself perfectly under control and asks (probably the two sisters): "Where have ye laid him? They said unto him,

Lord, come and see." His polite inquiry to the whereabouts of Lazarus' tomb does not mean that He was ignorant of its location. He had been in Bethany often enough to see the private burial ground of this prominent family.

b. The display of emotions:

Mary and Martha invited Him to come and see, the very language used by Philip to Nathanael (1:46). As Jesus started toward the tomb, He burst out in tears. This is the literal rendering of the word dakruo, used only here in the N. T. (v. 35). The weeping of Mary and the Jews had been loud, demonstrative wailing. Jesus, instead, is quietly weeping. His deep grief issues forth in tears, again, as in v. 33, because of the misconception of those round about Him. At another occasion Christ wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41). Here too it was the wrong attitude of the Jews that aroused His deep emotion. His weeping was therefore not primarily because of a lost friend or "the sheer human sympathy of his heart with Martha and Mary" (Robertson, p. 203), but because He was surrounded by people, some of whom believed in Him, but yet they did not fully believe. They believed Him enough to make Him their Savior but they had doubts about His being the Sovereign, the Lord over death.

As always, the Jews failed to understand the mind of Christ. They said: "Could not this man which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died" (v. 37). Just before that, almost all the Jews said upon seeing His tears, "Behold how he loved him!" A few ("some") suggest that He might have performed some act (aorist) to prevent the death of His friend. The people take His tears to be no more than a mark of the love He bore for Lazarus. They are not able to discern a deeper reason despite His unusual agitation. Some of them suggest, quite sincerely, that the One who could open the eyes of the blind--a miracle which they remembered well--could have helped His friend.

c. The discription of the grave:

The words of unbelief just uttered brought forth another outburst of deep emotion: "Jesus therefore, again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it." "Groaning" is the same verb as that used in v. 33.

The tomb is described as a cave with a stone upon it, suggesting that the family was rather well to do. The large number of mourners from Jerusalem and the very costly ointment with which Mary anointed the feet of her Lord (12:3) lead to the same conclusion. The tomb was outside of the town (v. 30), according to the universal custom in the East (Luke 7:12) which did not allow a placing of the dead among the living. The caves were sometimes natural (Gen. 12:9; Judith 16:23), sometimes as was this, artificial and carved out of rock (Is. 22:16; Matt. 27:60), in a garden (John 19:4), or in some field possessed by the family (Gen. 23:9, 17-20; 35:18; II Kings 21:13); with recesses in the sides (Is. 14:15), in which the bodies were laid, occasionally with chambers one beyond another. Sometimes the entrance to these tombs was on a level; sometimes, as most

probable here, there was a descent to them by steps. The stone which blocked up the entrance kept away the beasts of prey, above all the numerous jackals, which might otherwise tear the bodies of the dead. The stone was naturally of a size and weight not easily to be moved away (Mark 16:3).

6. The Deliverance of Lazarus:

a. The command to the people:

"Jesus said, Take ye away the stone." (v. 39). There exists today in Bethany a tomb which is pointed out as the burial place of Lazarus, with the site of the house of the godly family nearby. One of these localities must be spurious, because the actual distance from the house to the tomb seems to have been greater than the few feet between the present sites. It is very probable that St. Lazarus' tomb in Bethany is the genuine tomb. Both Christ (v. 39) and John (v. 41) speak of the necessity of "taking away the stone" (literally, lifting up the stone). The only Herodian tomb with a horizontal rather than a vertical opening found anywhere in Palestine is Lazarus' tomb. Had Lazarus been buried in some tomb with a vertical door, then the stone would have had to be rolled away rather than lifted up, as Christ commanded.

b. The caution of Martha:

"Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days" (v. 39). This verse is of the greatest importance for John's understanding of what took place. The Evangelist puts great stress on the actuality of the death of Lazarus. He leaves no doubt that he is describing a miracle. He records the fact that a stone had been placed upon the tomb and, as an eyewitness to the event, mentions that Martha is the sister of "him that was dead." He further records Martha's words of protestation. Probably assuming that Christ wished to look once more upon the face of His dead friend, she shrinks from the exposure of the corpse because, literally, "he is a fourth-day man." Lazarus was really dead. According to Jewish tradition the soul hovers around the tomb for three days hoping to return to the body, but on the fourth day it leaves it and decay sets in. Martha's protest is natural in spite of her faith in vv. 22 and 27.

c. Confidence in God:

Christ firmly rejects the protest and reminds Martha of His earlier words: "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" (v. 40). When had He said this? It could have been uttered in the preceding conversation though it is not recorded. However, the very words occur in the message which the Lord sends back to the sorrowing sisters when He first learns of the sickness of His friend. (v. 4) Jesus means the glory of God would be shown in the resurrection of Lazarus, and this is what the two sisters should have understood and believed.

After Jesus' words they removed the stone. John emphasizes the death of Lazarus again by adding "from the place where the dead was laid" (v. 41). An expectant hush must have fallen over the crowd of disciples and mourners. Suddenly Christ speaks, not to the people crowding around the tomb but to His heavenly Father: "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me" (vv. 41-42). Mary and Martha had consented to let the Master do what He wished. The stone had been removed and in anticipation they waited. Christ had prayed some time earlier concerning the raising of Lazarus and now publicly, so that the people might hear, He thanks God for answered prayer. Jesus knew the great issues which were involved here. If He failed, His own claims to be the Son of God would be hopelessly discredited with all. If He succeeded, the rulers would be so embittered as to plot His own death. Jesus did not pray for the sake of the multitude. That prayer was offered silently earlier. But He gave thanks for their sakes, to show that He was always being heard. He proved this His oneness with the Father. He wanted to demonstrate in an irrefutable manner that the Father always heard His petitions and that He had access to infinite power from above.

d. The call to Lazarus:

Stillness and fear must have overcome the crowd as Christ turned toward the tomb and "cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth" (v. 43). More exactly, what He cried was, "Lazarus! here! out!" No verb is used, only two adverbs. The loud voice was not for the benefit of Lazarus, but for the people standing around that they might see that Lazarus came forth simultaneously with the command of the Lord. Wizards muttered their incantations and spells. The Son of God issues a terse command and death is transformed into life.

e. The consequence of the call:

The echo of the loud cry had hardly ceased when a figure stood sharply outlined against the gloom, in its swathing of white linen, and in a moment more sprang forward, struggling with the grave clothes, and eager to throw himself at his redeemer's feet. John paints with brevity the awesome scene: "And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin, Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go." (v. 44). Every eye had been riveted on the dark mouth of the opened tomb. Suddenly the walking corpse appeared and one can sense the mingled pulse of fear and joy that throbbed through that crowd as he "that had been dead" came forth. There must have been an instinctive recoil just for an instant. Then, the forward wave, the rush of joyous recognition, when they saw that it was Lazarus alive. But they were still so overwhelmed with the startling appearance that no one made an effort to aid him. Edersheim describes the fantastic scene:

And still bound hand and foot with graveclothes ('bands,' Takhrikhin), and his face with the napkin, Lazarus stood forth, shuddering and silent, in the cold light of earth's day. In that multitude, now more pale and shuddering than the man bound in the graveclothes, the Only One majestically calm was He, Who before had been so deeply moved and troubled within Himself, as He now bade them 'Loose him, and let him go.' (II, 325).

What transpired was apparently a miracle within a miracle, although denied by most commentators. Lazarus does not walk out of the grave; he is rather drawn out, tightly bandaged. Some have assumed that he was wrapped about after the fashion of the Egyptians, with hands and feet bandaged separately and the face napkin placed only loosely upon his forehead. Upon close examination of the facts involved, however, it appears reasonably certain that Lazarus could hardly have propelled himself under his own power. First, there is the narrow tomb opening through which he would have had to crawl and come up several steps. It was not simply a horizontal unencumbered walking out of a tomb but a vertical climb which necessitated a low bending down and the climbing of three or four steps. Then too, the four-fold emphasis upon the incapacity of Lazarus must be taken into consideration. His hands were bound. So were his feet. They were wrapped in "bandages," narrow strips wound around the body. And his face was still covered by a face cloth. Barnes suggests the probable method of Lazarus' burial:

No coffins being used, the body itself is more carefully and elaborately wrapt and swathed than is common or desirable where coffins are used. In this method the body is stretched out, and the arms laid straight by the sides, after which the whole body, from head to foot, is wrapt round tightly, in many folds of linen or cotton cloth. Or, to be more precise, a great length of cloth is taken, and rolled around the body until the whole is enveloped and every part is covered with several folds of the cloth. The ends are then sewed, to keep the whole firm and compact; or else a narrow bandage is wound over the whole, forming, ultimately, the exterior surface. The body, when thus enfolded and swathed, retains the profile of the human form; but, as in the Egyptian mummies, the legs are not folded separately, but together; and the arms also are not distinguished but confined to the sides in the general envelope. Hence it is clearly impossible for a person thus treated to move his arms or legs, if restored to existence. (p. 312).

John breaks off the narrative of the miracle itself, leaving the reader to imagine their joy, who thus beyond all expectation received back their dead brother and friend from the grave. One can only surmise that Peter, the impetuous disciple, having regained his composure, was among those who loosed Lazarus. The two sisters undoubtedly gave fitting expression to their joy and the happy crowd returned home.

The Scriptures contain only one further notice of Lazarus (John 12:2). His name, an abridged form of the Hebrew name, Eleazar, means "God has helped"--a fitting appellation for one who had been rescued from physical death and destruction. He is generally assumed to have been much younger than his sisters. One

tradition is worthy of notice. It is said that the first question he asked the Lord after he was come back from the grave was whether he should have to die again, and, learning that this would be the case, he never smiled any more. (Trench, p. 330). This suggestion is easily refuted by the reference the Lazarus at the happy banquet mentioned in 12:2.

7. The Divergence of Reactions:

a. The divisions among the crowd:

No attempt is made by John to trace the events subsequent to the miracle. Rather, the historical significance of it is presented. It is presented as a major link in the chain of events which would result, according to the determinate decree and counsel of God, in the atoning death of the Son of God upon the cross.

The immediate result of the miracle, as always, was division: "Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees and told them what things Jesus had done." (vv. 45-46).

1) The believers:

John first emphasizes those Jews who believed and makes it clear that there were many of them. Interestingly he describes them as those "who came to Mary." While Martha has been prominent in the narrative, the Jews were evidently more concerned for the emotional Mary than the bustling Martha. Mary was in greater need of consolation.

The people were eyewitnesses of the event. They "beheld that which he did" and did not depend on hearsay. "They believed on him" is John's favorite construction for genuine trust. God had so ordered it in His providence that to this miracle, at the gates of Jerusalem, there should be many witnesses. They believed and gave glory to God and to the Son of God, for which purpose Lazarus was permitted to die. For those who already believed in Christ, the miracle expanded their faith. It brought Mary, Martha, Peter and the other disciples to the full realization that their Master was indeed the Resurrection and the Life. Not even a decaying corpse was outside the realm of His life-giving influence. Christ could bring life alike to the child on its death-bed, the youth on his bier, and the man in the grave. In Him dwelled all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

2) The unbelievers:

In contrast with those who believed, there were others who simply went away to the Pharisees, known to be the enemies of Jesus, and told them the things that He had done. In the context their motive was to bring the latest news to the sworn enemies of Christ, not to win them over.

b. The decision by the council:1) The problem of the council:

The unbelieving Jews hurried to Jerusalem and reported the miracle to the Pharisees. "Then gathered the chief priests and Pharisees a council and said, What do we? For this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." (vv. 47-48). At the hastily called informal meeting of the Sanhedrin there was much heart-searching. They admitted that Christ was performing many miracles. In contrast, said they, "what are we doing? He is active and we are idle." Thus far there had been no concerted effort to stop Him. They feared that the Romans would not stand by indifferently if there were popular tumult stirred up by messianic expectations. The Romans might even destroy the temple.

2) The prediction of Caiaphas:

John singles out the reaction of the high priest Caiaphas. "And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all. Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." (vv. 49-50). Caiaphas was a Sadducee (Acts 5:17) and evidences a rudeness which is alleged to have been typical of the Sadducees. The "ye" is emphatic and probably contemptuous. Joseph writes concerning the Sadducees that they "are, even among themselves, rather boorish in their behaviour, and in their intercourse with their peers are as rude as to aliens" (Cited by Morris, 567n). The high priest contemptuously dismisses the whole assembly of the Sanhedrin as ignorant because its members do not see things in the same way. He suggests in sheer cynicism that it is better that one man, however innocent, should die than that the nation as a whole should perish. God so overruled this well thought out fiendish scheme so that his words became a simple prophecy of the meaning of the cross. John adds his own reflection on these words: "And this spake he not of himself but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation: And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (vv. 51-52).

3) The plotting of the council:

Caiaphas' words mark the turning point. "Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death" (v. 53). His persuasive speech had the effect of clarifying their ideas. They now knew what they had to do.

4) The pressure on Christ:

While the time of Christ's death was determined in the counsel of God and it was yet daylight for Him, the Master did not

hesitate using proper means to preserve His life, now that the leaders were anxious to kill Him. Because of the pressure of persecution He "walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there he continued with his disciples" (v. 54). It was now the formal resolution of the chief council of the nation to put Christ to death and He withdrew to a remote area until near the Jewish Passover which was at hand (v. 55). He, the very Passover Lamb must not be absent from the feast. But until that time, seclusion was called for to avoid a premature sacrifice. Ephraim, whose location was probably close to Bethel, afforded the necessary safety and solitude. In this difficult period the little band was closely knit together.

§ 104. CONCERNING FORGIVENESS AND FAITH.

LUKE 17:1-10.

1 And he said unto his disciples, ^aIt is impossible but that occasions of stumbling should come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! 2 ^bIt 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. 3 ^cTake heed to yourselves: if thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. 4 ^dAnd if he sin against thee seven times in the day, and seven times turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

5 And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. 6 ^eAnd the Lord said, If ye have ¹faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye would say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou rooted up, and be thou planted in the sea; and it would have obeyed ²you. 7 But who is there of you, having a ¹servant plowing or keeping sheep, that will say unto him, when he is come in from the field, Come straightway and sit down to meat; 8 and will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? 9 Doth he thank the ¹servant because he did the things that were commanded? 10 Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable ²servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do.

FINAL JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

After Lazarus had been raised in Bethany and the Sanhedrin had given orders to arrest Jesus, He took up His abode in a small town called Ephraim, in the proximity of the desert of Judaea (John 11:54). During the brief time of rest and quiet the Savior undoubtedly taught His disciples concerning His impending death. It was a time during which He prepared Himself and those whom He loved for His last journey to Jerusalem. All three Synoptics mark this journey, although with varying details. From the mention of Galilee by Matthew (19:1-2) and by Luke of the frontiers of Samaria and Galilee (17:11; cf. Mark 10:1) one may conjecture that, on leaving Ephraim, Christ made a very brief detour along the northern frontier to some place at the southern border of Galilee--perhaps to meet at a certain point those who were to accompany Him and the disciples on their final journey to Jerusalem. It is most natural to assume that these friends and relatives met the Lord and the disciples somewhere along the way to Jerusalem. Mark notes that among those who had followed Christ there were "many women which came up with Him unto Jerusalem" (15:40-41). Apparently by the time that Christ reached Jerusalem, He was the leader of a whole company of people comprising a festive band traveling to the Passover Feast. Earlier, however, in Galilee, at the beginning of the long journey Christ appears to have been traveling just with His disciples (Luke 17:5); however, although a good argument could be made for His being the leader of a festive throng already in Galilee, it seems to have been in Perea beyond the Jordan that the multitudes started following Him, whereupon He "healed them there" (Matt. 19:2) and "taught them" (Mark 10:1). (Erdersheim, II, 327-328).

Luke records many more details along the way than do the other Synoptics and while one cannot always be certain of his chronology, it is possible to arrive at least at a plausible order of events. On this final journey one meets the ten lepers, the needy multitude, the divorce question, the kingdom prediction, the young ruler, the blind beggar(s) and the searching Zacchaeus. Each of these events furnishes a teaching situation in which the disciples are instructed in something that they need to know. Soon their Lord would take leave of them and these last few days are filled with teaching and object lessons and illustrations of previously taught truth.

I. The Desired Faith. Luke 17:1-10.

Somewhere along the rocky road from Ephraim to Galilee or shortly after their arrival in Galilee, Christ instructs His disciples concerning their awesome responsibilities as followers of the Master.

1. The responsibility toward the brethren. Luke 17:1-4.

"And he said unto his disciples, It is impossible but that occasions of stumbling should come: but woe unto 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" (17:1-2). The disciples

are expressly warned against the danger that their example, words, attitude or neglect may do spiritual harm to others. The "little ones" are to be understood as the weaker ones in the circle of disciples who are probably even present at the time, e.g. former publicans and sinners who had turned to Him (Luke 15:1). The publicans are called "little ones" in comparison with the apostles because they were yet weak in the faith. (Geldenhuys, p. 434). The Lord impresses here upon Peter and the disciples the responsibility that rests upon them to live in such a manner that they do not lead others into sin. He is showing them the necessity of a considerate life and faith. So terrible will be the punishment to be undergone by one who causes offence to another that it would be better for him, before he can offend anyone, that he could die a violent death and thereby escape the heinous sin and the awful judgment, described by "woe," that would follow. It is criminal to cause anyone to fall into sin through one's life and attitude. It is (literally) "profitable for him if a millstone is hanged around his neck." The first-class condition assumes that this is fulfilled. It is not open to question. The millstone is simply a stone belonging to a mill not the one turned by an ass, Matt. 18:6. (Robertson, II, 225-226).

"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." (17:3-4) While the first words emphasized a forbearing faith that is necessary, this admonition teaches the imperative of a forgiving faith. The precept of forgiving faith and love had already been given to Peter previously (Matt. 18:21-22). Now it is given in another form to all of the disciples. They must learn that just as it is necessary for them not to put obstructions in the way of others, so it is necessary to practice forgiveness toward those who offend them. Forgiveness, they are told, is not a weakness, for they must first rebuke the guilty one, call attention to his wrong, and, as Geldenhuys so aptly adds (p. 432), "not slander him behind his back!" If there is repentance there must be forgiveness. If need be, they should be willing to forgive seven times a day. This is the customary way to indicate an unlimited repetition. On the other occasion Peter's question brought Christ's similar answer, "seventy times seven." There should be no limits to forgiveness towards those who truly repent. Forgiveness must be repeated as often as even the least trace of repentance is shown.

2. The request for faith. Luke 17:5-6.

a. The request:

The duties of avoiding offences and forgiving offences seemed so difficult to the disciples, that the Twelve discussed the near impossibility of the requirements among themselves for a while. Then with Peter probably as their spokesman "the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith." A similar request also occurs in Matt. 17:19-20 and Mark 9:23. Even Peter

who was generally so self-sufficient and sure of himself sensed that he required supernatural grace and divine strength for the severe demands which the Lord had placed upon him and the others. Peter realized that the duties of avoiding offences and forgiving offences are among the most difficult obligations for the believer. The apostles address Jesus here as "the Lord," evidencing by this already a strong faith in the Lord as they trust Him that He could add to their faith. After a serious discussion among themselves about the heavy words of the Master they come to Him in whom they have placed all their faith and with one accord request (literally), "Lord, add to our faith!" Only existing faith can ask for additional faith, as Stier (p. 341) so wisely observes.

b. The reply:

The Savior replied that they have no need of more faith, but of the right kind of faith--a vital, living faith. He answers their request: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye would say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou rooted up, and be thou planted in the sea; and it would have obeyed you."

1) The amount of faith:

The Lord asserts that even the smallest amount of faith is able to accomplish the greatest works. "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed" is the protasis in the statement and Christ acknowledges that Peter and the other disciples already possess faith sufficient to work miracles. In Matt. 17:20 the emphasis lies on the lack of such faith. The nine disciples who did not ascend the Mt. of Transfiguration were unable to cast the demon out of the lunatic boy because they did not have the faith of a grain of mustard seed. If they did have the faith, they did not couple it with fasting and prayer, as was necessary for this case of demon possession.

Much controversy surrounds the identification of the plant whose seed was used by Christ as an illustration of something which develops rapidly from small beginnings, such as the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 13:31; Mk. 4:31; Lk. 13:19) or the faith of an individual (Matt. 17:20; Lk. 17:6). Some scholars think that the black mustard (Sinapis nigra L.) is indicated, since in New Testament times its seeds were cultivated for their oil as well as for culinary purposes. Others have identified the mustard of the parables with white mustard (Sinapis alba L.), a closely related species. Though both varieties have been reported growing to a height of about 15 feet, they do not normally exceed 4 feet at maturity. A third type of plant, the Salvadora persica L., found near the Dead Sea, has been suggested as an alternative. This shrub grows to nearly 10 feet in height, but was probably not found in Galilee where Christ uttered His parables. Furthermore, the seeds of this plant are fairly large, unlike those of Sinapis, and in other respects also it is much more improbable. (Douglas, New Bible Dictionary, p. 1006).

Christ chose the mustard seed as an illustration of growth and faith not because of its heat, its fiery vigor or the fact that only through being bruised or crushed will it give out its special virtues. Rather, the size of the mustard seed is its important characteristic. One must not suppose that the mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds in the world; it was the smallest which the husbandman was accustomed to sow; and the "tree," when full grown, was larger than any other herb in the garden. The ample plant, with branches shooting out in all directions, grows forth from the smallest garden seed. This is the meaning of the mustard plant in the parable. As Trench remarks, the mustard plant is chosen with reference "to the proportion between the smallness of the seed and the greatness of the tree which unfolds itself therefrom." (Trench, Parables, p. 89).

Christ had a slightly different purpose in choosing the mustard seed in connection with faith. When He said to Peter and the others, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed" He was using the proverbial expression among the Jewish people for something exceedingly minute (Trench Parables, p. 91). Strack-Billerbeck, the greatest authority on Jewish and Rabbinic customs, concurs: "The most minute quantity of anything one customarily designated as the size of a grain of mustard seed." Numerous examples are given from Rabbinical instructions: "When a woman notices a drop (of blood) as large as a grain of mustard seed, she sits and waits the seven days of her purification . . . (Sexual emissions by the man) make unclean, no matter how small they might be, even as small as a mustard seed" (Kommentar, I, 669). Even the Koran speaks of the mustard seed as the smallest object in nature (Sur. 31): "Oh, my son, verily every matter, whether good or bad, though it be of the weight of a grain of mustard-seed, and be hidden in a rock, or in the heavens, or in earth, God will bring the same to light" (Trench, Parables, p. 91). The disciples too would be familiar with the lively image of an exceedingly small mustard seed.

2) The ability of faith:

"If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye would say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou rooted up, and be thou planted in the sea; and it would have obeyed you." This is a first class condition, thus Christ assumes that the disciples already have this faith. The apodosis follows. They could do the most difficult thing even with a minute quantity of faith. The tree which is referred to is not to be confused with the sycamore tree mentioned by Luke in connection with Zacchaeus (19:3). Luke alone in the N.T. uses either word, the sycamine here. The distinction is not observed in the LXX, but it is observed in the late Greek medical writers for both trees have medical properties. Hence it may be assumed, writes Robertson

(Luke, p. 226), that Luke, as a physician, makes the distinction. Both trees differ from the English sycamore. The New Bible Dictionary describes the sycamine tree as "the black mulberry (Morus nigra L), a small sturdy tree with blood-red, edible fruits, cultivated in Palestine" (p. 1294). It is very likely that the Lord was standing by one of the sycamine trees as He addressed these words to His disciples. In effect He was saying that if their faith, like the grain of mustard seed exceedingly small, were allowed to germinate, it would grow to great dimensions and accomplish great things. No problem or task would be too difficult for them. They could say to the sycamine tree close by, "Be rooted up and planted again in the middle of the sea," where an ordinary tree could never take root, and it would transpire. There is the plain intimation that faith can supercede the natural and succeed in the supernatural. In the midst of the sea an ordinary tree can neither take root nor grow. But the right kind of faith would bring it about. This goes even beyond the casting of mountains into the sea (Matt. 21:21). A tree could be torn out by the roots and be made to grow in the same sea in which the man with the millstone (v. 2) would drown. The roots of the sycamine tree were regarded as extraordinarily strong; "it was supposed that the tree could stand in the earth for six hundred years" (Strack-Billerbeck, in loc.).

This is the kind of faith which the disciples needed. It is a faith which is living and growing. After the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, they possessed in a rich measure this kind of faith which enabled them to perform many supernatural and mighty deeds. Christ, in effect, is giving them hereby the promise of this type of faith. The request for more faith or the right kind of faith would never go unanswered. When the time comes that their faith has completely matured and they would perform miracles and work marvels, there would be a tendency on their part, so wisely foreseen by Christ, to be self-satisfied and proud. For this reason the Lord adds the words concerning humility.

3. The Reminder to Humility. Luke 17:7-10.

a. The parable: 7-9.

"But who is there of you, having a servant plowing or keeping sheep, that will say unto him, when he is come in from the field, Come straightway and sit down to meat; and will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Does he thank the servant because he did the things that were commanded?"

With great faith there exists the danger that the mighty deeds wrought make one self-satisfied and lead to the belief that one merits special honor. Such an attitude, Peter and the others

must learn, is quite sinful and wrong. In ordinary life it is unthinkable that, after a bond-servant has completed his daily task, his master will invite him and praise him as though he deserved special rewards and honors for the mere execution of his duties. As a born or bought bond-slave, the servant has no more claim than for food and drink. How much less has a man the right to demand of God, even if he has done everything he should have done (and who is capable of this?), that he should be honored and rewarded in a special manner, as if he were such a meritorious and indispensable person in His service! (Geldenhuys, p. 433).

b. The principle: 10.

The faith given to the disciples would not simply accomplish great things or win great victories. Their faith would enable them to accomplish that for which they were called, namely, to plow the field and sow the seed of the Gospel as well as to shepherd the flock. This was to be the apostolic task and this is perhaps why the Lord makes illusion to these two vocations in the parable.

When the disciples and all believers carry out their charges loyally through divine enablement, they need to realize that all their love, labor and success belong to their Master and they do not merit any special rewards. When God does give rewards, they are bestowed out of pure grace. If a person who has done everything he was commanded to do can expect no special treatment, how much less those who have left many things undone and have many things wrongly. The Lord's lesson to the disciples and the believers of all ages is that the fitting attitude for the true servant is one of meekness and one of gratitude for the privilege of being allowed to serve Him. The lesson was not lost on the apostles, least of all on Peter. After Pentecost the disciples never argue as to who would be the greatest in the kingdom. With an increase in miraculous power came an increase in true humility. After Peter had cured the lame man by the gate of the temple and all the people were about to worship him, he did not take the credit for his miracle-working faith which had grown as it were, from a small grain of mustard seed to a large tree. His reply to the admiring throng was one of genuine humility: "Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus" (Acts 3:12-13).

§107. THE TEN LEPERS.

LUKE 17: 11-19.

11 And it came to pass, ¹ as they were on their way to Jerusalem, that he was passing ² through the midst⁴ of Samaria and Galilee. 12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which³ stood afar off: 13 and they lifted up their voices, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. 14 And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go and shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, as they went, they were cleansed. 15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, with a loud voice glorifying God; 16 and he fell upon his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. 17 And Jesus answering said, Were not the ten cleansed? but where are the nine? 18 ⁷ Were there none found that returned to give glory to God, save this ⁸ stranger? 19 And he said unto him, Arise, and go thy way: thy faith hath ⁹ made thee whole.

II. The Ten Lepers. Luke 17:11-19.

1. The circumstances of the miracle. Luke 17:11

"And it came to pass, as they were on their way to Jerusalem, that he was passing through the midst of Samaria and Galilee."

Much of Luke 17 seems to speak of faith. The chapter starts with a conversation about forgiving faith, a desire for fuller faith, and a parable about humble faith. The entire conversation probably took place somewhere in northern Samaria or southern Galilee and the miracle of the cleansing of the ten lepers no doubt follows chronologically as well as thematically. The theme of faith is the connecting link between the former event and the present miracle. Peter and his fellow-disciples need yet another important lesson about faith. While the conversation described above probably did happen as Christ and His disciples were preparing for their final journey to Jerusalem, the miracle of the lepers is definitely the very first incident along the way. As in 9:51-52 and 13:22, so here Luke indicates that Christ was journeying towards Jerusalem. Coming with His disciples from their homes in Galilee, the Lord turned east and made His way between Samaria and Galilee. It is not that He went through the midst of Samaria and Galilee, for had this been the case, Samaria would not have been mentioned before Galilee. Earlier, the way through Samaria had been barred when the Samaritans "did not receive him, because his face was as though he were going to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51-56). It was at this time that James and John desired to bring fire down from heaven to consume the obstinate Samaritans. Luke 9-18 is the great travel narrative and however the events and discourses in this unique Lucan section may be related, one can be certain that this is the Lord's last pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

According to the text, Christ and His disciples would have journeyed due eastward toward Jordan, having Galilee on their left hand, and Samaria, which is therefore first named, on their right hand. They would have gone past Beth-shan and crossed the Jordan perhaps immediately to the east of there where there was a bridge. Then the journey continued through Trans-Jordan and the festive pilgrims would have recrossed the Jordan at Jericho, to continue from there to Jerusalem. It was while the group was making its way between Galilee and Samaria that these ten leprous men came to meet them.

2. The condition of the lepers.

a. Their plight:

"And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off."

As Christ was nearing a town, perhaps close to Beth-Shan, ten leprous men came to meet Him. Christ could not have been inside the town yet or very close to it, for people with leprosy were not even permitted to approach the city gate (Stier, Lucas, p. 347). Their common misery had drawn these poor outcasts together

(cf. 2. Kings 7:3) and more than that, it had caused them to forget their fierce national antipathy which kept Jew and Samaritan apart.

It is a mistaken assumption that the Jews believed that leprosy was a communicable disease and that thus lepers were carefully secluded from their fellow-men. All the notices in the Old Testament, as well as in other Jewish writings, confirm the proposition that the laws governing leprosy were religious rather than civil. Ordinarily leprosy was not communicable from one person to another, so that the measures prescribing leprosy were primarily moral and ritual rather than sanitary. The isolation which banished lepers from all contact except with those similarly stricken, and forbade their entering not only the temple or Jerusalem, but any walled city, could not have been merely prompted by the wish to prevent infection. All the laws in regard to leprosy are expressly stated not to have application in the case of heathens, proselytes before their conversion, and even of Israelites on their birth. Furthermore, the priestly examination and subsequent isolation of the leper were not to commence during the marriage week, or on festive days, indicating again that leprosy was not regarded primarily as a communicable disease. The Rabbis confessed themselves powerless in the presence of this living death and the disease is not included in the catalog of the various kinds of diseases for which a remedy was possible. (Trench, Miracles, p. 165; Edersheim, I, 491-492). If infection was not the issue, why then the strict laws forbidding all contact with the living?

The leper was a living illustration of the awful consequences of sin. Trench has well written on the spiritual significance of leprosy:

And leprosy, the sickness of sicknesses, was throughout these Levitical ordinances selected of God from the whole host of maladies and diseases which had broken in upon the bodies of men. Bearing His testimony against it, He bore His testimony against that out of which every sickness frows, against sin; as not from Him, as grievous in His sight; and the sickness also itself as being grievous, being as it was a visible manifestation, a direct consequence, of sin, a forerunner of that death, which, by the portal of disobedience and revolt, had found entrance into natures created by sin for immortality. (Miracles, p. 166.)

The leper, thus fearfully bearing about in the body the outward and visible tokens of sin in the soul, was treated as one in whom sin had reached its climax, as one dead in trespasses and sins. The leper was himself a dreadful parable of death and by law was required to bear the appearance of a mourner. As the leper went about, his clothes rent, his hair dishevelled, and the lower part of his face and his upper lip bound strangely with a cloth, it

was as if he were going to his own death. The mournful words, "unclean! Unclean!" which he uttered, proclaimed that his was both living and moral death. And as an illustration of death, he had no communication with the living.

b. Their plea:

The "ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off" (Luke 17:12) were no doubt a very pitiful group, with clothes rent, heads bared, hair dishevelled, and a cloth bound around their lower face. They must have been some distance from the Lord and His disciples for according to the text they stood "afar off." They dared not come nearer to clean people than a certain measured distance. According to Jewish custom no less a distance than four cubits (or six feet) must be kept from a leper and if the wind were blowing from their direction, they had to be as much as 150 feet away. (Edersheim, I, 495).

"And they lifted up their voices, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us" (v. 13).

With their coarse voices (which became later loud with the healed Samaritan (v. 15) they do not cry to the passers-by their woeful "Unclean!" to incite them to pray for them and to warn them, as would ordinarily be the case. They are not afraid of Christ as they might be of some of the Rabbis and flee. One Rabbi boasted that he always threw stones at lepers to keep them away. Rabbi Meir would not eat an egg purchased in a street where there was a leper. The inhuman logic of Rabbinism insisted that inasmuch as a leper was a mourner, he could not even wash his face (Edersheim I, 495).

The ten lepers evidence their faith, small though it might have been as the mustard seed, that the "Master," for thus they addressed Him, would be able to cure them as He had many of the sick in the area. This was no ordinary Rabbi who walked there in the distance with His disciples. With the Rabbis leprosy was an incurable disease and at any encounter with ordinary Rabbis these wretched creatures would have fled. With this Rabbi they have hope and cry with words of earnest and solemn entreaty, "Jesus! Master! have mercy on us." Their faith is small but sincere.

3. The command of the Master.

"And when he was them, he said unto them, God and shew yourselves unto the priests" (v. 14a).

It is most instructive to observe the differences in the Lord's dealing with the different sufferers and mourners brought in contact with Him. In His manifold wisdom the great Physician varies His treatment according to the varying needs of His patients. When Christ healed the leper in 5:12-16 Jesus did not shrink from touching

him while He uttered the authoritative word of healing. In this case, however, He does not touch any one of the ten, but merely commands them to go and show themselves to the priests who supervise the observance of the purification laws in the various villages and towns from which these lepers come. According to Eedersheim (II, 329), any priest could declare "unclean" or "clean," provided the applicants presented themselves singly, and not in company, for his inspection. Even if the nine did follow the command and did go to the same priest for cleansing, the command (priests is plural) and narrative imply that at least two priests were involved. The Samaritan in the group would hardly have approached a Jewish priest where he would have gotten a bad reception and might have been cast out.

It is natural to assume that each leper hurriedly went to his own town to be examined by the priest. Their journey was one of faith and joy. They believed the clear implication of the Master's words that they would be cleansed. They had heard no words of cleansing and yet they would never have gone to their priests, had they disbelieved the Master's words. Each hurried step away from the Savior, immediately upon His command, indicated their obedience to His authority and faith in His ability.

Unlike the cleansing of the leper in ch. 5, Christ bids them to take the cure on trust. First there is the command, then the cure. This order of events shows the purpose that Christ had in performing the miracle, namely, to test their faith and their love. It was a strong test, but their faith was equal to it.

4. The cleansing on the way.

"And it came to pass, as they went, they were cleansed" (v. 14b).

The cleansing must have taken place within a few minutes. Twice the phrase "and it came to pass" is used to convey the idea of rapid sequence. Christ and the disciples may have followed the ten with their eyes, as they went steadily on in their rags, wretchedness, and uncleanness, but hopeful as to what would happen. Laidlaw (p. 316) well describes the scene:

Right soon, as they went along, a cry of joy broke from one and another and another. The cure had come. New life shot into their wasted frames; the lagging steps quickened into a firm and steady tramp; the shrivelled arms were raised in exulting strength. Their flesh became clean as a little child's, and every man saw before his eyes in his fellows the wonderful transformation which he felt in himself.

5. The coming back of the one .

"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" (vv. 15-16).

a. The glorifying of God.

The healing probably took place as the lepers, at least in part, had already separated so that each could go to his priest. By then they no doubt were already out of the sight of Christ and some distance on their journey. It was therefore not an easy and costless effort to return and render thanks to the Master. Their faith had been tested. They had been sent away with only an implied promise that they would be healed. They believed Him and got the blessing. But His treatment of them was further intended to test their love. Was their's a fruitful faith which would issue forth in gratitude or was it merely a formal faith? Was it merely a faith in Him as the Master who could heal the sick or did their faith cause them to bow in gratitude before Him as the God-sent redeemer?

The implication of the passage is that Christ and the twelve had not left the place where they met the ten lepers. They had watched the the wretched outcasts disappear behind the rocky ridges of Galilee but in just a matter of minutes one of the dismal figures could be seen emerging over the ridge, wildly waving the formerly disfigured arms and leaping towards the waiting group. Already from a distance they could hear his loud praise, his formerly coarse voice now strong and clear. He was overflowing with praise to God who alone could effect such a miracle.

b. The gratitude to Christ.

The healed leper came closer and though the priest had not yet declared him clean, the man did not remain at a distance but without hesitation, in humblest reverence, fell on his face at the feet of his Healer. By this act of bringing glory to God and showing gratitude to the Lord, this man showed that he had received more than new physical life and health. He had been healed spiritually as well.

There is no evidence that this man, after He had given thanks to God, and had poured out his joy at the feet of Jesus, did not go to the priest as he was directed. He could not have been restored to society without doing it. But he first poured out his thanks to God, giving Him praise for his wonderful recovery. Likewise, it is the first duty of a spiritually healed person to prostrate himself at the feet of his great Redeemer and to consecrate himself to the Master's service. Then is the time to show to others the evidence that he has been cleansed. (Barnes, Luke, p. 128).

"And he was a Samaritan." This touch, as Robertson observes (p. 228), colors the whole incident. The one man who felt grateful enough to come back and thank Jesus for the blessing was a despised Samaritan. The Jews considered the Samaritans

as peculiarly wicked and themselves as peculiarly holy. This example, like that of the good Samaritan, showed the disciples, who undoubtedly had also some of this prejudice, that in this they were mistaken. Perhaps one of the designs of the parable, along with it being a vivid illustration of genuine faith and grateful love, was to break down the prejudice which disciples like Peter might have felt toward their neighbors, the Samaritans.

d. The callousness of the nine.

"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?" (vv. 17-18).

As the Savior sometimes was surprised at faith, at other times at unbelief, so here He is startled by the ingratitude of the nine. Galilee, after all, was the Savior's favorite area, where He spent roughly two-thirds of His public ministry. It was here that the multitudes had thronged to Him as He healed them from all manners of diseases. They had been grateful and in their enthusiasm they endeavored to make Him their King. But now the conditions had changed. While plans were being forged in Judea for His destruction, the Savior once again made Galilee the theater of his saving love. But even here He now reaped only ingratitude. This explains the full melancholy earnestness of his inquiry: Where are the nine Galileans?

The rejoicing Samaritan stands in stark contrast to the rejected Savior. The question lies heavy over the event: where are the nine? Most certainly they had some faith when they first sought help from the Savior. They evidence more faith when they set out for the priests before they had experienced the healing. But the passage indicates that their faith was not real. One must not overestimate their faith. After all, the Jews had witnessed miraculous cures by this man during the past three years without a single failure. The lepers no doubt had heard about the many healings and it is therefore not strange that they would apply to Jesus for healing. Nor does it appear strange that they want to the priests at his bidding. They knew from past events that the Lord could heal any sickness and could use various means to effect the cure. They believed that He was the healer of the body but they would not believe that He was that only because He was primarily the Healer of the soul. Their unbelief brought forth its bitter fruit of ingratitude. Ingratitude is pronounced to be the very sin of the heathen who, like these Jews, "when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (Rom. 1:20).

The grateful Samaritan remained with the group of the twelve and the Savior for some time, while Christ waited for the others to return. It is likely that the Samaritan had farther to go to his town to see his priest than the Jews, who may have formerly lived in the "certain village" (v. 12) nearby. The waiting proved in vain. Edersheim provides the most likely reason why the nine Jews

did not return immediately as had the Despised Samaritan:

Or, what seems to us the most probable, was it simply Jewish ingratitude and neglect of the blessed opportunity now within their reach--a state of mind too characteristic of those who know not "the time of their visitation"--and which led up to the neglect, rejection, and final loss of the Christ? Certain it is, that the Lord emphasized the terrible contrast in this between the children of the household and "this stranger." (II, 330).

It was therefore not a desire to separate from their former companion which prevented them from coming back. Nor was it very likely some word of warning that the priests spoke to them or a desire to obey the letter of Christ's commandment rather than its spirit. Rather it was their unbelief. Early in the chapter Christ indicated primarily how much faith a person must have. This event illustrates what kind of faith is necessary. The matter of faith, which the disciples wanted to understand better and appropriate more, forms the link between the earlier instruction and the present incident.

7. The conversion of the Samaritan.

"And he said unto him, Arise, and go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole" (v. 19).

Although the account of the healing of the lepers is compressed it is apparent that some conversation took place between the Samaritan and Christ. In v. 17 Christ answers apparently a statement by the prostrate stranger. After the Samaritan had been in this worshipful position for some time, the Savior exhorts him to arise and go. It is implied that he should go to the priest to be declared clean, after which he would bring his sacrifice of thanksgiving and finally rejoin his own family.

The command is followed by a commendation: "Thy faith hath made thee whole." The Savior assures him that his faith has saved him--not merely cured him of his bodily sickness, but saved him in the fullest sense of the word. The Samaritan had really believed Him and entered into a personal relationship with Him. Edersheim appropriately focuses on the crucial difference between the nine Jews and the one Samaritan when he states: "According to the Gospels, a man might either seek benefit from Christ, or else receive Christ through such benefit" (II, 331). The Samaritan did the latter.

The lesson of the whole event would not have been lost upon the observant disciples. All ten lepers come to Christ for a boon. Only one receives Him through the benefit. Superficial and external faith gets healing; true faith brings salvation and evidences itself in gratitude. The ingratitude of the nine stands in marked contrast with the gratefulness of the one whom the Savior sends away

healed in body and in spirit. The nine Jews are satisfied with Christ's power. The Samaritan outcast longs for Christ's person. His genuine gratitude is rewarded by augmented gifts of grace. The Lord rejects the children of the household and turns to the stranger, an action of greatest significance for the disciples, as Lange so well states:

The love which the Saviour here also, as often exhibits for the Samaritans, was for the apostles a paedagogic lesson, which, as appeared from the extended commission that was given them, Acts 1. 8, was doubly necessary, and afterwards also bore its fruits in the zeal with which they preached the Gospel to Samaria too. Acts viii. (Luke, p. 264).

MATT. 19:1, 2.

MATT. 8: [18] 19-22.

1 And it came to pass when Jesus had finished these words, he departed from Galilee, and came into the borders of Judæa beyond Jordan¹; 2 and great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there. (+ §110)

MARK 10:1.

1 And he arose from thence, and cometh into the borders of Judæa and beyond Jordan¹; and multitudes come together unto him again; and, as he was wont, he taught them again.

III. The Needy Multitudes. Matt. 19:1-2; Mark 10:1.

1. The farewell to Galilee:

"And it came to pass when Jesus had finished these words, he departed from Galilee, and came into the borders of Judaea beyond Jordan; and great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there" (Matt. 19:1-2).

After Jesus had finished His Galilean ministry He passed between Galilee and Samaria toward the Jordan, healing the ten lepers on the way. Before long He had crossed the Jordan, leaving forever that area where He had been teaching and performing miracles approximately two out of the three years of His earthly ministry. Christ did not leave this area until His work had been completed. The last sermon had been preached and the last miracle had been performed. This was His final farewell from the country which He loved. And Peter and the other disciples must have sensed the Savior's sober mood and even the tinge of sadness occasioned by the final farewell and the fateful future which awaited Him at the end of His journey. The Savior's serious mood must have been in stark contrast to the festive crowds which joined the disciples for their annual celebration of the Passover in the beloved capital Jerusalem.

Jesus left Galilee to go to Judea and ultimately Jerusalem by way of Perea as the Galileans often did to avoid the unclean country of the Samaritans. Apparently He passed through the edge of Galilee (Luke 17:11) and down the Jordan Valley in Perea. His final departure from Galilee must have been rather abrupt, for the verb "departed" is an unusual word and conveys the idea of lifting up, changing something to another place. Christ must have departed resolutely as He set His face toward Jerusalem (Robertson, Matthew, p. 153). While most commentators suggest that Christ took the shortest route towards Judea, along the eastern side of the Jordan River, Lange (Matthew, p. 337) observes that "it deserves notice, that Jesus entered not merely the territory of Perea, but penetrated to its utmost boundaries." It may be that Christ's extensive ministry to the needy multitude brought Him to the eastern boundaries of the province.

The Scriptures seem to attach a special interest and importance to Perea, where Christ retired on two occasions prior to His crucifixion (John 10:40-42 and here). Here He found refuge and in the same manner His infant Church sought shelter among its mountains before the destruction of Jerusalem, making Pella their capital.

While Perea is never mentioned by name in the N.T., Josephus, the Jewish historian makes reference to it. The Douglas' New Bible Dictionary states succinctly the major facts concerning this lovely province:

The name Peraea came into use after the Exile, to denote an area east of the Jordan about 10 miles wide, stretching from the river Arnon in the south to some point between the Jabbok and the Yarmuk in the north. It comprised essentially the edge of the 3,000-foot scarp overlooking the Jordan, with its towns, and was thus a high-land region. . . . At intermediate elevations there were olives and vines, and cultivation tailed off eastwards through the wheatfields and then the steep pastures of lower lands. It was evidently an attractive region in Old Testament times, for after seeing it and adjacent areas the tribes of Gad and Reuben (Nu. xxxiii, 1-5) lost interest in crossing Jordan with their cattle.

In the time of Christ Peraea was occupied by Jews and ruled by Herod Antipas, and by Jews it was regarded as possessing equality of status with Judaea and Galilee. As it adjoined both of these across the Jordan, it was possible by traversing its length to follow an all-Jewish route from Galilee to Judaea, thus by-passing the territory of the Samaritans (p. 965).

2. The followers on the way:

"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" (Mark 10:1).

Like Matthew, Mark records Christ's farewell to Galilee and although the chronology is somewhat difficult to follow, it is probably best to see both references as an account of Christ's final farewell from Galilee. The picture is that of Christ resolutely departing with the disciples, accompanied by some festive band of pilgrims who know Christ and are likewise traveling to Jerusalem for the Passover. Near Bethshean, the important city situated at the junction of the Valley of Jezreel and the Jordan valley, the pilgrims crossed the Jordan and made their way slowly southward on the much-traveled road. The news of the Savior's approach must have preceded Him and by the time the motley crowd reached the area opposite Judea where Christ had been some weeks earlier before raising Lazarus, "the multitudes come together unto him again," apparently as they had done during His previous visit, and "as he was wont, he taught them". Matthew adds that the multitudes were great and "followed him; and he healed them there" (Matt. 19:2).

3. The favors from the Physician:

The picture is that of Christ, slowly moving toward His pre-determined destination, followed by ever greater bands of pilgrims as well as local people who needed His special healing power for their many afflictions. They were the people who undoubtedly had given up all hope of going to the glorious Passover. But now, through Christ's intervention, they were healed and accompanied Him the rest of the way. It is no doubt these people who play an important part in Christ's triumphal entry as they herald Him as their King.

The Gospels never picture Christ as being in a hurry or behind schedule. Even here in Perea He found time to heal and to teach, as He has so often done. The news had traveled to each town along the route that the great Teacher and Physician was coming. In each hamlet throngs of people surrounded Him, as He healed them and taught them. Many incidents took place along the way. A. B. Bruce rightly suggests that "in every incident the Master has an eye to the lesson for the disciples. And the evangelist takes pains to make the lesson prominent" (The Expositor's Greek New Testament, I, 408). Peter and the other disciples need to learn many lessons before their Master can leave them. It almost appears as if the Evangelists selected certain incidents that happened along the way and grouped them purposely with specific lessons for the twelve in view.

§108. THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM.

LUKE 17: 20—18: 8.

20 And being asked by the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God cometh, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: 21 neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, There! for lo, the kingdom of God is ¹within you.

22 And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire ²to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. 23 ³And they shall say to you, Lo, there! Lo, here! go not away, nor follow after *them*: 24 for as the lightning, when it lighteneth out of the one part under the heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall the Son of man be ²in his day. 25 ⁴But first must he suffer many things and be rejected of this generation. 26 ⁵And as it came to pass in the days of Noah, even so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. 27 They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. 28 Likewise even as it came to pass in the days of Lot; they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; 29 but in the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all: 30 after the same manner shall it be in the day that the Son of man is revealed. 31 ⁶In that day, he which ²shall be on the housetop, and his goods in the house, let him not go down to take them away: and let him that is in the field likewise not return back. 32 Remember Lot's wife. 33 ⁷Who-soever shall seek to gain his ³life shall lose it: but whosoever shall lose *his* ³life shall ⁴preserve it. 34 I say unto you, ⁸In that night there shall be two men on one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. 35 There shall be two women grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be ⁵left. 37 And they answering say unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, ⁹Where the body is, thither will the ¹eagles also be gathered together.

18: 1 And he spake a parable unto them to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint: 2 saying, There was in a city a judge, which ¹feared not God, and regarded not man: 3 and there was a widow in that city; and she came oft unto him, saying, ²Avenge me of mine adversary. 4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; 5 yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest she ³wear me out by her continual coming. 6 And the Lord said, Hear what ⁴the unrighteous judge saith. 7 And shall not God avenge his elect, which ²cry to him day and night, and ³he is longsuffering over them? 8 I say unto you, that he will avenge them speedily. Howbeit ¹when the Son of man cometh, shall he find ⁵faith on the earth?

IV. The Future Kingdom. Luke 17:20-18:8.1. The incident in context:

The great majority of religious Jewry looked forward at this time to the imminent establishment of the Messianic kingdom. They were familiar with the numerous Old Testament prophecies and statements in the inter-testamental apocalyptic writings concerning the coming of the Messiah, that they expected the Messianic age to dawn shortly. The Jewish leaders were keenly aware of the claims of both John the Baptist and Christ that the kingdom of God was at hand. Many of them undoubtedly recognized that Christ possessed prophetic gifts. But they also recognized that He claimed to be the Messiah. As they observed the Lord performing numerous Messianic miracles in Perea and watched the throng of followers growing larger and larger as Christ and His disciples slowly went from town to town in Perea on their way to Jerusalem, the issue of Messiah-ship and the coming kingdom became a burning question for them and the crowds. A knot of Pharisees, probably also en route to Jerusalem for the Passover, confronted Christ and, half sincerely and half temptingly asked Him about the coming kingdom.

2. The inquiry by the Pharisees:

"And being asked by the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God cometh, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, There! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20-22).

"Master," they said to Him, "you have often represented yourself, both by word and mighty miracles, as the Messiah, but we see no signs as yet of the coming of the kingdom of God. When will it come? It has been long promised."

Very remarkable about the encounter is the brevity of Christ's answer before He turns to the disciples to teach them. Christ simply replies that the kingdom does not come with observation, literally, amid a superstitious gazing for outward signs. The Greek word for observation, parateresis, is used only here in the Bible and means "the observing of signs in the sky, perhaps also the apocalyptic reckoning of the fixed time when it is to come" (Klostermann, cited by Geldenhuys, p. 442). No man will be able to prophesy the time of the coming of the kingdom through a human analysis of the signs of the times. It is the predictability not the visibility of the kingdom which the Lord rejects. The Pharisees attempted to determine by signs the moment when the kingdom would be established. As important as the signs of the times are, the kingdom will not come as men expect it. While signs of the times will point toward the ultimate establishment of the kingdom, the actual moment of the advent will arrive suddenly when least expected. Moreover, the kingdom is already in their midst. They were looking for a climactic eschatological event, when in fact the kingdom was already present among them in the form of the King.

While many commentators interpret the phrase entos humon as "within you," there are instances in the Classics where it means "among you." Christ is not speaking of a spiritual kingdom residing in individuals.

He did speak frequently of individuals living in the kingdom, however. Besides, in no way could it be said that the kingdom dwelled within these Pharisees who a few days later would condemn Christ to death. Christ is simply saying to them: "I cannot give you any moment when it may be said to have come, for, in fact, it is already in your midst. I, the Messiah, live and work amongst you, and where the Messiah is, there is His kingdom." Christ at once put aside their curiosity and laid a solemn responsibility on these Pharisees. If the Messiah was already among them, how imperative for them to accept Him! This they were unwilling to do. These interrogators, having been confronted with the necessity of acknowledging Christ as Messiah, presumably left angrily the presence of the Savior and His disciples. (Geike, pp. 339-340).

3. The instruction to the disciples: Luke 17:22+8:8

To the Pharisees Christ had spoken of the aspect of the kingdom already present, namely the Messiah. Now turning privately to His disciples, probably no easy matter amidst the whole throng following behind, He instructs them concerning the coming of the future kingdom.

a. The deception in the last days: Luke 17:22-24.

"And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say to you, Lo, there! Lo, here! go not away, nor follow after them; for as the lightning, when it lighteneth out of the one part under the heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall the Son of man be in his day."

The disciples needed further instructions concerning the coming kingdom in which they would be citizens. They had accepted the present reality of it, namely the Messiah Himself who was present as King. It was imperative that they be informed about the future ramifications of the kingdom. Dark times would come in the future when they would yearn for a return of one of the Messianic days. "The days of the Son of man" is the usual expression for the Messianic age in rabbinic literature" (Strack-Billerback, *in. loc.*) In those final days of trouble when men will yearn for the presence of the Messiah, seducers will attempt to mislead the disciples by pointing out human impostors as the Messiah. The disciples must not allow themselves to be misled by such deceivers, for the coming of the Messiah will be as sudden and striking as lightning, that no one will be in doubt about this universally visible event.

b. The death of the Son of Man: Luke 17:25.

"But first must he suffer many things and be rejected of this generation."

Before the kingdom can be established, Christ would first have to suffer. There could be no crown without a cross. Despite the Master's frequent references to His death, the disciples

consistently disbelieved these gloomy predictions. It was easier for Peter and the others to receive Him as sovereign King than as suffering Savior. At this point in Christ's ministry, the nation had already officially rejected Him as their king (Matt. 12) and the leaders had given their verdict that Christ's power was satanic. The kingdom thus spurned was taken from them and, after the intervening Church age, would be offered to another generation. Even if the Jewish nation had accepted Christ as King, it still would have been necessary for Him to die. Old Testament prophecies such as Isaiah 53 were only too explicit: without a cross, no crown; without death, no dominion.

c. The developments at the second coming: Luke 17:26-30.

"And as it came to pass in the days of Noah, even so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise even as it came to pass in the days of Lot; they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but in the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all; after the same manner shall it be in the day that the Son of man is revealed."

The examples of Noah and Lot are used to indicate the conditions at the time of Christ's return. Men were so engrossed in external and material pursuits that they gave no consideration to spiritual matters and made no preparation in the face of certain judgment. The Greek here is very descriptive. There are no connecting particles between the four verbs in verse 27. The imperfect stresses the continuous action. "They were eating, they were drinking, they were married, they were given in marriage" right up to the very hour of destruction. They were wholly given up to these activities. Noah and Lot realized that the catastrophe was coming and made preparations. Demoralization and disregard for spiritual things characterized the life of the people in those days. In the same manner, immorality and indifference will characterize the society at the time of Messiah's return.

d. The destruction at the return of the Lord: Luke 17:31-37.

"In that day, he which shall be on the housetop, and his goods in the house, let him not go down to take them away: and let him that is in the field likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to gain his life shall lose it: but whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. I say unto you, In that night there shall be two women grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. And they answering say unto him, Where Lord? And he said unto them, Where the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together."

A terrible judgment will precede the Lord's return. The words are very similar to those of Matthew 24:13ff. This ungodly security of the majority of the people will be disrupted by an instant separation of man from man. While commentators have mistakenly understood this passage

as a reference to the Lord's return for His saints (as in I Thess. 4:17), actually the events in view take place at the time of Christ's return with His saints. There will be an instantaneous gathering but of offenders to end-time judgment. Christ emphasizes the proximity of the people and the subsequent remoteness of their destiny. People who are too attached to earthly things will lose their life. Believers who lead an unselfish life and do not shrink from dying for Him will gain true life.

The Twelve who had undoubtedly listened with breathless attention to this vision of the future, now asked Christ with great alarm where the judgment of those will take place who have been snatched from their homes and places of work. The Pharisees wanted to know the chronology of His return. The disciples inquired about the locality of His judgment. They receive no direct answer but in what was probably a well-known Palestinian proverb, they are told that where spiritual decay exists, there judgment will be executed. Other Scriptures describe in gruesome detail the place of this terrible carnage on the plains of Armageddon (Rev. 16:14; 19:17). It will be here that the world's armies will be gathered at the Lord's return and an unprecedented judgment will destroy the enemies of God (Unger, Bible Handbook, p. 532).

e. The discourse concerning persistent prayer: Luke 18:1-8.

1) The instruction by Christ: Luke 18:1.

"And he spake a parable unto them to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint."

The parable of the unjust judge occurs in the context of Christ's second advent (17:20-35) and thus is of great importance for the disciples. They needed these instructions concerning conditions that would exist at the time of the return of the Messiah. The preceding teaching had given them a glimpse of the fearsome judgments which would come upon the ungodly. Now the instructions deal with the manner of life of the believers in the light of the second advent.

2) The importance of prayer: Luke 18:1.

In the dark apostate days of the Tribulation only few will be faithful to Christ. The believers need to be assured that all appearances notwithstanding, God is intensely interested in His children and will ultimately hear their cry and deliver them.

The parable opens with the general principle that they ought to pray at all times and must never faint. The "them" in verse 1 indicates that the disciples are still being addressed. They, like men of all ages, but especially those living during the persecution of the Tribulation, must never waiver in their dependence upon God.

3) The injustice of the judge: Luke 8:2-5.

"Saying, there was in a city a judge, which 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. 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."

The parable introduces an unjust judge who had none of the impulses which restrain men from evil, a fear of God or a respect for men. He is destitute of character and probably mirrors the situation of judges at the time of Christ in Palestine. In ungodly soliloquizing he admits his wickedness and shows no trace of shame. He finally helps the wronged widow, not because of a change of attitude towards her, but because her bothersome persistence will deprive him of all peace and comfort.

4) The importunity of the widow:

The parable is one of contrast and the main lesson is derived from the sharp dissimilarity between the judge and God. The judge has no interest in his fellowmen. The Heavenly Father is perfectly just in everything. The widow who continually goes to plead with the unjust judge represents the believers' difficulty, primarily those living during the unrighteous and unholy days of the Tribulation, when it may seem that the Lord will never vindicate them. The judge admitted that the widow would finally wear him out. The verb here used is of great color. It may mean "hit in the face" or "beat black and blue," or merely "cause much trouble" (Geldenhuys, p. 448). The judge appears to have feared a violent attack by the wronged widow.

5) The implication of the parable: Luke 18:6-8.

"And the Lord said, Hear what the unrighteous judge saith. And shall not God avenge his elect, which cry to him day and night, and he is longsuffering over them? I say unto you, that he will avenge them speedily. Howbeit when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

Christ is teaching that incessant prayer will be rewarded. God, no less than the unjust judge, can and will answer prayer. Furthermore, God is altogether willing to hear the believer's cry. Whereas the widow sustained no special relationship to the judge, the believers are God's elect and with the words "I say unto you," Christ encouraged His disciples, soon to be persecuted because of Him, that God will answer quickly. This does not mean soon or after a short time but rather when God's time has come. He will not tarry one moment too long with the answer. His help will come immediately. What an encouraging thought for disciples of every generation!

Christ's probing question intimates that at His second advent the vast majority of people will live in unbelief. Upon His return

CONCERNING DIVORCE.

MATT. 19:3-12

3 And there came unto him Pharisees, tempting⁶ him, and saying, Is it lawful *for a man* to put away his wife for every cause? 4 And he answered and said, Have ye not read, that he which¹ ¹⁰made *them* from the beginning made them male and female, 5 and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the twain¹ shall become one flesh? 6 So that they are no more twain¹, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. 7 They say unto him, Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put *her* away? 8 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. 9 *And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, ¹except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: ²and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery. 10 The disciples say unto him, If the case of the man is so with his wife, it is not expedient to marry. 11 But he said unto them, All men cannot² receive this saying, but they ~~to~~ whom it is given. 12 For there are eunuchs, which³ were so born from their mother's womb: and there are eunuchs, which³ were made eunuchs by men: and there are eunuchs, which³ made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

MARK 10:2-12.

2 And there came unto him Pharisees, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away *his* wife? tempting him. 3 And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? 4 And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. 5 But Jesus said unto them, For your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. 6 But from the beginning of the creation, Male and female made he them. 7 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, ³and shall cleave to his wife; 8 and the twain¹ shall become one flesh: so that they are no more twain¹, but one flesh. 9 What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. 10 And in the house the disciples asked him again of this matter. 11 And he saith unto them, *Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her: 12 and if she herself shall put away her husband, and marry another, she committeth adultery.

There would be few who would trust Him as the Christ, the Messianic Son of man. Nevertheless, a faithful remnant would persevere until the end. Christ encouraged that little flock to persevere unto the end.

V. The Divorce Question. Matt. 19:3-12; Mark 10:2-12.

1. The problem of divorce: Matt. 19:3

"And there came unto him Pharisees, tempting him, and saying, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?"

Among the theological questions fiercely debated in Christ's day between the rival schools of Hillel and Shammai, no one ^{was} more prominent than that of divorce. The school of Hillel contended that a man had a perfect right to divorce his wife for the most trivial reason. If a man ceased to love his wife or saw one he liked better or had a badly cooked dinner from his wife he would have sufficient grounds for divorce. The school of Shammai, on the other hand, held that divorce could be issued only for adultery and unchastity.

The Pharisees, Christ's avowed enemies, approached Jesus with the purpose of tempting Him. They saw a favorable chance to bring religious and political malicious hostility upon Him. John had been placed in prison and then killed because of the divorce question (Matt. 14:3-5). The Pharisees must have already known the Lord's position from His previous teachings concerning the subject (Luke 16:17-18; Matt. 5:31-32). It is probable that in asking this question these Pharisees purposed to entangle Christ in a political and religious snare so that like John He could be removed from the scene.

2. The principles of marriage: Matt. 19:4-6.

"And he answered and said, Have ye not read, that he which made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the twain shall become one flesh? So that they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

The Great Teacher fearlessly meets the challenge head-on and asserts that the institution of marriage is indissoluble. He points to the principles of the Genesis account and gives four reasons why divorce is wrong. In the beginning God created one man for one woman (v. 4). He did not make provision for either polygamy, polyandry, or divorce by making more men than women or more women than men. Secondly, the marriage bond is the strongest of all family relationships (v. 5). A third reason is seen in the fact that man and wife are one flesh (vv. 5-6). Finally, since God ordained marriage, the consummation of marriage is looked upon as being a work of God which must not be separated by man (v. 6). (Toussaint, p. 260).

3. The practice of divorce: Matt. 19:7-9

"They say unto him, Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the

beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."

Anxious to disparage the Lord's ministry, the Pharisees point to an apparent discrepancy between His principles and Moses' practice. The Lord again refutes their insinuation that He was ignorant of the law of Moses or that He was disregarding it. The Pharisees said that Moses commanded it; Christ corrects them and says he permitted divorce. In the beginning a higher ideal existed. The law of Moses merely made provision for their primitive spiritual condition. Moses regulated the subnormal condition existing in Israel. By these words the Lord lays an indictment at the feet of the Pharisees. If they had really had a heart for the things of God, they would have desired the highest ideal and not the lowest. Furthermore, Christ is underscoring the fact that the Pharisees have the same hardness of heart as their forefathers. "Because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives" reflects on their spiritual state.

With the words "but I say unto you" the Lord emphasizes the authoritative character of His words as the Messiah. His words are the true interpretation of the Old Testament when He asserts that there is to be no divorce except for adultery.

4. The problem of the disciples: Matt. 19:10.

"His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry."

The disciples were captives of their own customs and opinions, supported by national law. The Twelve, therefore, when they were alone with Christ in the house ("And in the house the disciples asked him again of this matter," Mark 10:10), urged that, if it were as Christ had taught, it would be better not to marry at all. If fornication furnishes the only lawful ground for divorce, is it not better that a man had best not commit matrimony?

5. The pronouncements of Christ: Matt. 19:11-12.

"But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, but they to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are eunuchs, which were made eunuchs by men: and there are eunuchs, which made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it let him receive it."

By proclaiming that marriage is indissoluble, Christ taught the equal rights of woman and man within the limits of the family. It was this profound doctrine of marriage which ultimately raised the woman to her true position in societies where Christianity took root. The position granted to the woman in antiquity is in stark contrast to the nobler position of the woman in the Christian era.

By His response Christ does indicate that it is better not to marry at all in some cases, but not for the carnal reasons of convenience given by the disciples. Christ mentioned three cases in which abstinence from marriage might be permissible. In two of these cases abstinence was due to natural causes. In the third case a person might refrain from marrying because of his preoccupation with the work of the kingdom. Christ implies that this complete dedication is possible for only a few. There is not the slightest intimation that Christ commands celibacy. His disciples were left free to marry or remain single, as they chose (I Cor. 9:5).

§111. CHRIST BLESSING LITTLE CHILDREN.

MATT. 19:13-15.

13 Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should lay his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. 14 But Jesus said, Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is¹ the kingdom of heaven. 15 And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.

MARK 10:13-16.

13 And they brought² unto him little children, that he should touch them: and the disciples rebuked them. 14 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 of such is¹ the kingdom of God. 15 *Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein. 16 And he took them in his arms, and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.

LUKE 18:15-17.

15 And they brought² unto him also their babes, that he should touch them: but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. 16 But Jesus called them unto him, saying, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is¹ the kingdom of God. 17 *Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein.

VI. The Little Children. Matt. 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17.

1. The devotion of the mothers: Mark 10:13.

"And they brought unto him little children, that he should touch them: and the disciples rebuked them."

In the south, as in Galilee, the mothers turned with tenderness and reverence to the new Prophet and Rabbi. They were no doubt encouraged to do so by the sight of women who now, as always, accompanied Christ on His journeys. They were further drawn to Him by the goodness that beamed in His looks and breathed in His words. And so they brought their little children (*paidia*; Matt. 19:13-14; Mark 10:13-14) and infants (*brephē*; Luke 18:15) to the Savior that He might "touch," "lay his hands on them, and pray" for them. A beautiful custom led parents to bring their children at an early age to the synagogue, that they might have the blessings and prayers of the elders. "After the father of the child," says the Talmud, "had laid his hands on his child's head, he led him to the elders, one by one, and they also blessed him, and prayed that he might grow up famous in the Law, faithful in marriage, and abundant in good works." (Geike, p. 350). Children were thus brought, also, to rabbis who were especially venerated. These mothers believed in Christ's power and holiness and brought their infants and children to be blessed and be prayed for by Him.

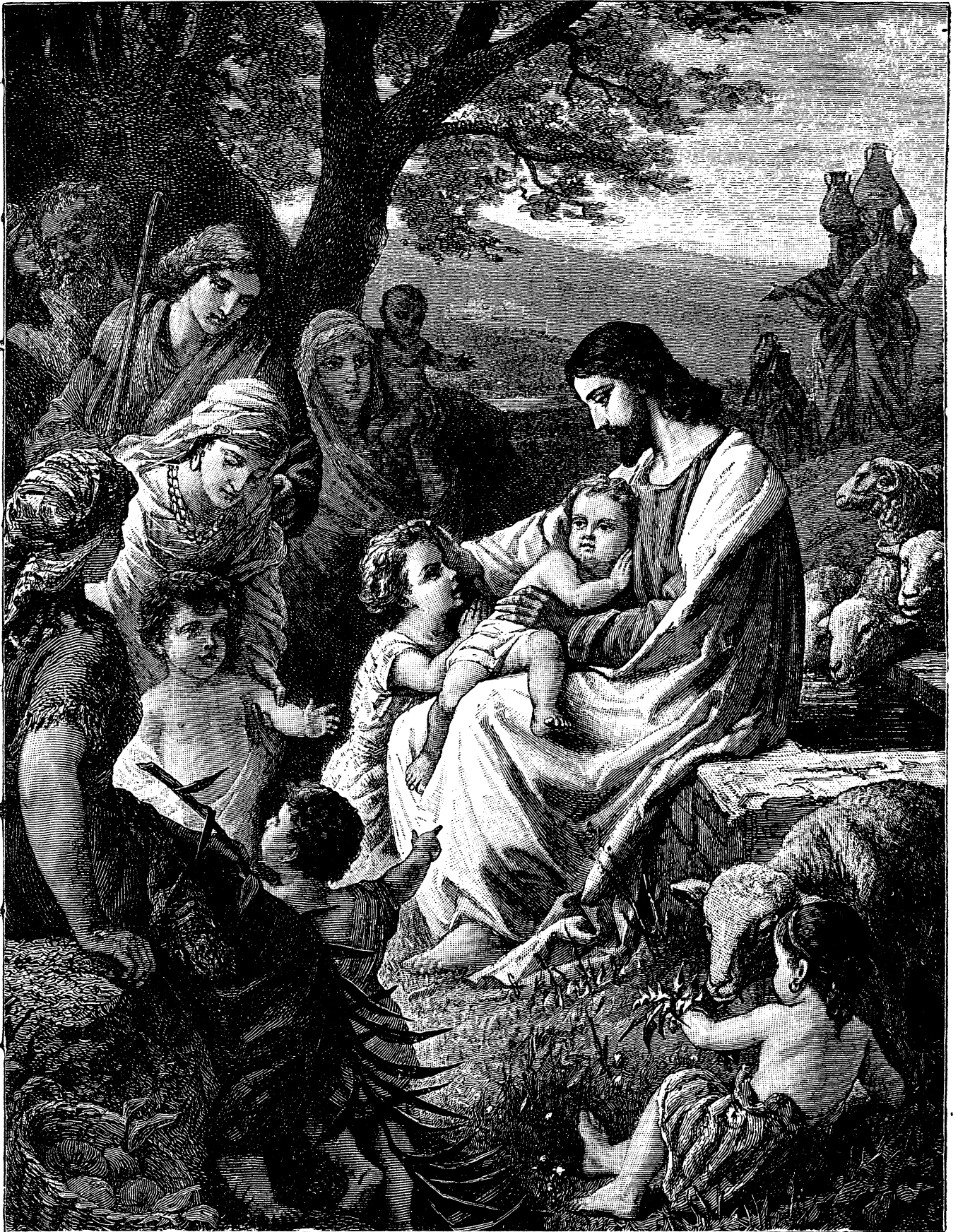
2. The displeasure of the disciples:

All three scriptures record the response of the disciples: "and the disciples rebuked them." Protective Peter was no doubt the first to come to the door as the mothers approached, Christ probably still being inside the house. The other disciples joined Peter in chiding the parents, some with infants carried in arms, others with little ones by the hand, who were about to disturb the needed rest of the Savior.

3. The dismay of the Savior: Mark 10:14.

"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 of such is the kingdom of God."

The Savior in the house must have heard the boisterous voices of Peter and the disciples as they drove back the devoted women with their children. Matthew implies that the disciples addressed the rebuke to those who brought the children but in reality directed it toward the children themselves. Thus the gentle and tender Savior "was moved with indignation." The word *eganaktēsen* is ingressive aorist and, literally rendered, suggests, "he became indignant." It is a strong word of deep emotion. (Robertson, I, 351). Calling Peter and the other disciples, who blocked the entrance to the house, Christ commanded them to allow the mothers to come. The imperfect tense of the bringing and rebuking indicates that as the parents came one by one, the disciples rebuffed them continuously. Christ commands them, literally, to "stop hindering them." Mark alone records the Savior's displeasure. It is His displeasure against the displeasure of the disciples. Peter and the others had not yet gotten a vision of Christ's love for little children. Nor did they understand that a childlike spirit must characterize the subjects of the kingdom.



CHRIST BLESSING LITTLE CHILDREN.

“SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO ME, AND FORBID THEM NOT.”—Mark 10: 14.

4. The doctrine of the kingdom: Mark 10:15-16.

"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."

"Let the little children come to me," said Jesus, "and stop forbidding them, for the kingdom of God is given only to such as have a childlike spirit and nature like theirs." Their trusting and depending character He wanted to reproduce in His disciples. Stooping down, He took them in His arms, and fervently blessed them, laying His hands upon them. The word kateulogei is used only here in the N.T. and shows Christ's earnestness in blessing each child in His arms, one by one (imperfect tense). The process would have lasted for a while but Christ would not weary quickly in such work. The disciples must have taken notice of the tender scene and the lesson of childlike faith, and humility was further enforced by the following event.

MAT. 19:16—20:16

16 And behold, one came to him and said, ^{1,2}Master³, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? 17 And he said unto him, ³Why askest thou me concerning that which is good? One there is who is good: but if thou wouldest enter into life, keep the commandments. 18 He saith unto him, Which? And Jesus said, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, 19 Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 20 The young man saith unto him, All these things have I observed: what lack I yet? 21 Jesus said unto him, If thou wouldest be perfect, go, sell that¹ thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. 22 But when the young man heard the saying, he went away sorrowful: for he was one that had great possessions.

23 And Jesus said unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. 24 And again I say unto you, 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. 25 And when the disciples heard it, they were astonished exceedingly, saying, Who then can be saved? 26 And Jesus looking upon them said to them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. 27 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee; what then shall we have? 28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which² have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ⁴ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And every one that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or ¹mother, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive ²a hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life. 30 ⁴But many shall be last that are first; and first that are last. 20:1 For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is ¹a householder, which² went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. 2 And when he had agreed with the labourers for a ³penny³ a day, he sent them into his vineyard. 3 And he went out about the third hour, and saw others

MARK 10:17-31.

17 And as he was going forth ⁴into the way, there ran one to him, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good ¹Master³, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? 18 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good save one, *even* God. 19 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honour thy father and mother. 20 And he said unto him, ¹Master³, all these things have I observed from my youth. 21 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. 22 But his countenance fell at the saying, and he went away sorrowful: for he was one that had great possessions.

23 And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! 24 And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it ¹for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! 25 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. 26 And they were astonished exceedingly, saying ²unto him, Then who can be saved? 27 Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for all things are possible with God. 28 Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. 29 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 ³sake, 30 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 ⁴world to come eternal life. 31 ⁴But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.

LUKE 18:18-30.

18 And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good ¹Master³, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? 19 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, *even* God. 20 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and mother. 21 And he said, All these things have I observed from my youth up. 22 And when Jesus heard it, he said unto him, One thing thou lackest yet: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. 23 But when he heard these things, he became exceeding sorrowful; for he was very rich.

24 And Jesus seeing him said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! 25 For it is easier for a camel to enter in through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. 26 And they that heard it said, Then who can be saved? 27 But he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God. 28 And Peter said, Lo, we have left ³our own, and followed thee. 29 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or wife, or brethren, or parents, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, 30 who shall not receive manifold more in this time, and in the ⁴world to come eternal life.

standing in the marketplace
idle; 4 and to them he said,
Go ye also into the vineyard,
and whatsoever is right I will
give you. And they went
their way. 5 Again he went
out about the sixth and the
ninth hour, and did likewise.
6 And about the eleventh
hour he went out, and found
others standing; and he saith
unto them, Why stand ye
here all the day idle? 7 They
say unto him, Because no man
hath hired us. He saith unto
them, Go ye also into the
vineyard. 8 And when even
was come, the lord of the
vineyard saith unto his
steward, Call the labourers,
and pay them their hire, be-
ginning from the last unto
the first. 9 And when they
came that *were hired* about
the eleventh hour, they re-
ceived every man a 'penny'.
10 And when the first came,
they supposed that they would
receive more; and they like-
wise received every man a
'penny'. 11 And when they
received it, they murmured
against the householder, 12
saying, These last have spent
but one hour, and thou hast
made them equal unto us,
which² have borne the bur-
den of the day and the² scorch-
ing heat. 13 But he answered
and said to one of them,
Friend, I do thee no wrong:
didst not thou agree with me
for a 'penny'? 14 Take up
that which is thine, and go
thy way; it is my will to give
unto this last, even as unto
thee. 15 Is it not lawful for
me to do what I will with
mine own? or is thine eye
evil, because I am good? 16
*So the last shall be first, and
the first last.

VII. The Young Ruler. Matt. 19:16-20:16; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-30.

1. The ruler's identity: Mark 10:17.

"And as he was going forth into the way, there ran one to him, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

As Christ was leaving the house where He had blessed the children (Mark 10:10), probably early in the morning, an unusual incident took place. Suddenly "a young man" (Matt. 19:20), who was "a ruler" (Luke 18:18), probably of the local synagogue, came "running" and with lowliest gesture kneeled at the feet of the Lord. This distinguished man who so early in life achieved such an exalted position remained in this humble position for some time (kneeled is in the imperfect, implying continuous action) while he voiced his important question. Mark alone records the place and the particulars of the meeting.

2. The ruler's inquiry: Matt. 19:16.

"And behold, one came to him and said, Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"

Combining the words of Mark and Matthew, the question put to the Lord was probably, "Good rabbi, what good thing shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Implied in the searching question is the fact that the young ruler had labored diligently to do good works of all kinds prescribed by the Law, but was not satisfied that he had done enough. "Pray tell me," he said, "what special good work can I do to inherit eternal life in the Kingdom of the Messiah?"

3. The Savior's instructions: Matt. 19:17-20.

"And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God; but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother; and, Thou shalt love they neighbor as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up. What lack I yet?"

The incident emphasizes the total misunderstanding of the rich young ruler, in a sense representing here the whole nation, and of the disciples concerning the requirements for entrance into the kingdom or the obtaining of eternal life. The ruler asks, "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" He believes, first of all, that entrance into the kingdom or eternal life is contingent upon some outstanding act and, secondly, that he is able to do it. He does not ask "How?" but "What?" Christ asked him in return, "Why do you call me good and ask me what is that one good thing by which you may inherit eternal life? Your question is superfluous, for it answers itself. There is only one who is absolutely and intrinsically good and that person is God. The good act concerning

which you inquire can be nothing else than perfect obedience to God's holy will. To keep His commandments is obviously the highest good." The young man asks, "Which?" The scribes and Pharisees had catalogued the commandments, misinterpreted them and added so many of their own that the Lord's answer must have puzzled him. Thus the question, "What sort of commandments?"

The Lord enumerated simply some of the well-known commandments when the young man apparently expected some special ceremonial injunction which would have required great pain and thus secured correspondingly great merit. But the Lord leads him from the commandments which were least likely to be broken, step by step, to the last commandment, re-phrased in a positive and more embracing form, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This was most likely to awaken a realization of his sin and recognition of his shortcoming. But his answer further confirms the blindness of his generation. He blandly asserts that he has never once violated any of these commandments enumerated by the Lord. He had followed the doctrines of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 5:20), but not the interpretation of the Lord (Matt. 5:21-7:6). The reply reveals his spiritual deficiencies: "All these things have I observed: what lack I yet?" Undoubtedly he had lived a life in strict conformity with the outward letter of the law and as far as the Pharisees were concerned, like the Apostle Paul, he was righteous before the law.

4. The Saviour's invitation: Matt. 19:21-22.

"Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions."

Mark alone records that "Jesus looking upon him loved him" (10:21). This glance of affection was occasioned by the young ruler's sincerity and honesty, notwithstanding his evident self-righteousness. His exemplary life and noble aspirations won the Savior's sympathy. And so, according to Mark and Luke the ruler is told, "One thing thou lackest." The earnest exhortation that he sell his goods and the invitation to become Christ's disciple struck right at the root of the problem. Riches kept this man from the right relationship with the Savior. His opening words "good Master" were no more than a reverential greeting. Had he recognized that deity incarnate, the only true God Himself, stood before Him, He would have hastened away to fulfill the command as he had hastened to Him to ask the question. Mark graphically pictured the closing scene. During the questioning the young man was probably still on his knees. Upon the final instruction from the Lord "his countenance fell" (Mark 10:22). The word is used only in Matt. 16:3 and applied to the lowering sky. The verb form is stugnos, meaning gloomy, like a lowering cloud (Robertson, I, 352). Dark gloom overshadowed the young ruler's face. He knelt there sad and disconsolately and then finally arose and slowly, sorrowfully, walked away. To keep earth's poverty he had spurned heaven's riches.

5. The disciples' inquiry: Matt. 19:23-27.

"And Jesus said unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?"

According to Mark, Christ "looked round about" (10:23) to see what impression the incident had made on the Twelve. The deep pity which Christ showed for the rich young ruler was then coupled with a warning to His disciples, so that the lesson of the incident might not be lost on them. It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom. Mark records that a look of blank astonishment was on their faces when they heard this statement from Christ (10:24). But He, only here calling the disciples "tekna", in tenderness attempts to alleviate their perplexity. "It is easier," Christ said, "to use a proverb you often hear, for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." It was a common Jewish proverb that a man did not even in his dreams see an elephant pass through the eye of a needle (Edersheim, II, 342). These words fell with a new and perplexing sound on the disciples' ears. Like the Jews of their day they regarded wealth as a token of God's special favor. Their Scriptures seemed to teach that obedience to the Law was followed by temporal blessings (Deut. 28). Their position therefore was: whom the Lord loveth He maketh rich. Their astonishment increased (Matt. 19:25 "They were astonished exceedingly") and they asked, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them a second time (Mark 10:27). His look was that of peculiar attentiveness and concern, for Mark relates His loving look upon the young man (10:21), His searching look upon the Twelve (10:23) and His earnest look here. "With men this is impossible," replied Christ, fixing His eyes earnestly on them, "but not with God, for with Him all things are possible." A miracle of the grace of God alone can make the impossible possible.

It is interesting to note that the words eternal life are here associated with entrance into the kingdom (Matt. 19:16, 23, 24). Christ as King, though no longer proclaiming the nearness of the kingdom, still preaches the possibility of entrance into the kingdom by faith. Throughout this conversation with the rich young ruler and the disciples Christ is nowhere asserting that eternal life is obtained by keeping the commandments of God. His personal approach to the ruler is to elicit a confession from him as to who he thought Christ was. The young man should have decided that either Christ was deity or He was not the "good Master" at all at whose feet he fell. Christ further attempted to produce a conviction of sin in this morally upright ruler. It soon became clear that his inordinate affection for wealth kept him from the Savior. Christ's plea to him to follow Him as a disciple went unheeded. The recognition of his sins and a living relationship to the Lord would have saved him. This was the main issue concerning eternal life. The disciples needed the lesson as much as the young ruler.

Peter especially had listened with deep attention to all that had transpired and had been mentally applying it to the case of his fellow-disciples and himself. When the Lord had first approached them they had been exactly in the young ruler's position. But they had given up everything for Him at His first invitation--their families, houses and occupations. "Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee." (Mark 10:28). Matthew adds Peter's question: "What then shall we have?" (19:27). Mark's words imply that Peter made a noble attempt to ask some pointed questions but, perhaps remembering former rebukes because of his hasty comments, broke off his impulsive questions. Knowing the honest simplicity of the Twelve, their Lord instead of reproving Peter's boldness, who spoke that which the others thought, "said unto them" (Matt. 19:28a) words which must have sounded inconceivably wonderful to Galilean fishermen.

6. The Savior's instructions: Matt. 19:28-20:16.

a. Temporal rewards: Mark 10:29-31.

"Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first."

For their sacrifices the disciples are promised a hundredfold compensation in this life. They would receive back richly all that they have left. Even for the leaving of relatives there would be a compensation among those who believe in Christ. The life rich in rewards would not be, however, without persecution.

b. Eternal rewards: Matt. 19:28.

"And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

There would not just be an immeasurable advantage for the disciples in this life but in the regeneration (only here and Tit. 3:15), when a new world order would be established at the time of the second advent, and Christ as the Ancient of Days of Daniel 7:13-14 would sit on His throne, the Twelve would likewise share in the Messianic reign. They would govern over Israel in the Millennium (Dan. 7:22; Is. 1:26). The disciples would be rewarded with elevated leadership but more than that, with eternal life.

The occasion must have been very instructive for Peter. He and the disciples were confronted with the insufficiency of good works and riches for eternal life. They came to realize that eternal life was a personal relationship with a person. Further, they received a

glimpse of the rewards that awaited them for their faithfulness. These promises would be a source of comfort in the days of persecution soon to follow. But the Lord also made some daring claims by asserting that He is the Son of Man of Daniel 7:22. The disciples were given to understand that when the Messiah would rule the world, they would share in governing over the nation which was now about to put the Messiah to death.

c. Sovereign rewards: Matt. 19:30.

"But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first."

To prevent self-complacency and pride in the Twelve, the Lord added a warning and illustrated it with the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. Trench pointedly remarks:

(Peter's) question itself, "What shall we have?" was not a right one; it put their relation to their Lord on a wrong footing; there was a tendency in it to bring their obedience to a calculation of so much work, so much reward. (Parables, p. 138).

The special rewards promised by the Lord were a free gift of God, not the payment of a debt. No reward from God is merited but He, as the Lord of the vineyard, bestows rewards sovereignly. This is the main point of the parabolic illustration which follows. God, like the householder, is fair in giving rewards. He is gracious and sovereign in the bestowal of rewards. And finally, outward circumstances do not determine the reward. The parable reads as follows: (Matt. 20:1-16)

For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.

And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.

But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, saying, these last have wrought but one hour, and

thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?

So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

§113. CHRIST FORETELLS HIS CRUCIFIXION.

MATT. 20:17-19.

17 And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples apart, and in^s the way he said unto them, 18 ^bBehold, 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, 19 and shall deliver him unto the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify: and the third day he shall be raised up.

MARK 10:32-34.

32 And they were in^s the way, going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus was going before them: and they were amazed; ^aand they that followed were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them the things that were to happen unto him, 33 *saying*, ^bBehold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him unto the Gentiles: 34 and they shall mock him, and shall spit upon him, and shall scourge him, and shall kill him; and after three days he shall rise again.

LUKE 18:31-34.

31 And he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, ^bBehold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all the things that are written ^cby^t the prophets shall be accomplished unto the Son of man. 32 For he shall be delivered up unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked ^{and} shamefully entreated^d, and spit upon: 33 and they shall scourge and kill him: and the third day he shall rise again. 34 And they understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, and they perceived not the things that were said.

VIII. The Predicted Suffering: Matt. 20:17-20; Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34.

1. The descent to Jericho: Mark 10:32.

"And they were in the way, going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus was going before them: and they were amazed."

The Lord with His little band of disciples and a large following of festive pilgrims is moving towards Jericho. Geike has captured the emotional impact of the somber scene (p. 358):

They were now approaching the end of their journey, for they were near Jericho, at which the road struck directly west to Jerusalem. Nisan, the month of the Passover, had already come, and only a few days more remained of our Saviour's life. Nature was putting on its spring beauty, and throngs of early pilgrims were passing to the Holy City. All around was joy and gladness, but, nevertheless, a deep gloom hung over the little company of Jesus. Everything on the way--the constant disputes with the Rabbis, the warning about Antipas, the very solemnity of the recent teachings--combined to fill their minds with an undefined terror. They had shrunk from visiting Bethany, because it was near Jerusalem; for they knew that the authorities were on the watch to arrest their Master, and put Him to death. He had had to flee from that village, first to Ephraim, and then, over the Jordan, to Perea, and yet He was now deliberately walking into the very jaws of danger. They had marched steadily southwards through the woody highlands of Gilead; they had passed the rushing waters of the Jabbok and its tributaries, and seen for a moment, once more, the spot where John had closed his mission. The distant mountains of Machaerus now threw their shadows over their route, and, everywhere, the recollections of the great herald of their Master met them. Mount Nebo, where Moses was buried, and the range of Attaroth, where John's mutilated corpse had been laid to rest, were within sight. Everything in the associations of the journey was solemn, and they knew their national history too well not to fear that, for Jesus to enter Jerusalem would be to share the sad fate of the prophets of old, whom it had received only to murder. It was clear that there could be but one issue, and no less so that He was voluntarily going to His death. The calm resolution with which He thus carried out His purpose awed them; for, so far from showing hesitation, He walked at their head, while they could only follow with excited alarm.

2. The determination of the Lord: Matt. 20:17; Mark 10:32.

"And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples apart, and in the way he said unto them."

"And they were in the way, going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus was going before them: and they were amazed; and they that followed were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them the things that were to happen unto him."

Jesus is about to make the fourth announcement of his death and resurrection. (cf. Mark 8:31; 9:13; 9:31) It will be by far the most detailed that He has given. In Matt. 16:21 He said His sufferings were a necessity. In Matt. 17:22 He told His disciples that His sufferings are impending. And now He is in the process of going to Jerusalem where those things will transpire. The destination is again mentioned here to explain the mood and manner of Jesus. Going before them, He is busy with thoughts of His impending death. Under severe emotional stress He nevertheless sets Himself to do this great work and goes to meet it.

3. The dejection of the disciples:

He is walking before them and His deportment must have been of such a nature that His mental agitation and depression in light of the final catastrophe which awaited Him must have been so evident to all, that the disciples drew back in amazement. Confusion and terror gripped their hearts as they watched the strange behavior of the Lord. Although they might have understood, however imperfectly, from His previous warnings what would await them in Jerusalem, those who followed after them, the festive band of pilgrims, must also have sensed the foreboding danger. The apostles were utterly amazed and those who followed were afraid.

4. The declarations of the Lord:

a. The revelation concerning His death: Mark 10:32b-34

"And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them the things that were to happen unto him, saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him unto the Gentiles: and they shall mock him, and shall spit upon him, and shall scourge him, and shall kill him; and after three days he shall rise again."

Both Matthew and Mark emphasize that Jesus took His disciples apart from the crowds to explain to them in greater detail than ever before what tragedy would shortly transpire. For the first time the Lord reveals that He would be delivered to the Gentiles, after being condemned by the Sanhedrin who had no right to put Him to death. Further, He mentions the mocking, spitting, and scourging, and predicts for the first time that His death would be by crucifixion (Matt. 20:19). Jesus had been thinking of these things before He spoke of them.

b. The response of the disciples: Luke 18:34

"And they understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, and they perceived not the things that were said."

The disciples rejected the words of Jesus as utterly impossible and incredible. It was completely foreign to them that the Messiah would have to suffer and die. Luke brings strikingly into view the totality of the misunderstanding of Peter and the others. Their response was one of total misunderstanding. The reason for this was that because of their own unbelief the saying was hid from them. And the natural result was that they perceived nothing that Christ said. But the startling announcement, which ran so counter to their and to common Jewish expectations concerning the Messiah, was so deeply impressed on their minds, that they remembered His words after His death. It was a puzzling experience for the disciples: first the Savior's strange behavior and then His startling announcement which ran so counter to their hopes and beliefs. No wonder Luke tries three times to explain the continued failure of Peter and the apostles to understand Jesus, though His words were plain enough.

AMBITION OF JAMES AND JOHN.

MATT. 20:20-28.

20 Then came to him the mother of the sons of Zebedee with her sons, worshipping *him*, and asking a certain thing of him. 21 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. 22 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. 23 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. 24 And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation concerning the two brethren. 25 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, ^aYe know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 26 Not so shall it be among you: ^bbut whosoever would become great among you shall be your ¹minister; 27 and whosoever would be first among you shall be your ²servant: 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.

MARK 10:35-45.

35 And there come near unto him James and John, the sons of Zebedee, saying unto him, ¹Master², we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall ask of thee. 36 And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? 37 And they said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and one on *thy* left hand, in thy glory. 38 But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink? or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? 39 And they said unto him, We are able. And Jesus said unto them, The cup that I drink ye shall drink; and ^awith the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: 40 but to sit on my right hand or on *my* left hand is not mine to give: but *it is for them* for whom it hath been prepared. 41 And when the ten heard it, they began to be moved with indignation concerning James and John. 42 And Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, ^aYe know that they which ¹are accounted to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great ones exercise authority over them. 43 But it is not so among you: ^bbut whosoever would become great among you, shall be your ¹minister: 44 and whosoever would be first among you, shall be ²servant of all. 45 For verily the Son of man³ came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

IX. The Ambitious Disciples: Matt. 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-45.

1. The request of Salome: Matt. 20:20-21.

"Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom."

The words of Christ concerning His coming in glory when the Twelve would sit on thrones and reign with Him (Matt. 19:28) neutralized for the disciples His solemn warnings concerning His impending death. This prophesied tragedy they could not and would not reconcile with His predicted triumph. Dreams of ambition had been kindled in the minds of the two disciples, James and John, who, with Peter, were the most honored of the Twelve. They were "the sons of thunder" and one of them "the beloved disciple." Peter, the third in this special group, had already had his fierce temptation (Matt. 16:23). These two sons of Zebedee had already been beset by temptation too. John had forbidden one to cast out demons because he did not follow after Christ. He and James wished to call fire down from heaven on the Samaritans who rejected Christ. With Peter they shared the same devotion and earnestness but also the same misunderstanding and lack of humility. At a terribly incongruous time now, just as Christ had predicted His death in vivid detail, they ignore His words and discuss with their mother what place of prominence they might have in the kingdom. While their Master was predicting His death they were plotting their prominence.

Salome, their mother, approaches the Savior and falls at His feet in worship. Then, looking up, she tells Him that she wants to ask "a certain thing of him." Literally she wants to ask Him something. But this "something" put forward as a small matter, was simply the choice of the two chief thrones promised in the kingdom by the Lord (Matt. 19:28). It may be safely assumed that James and John are right behind her, eagerly waiting for the Lord's reply.

2. The relationship to the Savior.

In Matthew the mother of James and John bears the unusual title, "the mother of Zebedee's children" (20:20; cf. Mark 10:35). The title is apparently used to emphasize that the special honor was not asked on the ground of earthly kinship. After all, on the basis of John 19:25 it is clear that Salome was the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Accordingly, James and John were the cousins of Jesus and Salome His aunt. Even though they were related to Jesus, they do not appeal to this kinship as a reason why Jesus should honor their request.

3. The reply of the Savior: Mark 10:38-40.

"But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus

said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: but to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared."

The request had been that James and John would occupy the two highest places in the kingdom. The Lord recognizes that ambition had blinded their eyes (literally, "you do not know what you ask for yourselves," Mark 10:38). He predicts that they shall suffer for Him. The places of authority which they seek are reserved only for those for whom they are prepared. It is important to notice that the Lord does not dispute the disciples' concept of a future earthly kingdom. He does not castigate them for holding to a literal kingdom but corrects their concept of greatness in the kingdom.

4. The rage of the ten: Mark 10:41.

"And when the ten heard it, they began to be moved with indignation concerning James and John."

James and John had striven to hide their selfish ambition by coming to Jesus through their mother. Mark speaks of the disciples coming directly to Jesus. They were, therefore, very close by their mother but she served as their spokesman. It was inevitable that the ten should soon hear of this proud request and become indignant. "They were moved with indignation," literally, they showed "angry resentment." They may have felt that James and John had taken unfair advantage of their relation to Jesus. They had the same ambitions as the two and felt that James and John were attempting to usurp that place of prominence that each desired for himself. While Peter is not specifically mentioned, it would be unusual if he were not the first one to voice his indignation at the two and thereby display his envy and jealousy.

5. The revelation concerning the kingdom: Mark 10:41-45.

"And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

With unspeakable tenderness and patience Jesus called around Him the Twelve, both offenders and offended, and as He had done with the two before, spoke to them with great kindness rather than in harsh rebuke. He pointed out how utterly they had misapprehended the nature of His kingdom, notwithstanding all His instructions in the past. The incident shows that Peter and the disciples were prepared for the coming of the kingdom but not for positions in it. They had accepted Christ as King but they lacked the humility of proper subjects in the kingdom. Earlier

they had disputed about the highest dignity in the kingdom (Matt. 18:1). Here the controversy revolved around the supreme rule in the kingdom. In chapter 18 the Lord set the example of children before them; in chapter 20 a contrast with earthly rulers is made. The principle which the Twelve needed to learn was that greatness comes by humility. It is interesting to note the progression in the Lord's instruction. Greatness is dependent upon being a servant (diakonos) of others but primacy comes from being a bonds slave (doulos) of others (Toussaint, pp. 271-272). This is how greatness is to be attained. It was because of this that Christ could not give the places or prominence to James and John.

One of the most significant lessons of the incident is that because none was more humble than the Savior, He would have the pre-eminent place. "For verily, the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Here Christ not merely expresses His humility but also gives for the first time the reason for His death. He had stated before that He would be crucified, but He had never said what this would accomplish. Now He reveals that His life will be a ransom for many. Here is Christ's own view of His death. It is a substitutionary atonement. The "ransom" (lutron) is the price which, according to the papyri, is "paid for a slave who is then set free by the one who bought him, the purchase money for manumitting slaves" (Robertson, Matthew, p. 163). There is the idea of exchange also in the use of "for" (anti). Christ gave His own life as the price of freedom for men enslaved in sin. Jesus gives here the full significance of His death to His disciples. If humility is the prerequisite to greatness, Christ is the greatest since He is infinitely more humble than any human, giving His life for many.

§115. THE BLIND MEN NEAR JERICOHO.

MATT. 20:29-34.

29 And as they went out from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. 30 And behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, Lord, have mercy on us, thou son of David. 31 And the multitude rebuked them, that they should hold their peace: but they cried out the more, saying, Lord, have mercy on us, thou son of David. 32 And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I should do unto you? 33 They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. 34 And Jesus, being moved with compassion, touched their eyes: and straightway they received their sight, and followed him. (+§119)

MARK 10:46-52.

46 And they come to Jericho: and as he went out from Jericho, with his disciples and a great multitude, the son of Timæus, Bartimæus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the way side. 47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth³, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. 48 And many rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried out the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. 49 And Jesus stood still, and said, Call ye him. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good cheer: rise, he calleth thee. 50 And he, casting away his garment, sprang up, and came to Jesus. 51 And Jesus answered him, and said, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? And the blind man said unto him, ¹Rabboni, that I may receive my sight. 52 And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath ²made thee whole. And straightway he received his sight, and followed him in the way. (+§119)

LUKE 18:35-43.

35 And it came to pass, as he drew nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging: 36 and hearing a multitude going by, he inquired what this meant. 37 And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. 38 And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. 39 And they that went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried out the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. 40 And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, 41 What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. 42 And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath ²made thee whole. 43 And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.

X. The Blind Beggars: Matt. 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43.1. The place of the miracle:

The Lord was now coming from the hills of Perea down to the Jordan River and from there to Jericho, where His last public miracle would be performed. The scene which He and His disciples along with the festive throng witnessed has been well described by Geike (pp. 361-362):

The upland pastures of Perea were now behind them, and the road led down to the sunken channel of the Jordan, and the "divine district" of Jericho. This small but rich plain was the most luxuriant spot in Palestine. Sloping gently upwards from the level of the Dead Sea, 1,350 feet below the Mediterranean, to the stern background of the hills of Quarantana, it had the climate of Lower Egypt, and displayed the vegetation of the tropics. Its fig-trees were pre-eminently famous; it was unique in its groves of palms of various kinds; its crops of dates were a proverb; the balsam-plant, which grew principally here, furnished a costly perfume, and was in great repute for healing wounds; maize yielded a double harvest; wheat ripened a whole month earlier than in Galilee, and innumerable bees found a paradise in the many aromatic flowers and plants, not a few unknown elsewhere, which filled the air with odours and the landscape with beauty.

Rising like an amphitheatre from amidst this luxuriant scene, lay Jericho, the chief place east of Jerusalem, on swelling slopes, seven or eight miles distance from the Jordan, and seven hundred feet above the river bed, from which its gardens and groves, thickly interspersed with mansions, and covering seventy furlongs from north to south, and twenty from east to west, were divided by a strip of wilderness. The town had had an eventful history. Once the stronghold of the Canaanites, it was still, in the days of Christ, surrounded by towers and castles. Thrax and Taurus, two of them, at the entrance of the city, lay in ruins since the time of Pompey, but the old citadel Dock, towered aloft--dark with the recollection that its heroic builder, Simon Maccabaeus, and his two sons, had been murdered in its chambers. Kypros, the last fortress built by Herod the Great, who had called it after his mother, rose white in the sun on the south of the town. The palace of the Asmonean kings stood amidst gardens, but it had been deserted by royalty since the evil genius of her house, Alexandra, the mother-in-law of Herod, and mother of Mariamne, had lived in it. The great palace of Herod, in the far-famed groves of palms, had been plundered and burned down in the tumults that followed his death, but in its place a grander structure, built by Archelaus, had risen amidst even finer gardens, and more copious and delightful streams. A great theatre and spacious circus, built by Herod, scandalized the Jews, not less by their unholy amusements than by the remembrance that the elders of the nation had been shut up in the latter by the dying tyrant, to be cut down at his death, in revenge for the hatred borne him. Nor was the murder of the young Asmonean, Aristobulus, in the great pools which surrounded the old Asmonean palace, forgotten; nor the time when Cleopatra had wrung the rich oasis from the hands of Herod, by her spell over her lover, Antony.

A great stone aqueduct of eleven arches brought a copious supply of water to the city, and the Roman military road ran through it. The houses themselves, however, though showy, were not substantial, but were built mostly of sundried brick, like those of Egypt; so that now, as in the similar cases of Babylon, Ninevah, or Egypt, after long desolation hardly a trace of them remains.

The city of Jericho is of such interest and importance to the next two incidents that another descriptive account should be added (Edersheim, II, 350-351):

We can picture to ourselves the scene, as our Lord on that afternoon in early spring beheld it. There it was, indeed, already summer, for, as Josephus tells us, even in winter the inhabitants could only bear the lightest clothing of linen. We are approaching it from the Jordan. It is protected by walls, flanked by four forts. These walls, the theatre, and the amphitheatre, have been built by Herod; the new palace and its splendid gardens are the work of Archelaus. All around wave groves of feathery palms, rising in stately beauty; stretch gardens of roses, and especially sweet-scented balsam-plantations--the largest behind the royal gardens, of which the perfume is carried by the wind almost out to sea, and which may have given to the city its name (Jericho, 'the perfumed'). It is the Eden of Palestine, the very fairyland of the old world. And how strangely is this gem set! Deep down in that hollowed valley, through which tortuous Jordan winds, to lose his waters in the slimy mass of the Sea of Judgment. The river and the Dead Sea are nearly equidistant from the town--about six miles. Far across the river rise the mountains of Moab, on which lies the purple and violet colouring. Towards Jerusalem and northwards stretch those bare limestone hills, the hiding-place of robbers along the desolate road towards the City. There, and in the neighbouring wilderness of Judaea, are also the lonely dwellings of anchorites--while over all this strangely varied scene has been flung the many-coloured mantle of a perpetual summer. And in the streets of Jericho a motley throng meets: pilgrims from Galilee and Peraea, priests who have a 'station' here, traders from all lands, who have come to purchase or to sell, or are on the great caravan-road from Arabia and Damascus--robbers and anchorites, wild fanatics, soldiers, courtiers, and busy publicans--for Jericho was the central station for the collection of tax and custom, both on native produce and on that brought from across Jordan. And yet it was a place for dreaming also, under that glorious summer-sky, in those scented groves--when these many figures from far-off lands and that crowd of priests, numbering, according to tradition, half those in Jerusalem, seemed fleeting as in a vision, and (as Jewish legend had it) the sound of the Temple-music came from Moriah, borne in faint echoes on the breeze, like the distant sound of many waters.

2. The problems of the account.

A careful reading of the account of the healing of blind Bartimaeus at the city of Jericho, mentioned by all three of the Synoptic Gospels,

shows three apparent discrepancies which demand special attention. These are: first, according to Matthew two blind men are healed while Mark and Luke speak of only one. A second difference exists between the evangelists in the recorded words of the beggars and of the Lord. And a third divergency had to do with the fact that Matthew and Mark relate the miracles to Christ's departure from Jericho while Luke relates it to His entrance into Jericho. Zane Hodges, in "The Blind Men at Jericho," Bibliotheca Sacra, Oct.-Dec. 1965, pp. 319-330, has harmonized the three apparently divergent accounts. The Synoptics themselves give enough clues to enable a reconciliation of the apparent discrepancies.

Matthew's account begins, "And as they departed from Jericho. . ." (Matt. 20:29), and Mark has, ". . . And as he went out of Jericho. . ." (Mark 10:46), but Luke's narrative begins, "And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside begging" (Luke 18:35). "It has been suggested that Mark and Matthew refer to the old Jericho, the ruins of which have been discovered, while Luke alludes to the new Roman Jericho." (Robertson, Matthew, p. 163). Hodges, *op. cit.*, disagrees with this interpretation but it appears to be the best explanation.

While Mark and Luke speak of only one blind man, it does not follow that they have at the same time denied that there were two. On the other hand, Matthew, a converted publican, and an eyewitness, can certainly be credited with the ability to correctly handle the sum of two. The accounts are not contradictory at all but supplementary. Matthew, who wrote for the Jews, probably mentions both beggars because the number two had a legal significance to the Jewish mind (John 8:17; Deut. 17:6). The evidential value of a miracle experience by two men would be heightened for a Jew who was accustomed to hear the truth from two witnesses. Matthew is interested in the evidence of the event. Jesus once again showed Himself to be the King of the Jews. Mark and Luke are primarily interested in the individual case and personal response of faith, as indicated by their addition of numerous graphic details to the account.

3. The persons in need: Matt. 20:29-31.

"And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David. And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David."

As the Messiah leaves the old Canaanite Jericho, with a huge crowd preceding and following Him, two blind men, sitting at their accustomed places "by the way begging," wondered at the noise and "inquired what this meant." Being informed that it was Jesus, the miracle worker who passed by, and having no doubt heard of the cure at Jerusalem, of the man who had been born blind, they at once decided to call on Him for help. Both Matthew and Mark picture the crowd as shouting, "Jesus is passing by!" (The explanatory that--hoti--is equivalent to quotation

marks. The title given by the throng to Christ shows Israel's attitude of rejection. By use of the human title "Jesus" they show that they fail to recognize Him as the Messiah, the Son of David. Later they take up the cry in hysterical frenzy, but not in true belief (Toussaint, p. 274).

The Lucan account implies that the beggars were somewhere within the city. The blind men heard the multitude passing through, and thus asked what it meant (18:36). A large festive band was approaching the city. Inside sat two blind beggars. They inquired about the commotion and were told Jesus passed by. Not knowing where Jesus was in this crowd, they cried continuously, so that He might not fail to hear their cry: "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on us." The crowd preceding the Savior tries to silence the beggars (Luke 18:39, "they that went before"). But their expectant faith led them to raise their cry for mercy all the louder. The verbal differences between the cries and exchange of words with the Savior, as recorded by the Synoptics, can easily be explained, as Hodges (p. 326) has done:

. . . If we begin with the cries of the beggars as they sat by the roadside, since these were obviously uttered repeatedly, we may well imagine that the phraseology varied with almost every utterance. It imposes no strain at all upon the historical imagination to suppose that we can hear each of them crying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David!--Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!--Son of David, Jesus, have mercy on me!--Have mercy on us. . ." and so on. Slightly less obvious, but no less probable, is the likelihood of some repetition and variation in the exchange between the Lord and the two men. The noise and confusion of the surrounding multitude might well necessitate the repetition of a question or an answer. Moreover, since both blind men doubtless had to be conducted through the press to have audience with Jesus, we can easily imagine a sequence something like this. Bartimaeus reaches Jesus first. "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" "Rabboni--Lord! that I might receive my sight." A moment later the second blind man reaches the Lord and stands before him with Bartimaeus. Jesus, speaking now to him: "What will ye that I shall do unto you?" "Lord, that our eyes may be opened."

Luke adds one additional personal touch to the story. As soon as the summons from the Master came, Bartimaeus and probably the other blind beggar as well in a moment cast aside their upper garment which would have hindered them, and leaping up were led to the One from whom they expected help (18:50).

4. The performance of the miracle:

The blind beggars display more spiritual sight than the seeing multitude. They address Him as "Son of David," which is His Messianic title. As they stood before their Messiah, Jesus was moved with compassion and touched their eyes (Matt. 20:34), telling them "receive thy sight"; "go thy way," "thy faith hath made thee whole" (Luke 18:42; Mark 10:52).

5. The praise to God: Luke 18:43.

"And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God."

The blind men did not go their way but followed Jesus their Messiah. Moreover, they gave expression to their genuine faith by glorifying God. He gave God the honor, praise and thanks for healing him through His Messiah. The vast multitude that were present observed this marvelous cure of the blind beggars and acknowledged with praise the miraculous work accomplished by God through Jesus of Nazareth.

It is almost as if the Holy Spirit wants the reader to hear at the gate of Jericho the prelude to the Hosannas which were soon to resound far more mightily at the gates of Jerusalem (Luke 19:37).

§ 116. VISIT TO ZACCHÆUS.

LUKE 19: 1-10.

1 And he entered and was passing through Jericho. 2 And behold, a man called by name Zacchæus; and he was a chief publican, and he was rich. 3 And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the crowd, because he was little of stature. 4 And he ran on before, and climbed up into a sycomore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. 5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. 6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. 7 And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner. 8 And Zacchæus 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. 9 And Jesus said unto him, To-day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.

XI. The Searching Zacchaeus. Luke 19:1-10.

1. The prominence of Zacchaeus: Luke 19:1-2.

"And he entered and was passing through Jericho. And behold, a man called by name Zacchaeus; and he was a chief publican, and he was rich."

Jericho was a Levitical city and therefore a residence of a great many priests. It was also a strategic center for trade located on the main road from Trans-Jordan to Jerusalem. It had much the same place in southern Palestine as did Capernaum in Galilee, which was the center of the trade between the sea coast and the northern interior, as far as Damascus. The transit of much trade necessitated many publicans who had to collect the customs. Amongst them there was a certain Zacchaeus, who occupied the position of chief of the tax and customs department. His very name shows that he was a Jew. Yet that very name Zacchaeus, "Zakkai," "the righteous one," sounded like mockery. He had grown rich by lawful and unlawful means through his infamous profession. In the eyes of his fellow-townsmen he was not only an extortioner, but, by serving the Romans, a traitor to his race. Although he had probably other publicans serving under him, his personal character was so depraved that he had wrung money from the people of Jericho by swearing falsely before the magistrates.

2. The plans of Zacchaeus: Luke 19:3-4.

"And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the crowd, because he was little of stature. And he ran on before, and climbed up into a sycomore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way."

Edersheim (II, 351-352) describes the situation in Jericho just prior to the passover feast:

It was the custom, when a festive band passed through a place, that the inhabitants gathered in the streets to bid their brethren welcome. And on that afternoon, surely, scarce any one in Jericho but would go forth to see this pilgrim-band. Men--curious, angry, half-convinced; women, holding up their babes, it may be for a passing blessing, or pushing forward their children that in years they might say they had seen the Prophet of Nazareth; traders, soldiers--a solid wall of onlookers before their gardens was this "crowd" along the road by which Jesus "was to pass."

Perhaps it was right after the healing of the two blind beggars when the festive throng continued on its way. The only one in the crowd who seemed unwelcome and out of place was Zacchaeus. If, as Christ had taught, it was harder for any rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, what of Zacchaeus who had become rich through unlawful means? And yet it was he who more

than anyone else desired to see this Jesus of Nazareth of whom he had previously heard but who passed so seldom this way.

Luke's narrative is very detailed and descriptive. It speaks of Zacchaeus actively and continuously seeking a vantage point from which he might catch a glimpse of the miracle worker. His diminutive size and the vastness of the crowd made him take extreme measures "to see who Jesus was," that is, which one of the crowd He was. But why this interest? Was it curiosity only? Certainly it was this but probably more. The working of his conscience undoubtedly drew him to the one who, unlike the harsh leaders of Israel, received publicans and sinners. There was an irresistible compulsion, an inward drawing of the Holy Spirit, which gave him this strange desire to see Jesus.

As Jesus passed, Zacchaeus was busy seeking ways to see Jesus. Unable to look over the shoulders of others and unable to push his way through the crowd, he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree. Vincent (pp. 408-409) comments on the sycamore tree, which must not be confused with the sycamine tree in Luke 17:6. The word sycamore comes

From sukē, fig-tree, and moron, the mulberry. The fig-mulberry, resembling the fig in its fruit, and the mulberry in its leaves. Some old writers derived it from mōros, foolish, because it produced worthless figs. Dr. Thomson says that it bears several crops yearly, which grow on short stems along the trunk and the large branches. They are very insipid, and none but the poorer classes eat them. Hence Amos expresses the fact that he belongs to the humblest of class of the community, by calling himself a gatherer of sycamore fruit (Amos vii. 14). It grows with its large branches low down and wide open, so that Zacchaeus could easily have climbed into it. It is a favorite and pleasant conceit with old commentators that Zacchaeus' sycamore that day bore precious fruit.

3. The perceptiveness of the Lord: Luke 19:5-6.

"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."

Zacchaeus' singular action of climbing the tree must have drawn some attention to him. But this short and despised person takes no notice of the mockery which ^{he} surely must have received from the jubilant throng. He is happy that he at last will have his wish. Even without the people around Jesus pointing up at Zacchaeus, the Lord knows he is there and sees the desires of the publican who is despised by everyone else. Christ stops at the foot of the tree and with royal imperative commands Zacchaeus: "Come down in a hurry! It is necessary that I stay at your house tonight." The most disliked person in Jericho became the distinguished host of the Lord.

Whatever Zacchaeus' attitude had been before, after the Master had addressed him, he "received him joyfully." Respect and joy filled

his heart and without delay he showed the Lord to his house to entertain Him.

4. The prattle of the crowd: Luke 19:7.

"And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner."

The crowds around Jesus who had just glorified God because of the miracle wrought on the two blind men now murmured about the Lord's visit to Zacchaeus' house. Christ and Zacchaeus, with the disciples and multitudes following, had probably reached the entrance to Zacchaeus' house. In disbelief people pressed closely around Christ.

Jesus was the hero of this crowd from Galilee on their way to the passover. But here he had shocked their sensibilities and those of the people of Jericho by inviting himself to be the guest of this chief publican and notorious sinner who had robbed nearly everybody in the city by exorbitant taxes. (Robertson, Luke, p. 240).

Christ was braving a harsh public opinion and incurring the bitterest hatred of the Jews by openly disregarding the laws of ceremonial defilement. Luke says that they all murmured. The whole crowd expressed their displeasure over the fact that Christ treated one with honor whom they denounced as accursed. The word "murmured" is an onomatopoeic word from dia-gogguzō. The simple gogguzō is used of the cooing of the doves or the hum of the bees. (Robertson, *ibid.*) There was a noisy murmuring as each voiced his disapproval, heard most certainly by the Lord and Zacchaeus.

5. The proclamation of Zacchaeus: Luke 19:8.

"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 ought of any man, I restore fourfold."

Apparently Jesus and Zacchaeus were about to enter the house when the murmur became such a roar that Zacchaeus turned around and faced the whole crowd. His standing (statheis) is a formal act. The word is used of one who is about to make a solemn declaration. As a spontaneous act of repentance over his past life and gratitude for the honor bestowed upon him, Zacchaeus vowed to give half of his goods to the poor and restore fourfold to that person from whom he had taken in the past by heartless extortion. "If I have wrongfully exacted" is a first class condition and assumes to results to have been true. Thus the words might be rendered, "Whatever I have taken by extortion I restore it here and now fourfold." According to the Mosaic law this was the restoration required of a thief (Ex. 22:1; Num. 5:6f; 2 Sam. 12:6). This immediate restitution is good proof of a change of heart. He admits his guilt in the past and acts immediately, handing out money to those who need it and restoring money to those from whom it had been wrongfully taken. Zacchaeus the publican robber has become the pious almsgiver.

6. The promise of the Savior: Luke 19:9-10.

"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."

By these words the Lord clearly teaches that Zacchaeus had indeed been lost. But now he and his house had received the Savior in faith and Zacchaeus the publican had now become a spiritual son of Abraham who is the father of all them that believe.

The Savior's words are directed more toward the crowd than toward the publican and his joyful family. It is in reality a vindication of His coming to Zacchaeus' house. It mattered little to the Savior what caste or class a sinner belonged. As long as the sinner desired salvation, it would be freely given to him, for to this end did Christ come into the world, to seek and to save that which was lost. This is why He had to come to this house. The passion account thus begins with a touching act of salvation and ultimately concludes with the triumphant fact of salvation.

MATT. 21:1-11.

1 And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and came unto Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, 2 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. 3 And if any one say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. 4 Now this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken ¹by the prophet, saying, 5 Tellye 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. 6 And the disciples went, and did even as Jesus appointed them, 7 and brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their garments; and he sat thereon. 8 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. 9 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.

MARK 11:1-11.

1 And when they draw nigh unto Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth two of his disciples, 2 and saith unto them, Go your way into the village that is over against you: and straightway as ye enter into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon no man ever yet sat; loose him, and bring him. 3 And if any one say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye, The Lord hath need of him; and straightway he ²will send him ³back hither. 4 And they went away, and found a colt tied at the door without in the open street; and they loose him. 5 And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? 6 And they said unto them even as Jesus had said: and they let them go. 7 And they bring the colt unto Jesus, and cast on him their garments: and he sat upon him. 8 And many spread their garments upon the way; and others ¹branches, which they had cut from the fields. 9 And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: 10 Blessed is the kingdom that cometh, *the kingdom* of our father David: Hosanna in the highest.

LUKE 19:29-44.

29 And it came to pass, when he drew nigh unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called *the mount of Olives*², he sent two of the disciples, 30 saying, Go your way into the village over against you; in the³ which as ye enter ye shall find a colt tied, whereon no man ever yet sat: loose him, and bring him. 31 And if any one ask you, Why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say, The Lord hath need of him. 32 And they that were sent went away, and found even as he had said unto them. 33 And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt? 34 And they said, The Lord hath need of him. 35 And they brought him to Jesus: and they threw their garments upon the colt, and set Jesus thereon. 36 And as he went, they spread their garments in the way. 37 And as he was now drawing nigh, *even* at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the ²mighty works which they had seen; 38 saying, Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. 39 And some of the Pharisees from the multitude said unto him, ³Master¹, rebuke thy disciples. 40 And he answered and said, I tell you that, if these shall hold their peace, the stones will cry out.

41 And when he drew nigh, he saw the city and wept over it, 42 saying, ⁴If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. 43 For the days shall come

JOHN 12:12-19.

12 On the morrow ⁴a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13 took the branches of the palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried out, Hosanna: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel. 14 And Jesus, having found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, 15 Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt. 16 These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him. 17 The multitude therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb, and raised him from the dead, bare witness. 18 For this cause also the multitude went and met him, for that they heard that he had done this sign. 19 The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, ⁵Behold how ye prevail nothing: lo, the world is gone after him.

10 And when he was
come into Jerusalem,
all the city was stirred,
saying, Who is this? 11
And the multitudes
said, This is the pro-
phet, Jesus, from
Nazareth of Galilee.
(+ § 121)

11 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 Beth-
any with the twelve.

upon thee, when thine
enemies shall cast up
a bank about thee,
and compass thee
round, and keep thee
in on every side, 44
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.

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

Matt. 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-44; John 12:12-19.

I. Introduction:

1. The period in Christ's life:

At last the time of the end had come. According to the chronological reference in John 12:1, Christ and His disciples had come to Bethany "six days before the passover." Accompanied by the long caravan of pilgrims, they had followed the wild gorge of the Kirdon on a steep and narrow bridle path. Along the way they perhaps rested at the khan pictured in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The rest of the journey to Bethany was easy compared to the long and rugged ascent of the first part. Just before leaving Jericho Christ had taught the parable of the talents (Luke 18:11-28). No conversation along the route is recorded, but undoubtedly everyone was concerned with the passover. John switches the scene from the band of pilgrims and disciples who accompanied Christ to the holy city, where many had already arrived for the purpose of purification (11:55) and of trade with the first arrivals of pilgrims from abroad. There was an evident excitement among the people in the temple as they asked each other, "What think ye? That he will not come to the feast?" This popular wish to see Jesus greatly alarmed the chief priests and Pharisees, who issued orders that Christ should be immediately arrested when found (11:56-57).

In the midst of the commotion the Lord quietly entered Bethany. The difficult journey was over before three in the afternoon, for it was the rule to have three hours of rest before the Sabbath began, at six (Geike, p. 370). Some of the festive pilgrims undoubtedly stayed in Bethany, others pressed on to Jerusalem, while many pitched their tents on the western slope of the Mount of Olives, where they could feast their eyes with a sight of Jerusalem's beauty.

Jesus was at home in Bethany. In the house of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus a feast was prepared for Him. It was here that Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with her precious perfume. It was here that Judas protested the apparent waste and revealed his true nature. The banquet did not pass unnoticed. The news of Christ's presence was passed from mouth to mouth and the street of the village soon became thronged with curious visitors who came, not only to see Christ, but also to see Lazarus, whom they heard He had raised from the dead. John mentions that it was the common people who came (12:9) and the high priests conspired the death both of Lazarus and the Man who had raised him. Because of Lazarus "many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus" (12:11). The term "believed on Jesus" is John's customary term for a deep and genuine faith. Lazarus was a double embarrassment for the Sadducees. Not only did he cause men to believe in Christ but he was also a standing condemnation of their doctrine. They denied that there would be a resurrection and yet here was a man who had been raised from the dead. No wonder they plotted against his life also (cf. 11:53). Many of the Jews, i.e. those normally opposed to Jesus, believed and departed with joy in their hearts.

Christ's life would shortly be consummated but His acts of deliverance never ceased. Many found salvation in the little village of Bethany, much as the two blind men and Zacchaeus in Jericho. Now, at the beginning of the Passion week, Christ was about to make His royal entry into Jerusalem as King of the Jews, as heir of David's royal line, with all the symbolic typical, and prophetic import attached to it. Yet soon it became apparent: the "triumphal entry" resulted in the nation's rejection of the king and the king's rejection of the nation.

2. The parallel passages:

All four evangelists carry the account of the royal entry. The Markan narrative combines the greatest vividness of detail with a certain restraint in identifying Christ as the Messiah, though the Messianic intension is perfectly clear. The Synoptics complement each other in matter of detail and accompany Christ from Bethany, while John seems to follow the multitude which approached Jesus from Jerusalem.

II. The Places of the Triumphal Entry.

1. Jerusalem.

The road from Jericho brought the party to the east slope of the Mount of Olives, within three miles of Jerusalem. It was to this city that the just King of Salvation should come, as foretold by Zechariah. It was here that Christ presented Himself as Messiah and that, finally, one of His saddest words found fulfillment: "It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem" (Luke 13:33).

2. Bethphage.

Christ and the festive band approached the villages nearest to the city on the Jericho road. They came to Bethphage and Bethany first. Bethphage is mentioned first, perhaps because it is better known or because, Jerusalem having been spoken of first, it would be natural to mention the place closest to it. Bethphage was a sabbatical distance limit east of Jerusalem and surrounded by some kind of a wall. The Talmud mentions the place several times. Its exact location is unknown. Sometimes it is spoken of as distinct from Jerusalem and at others it is described as part of the city. Perhaps the name was given alike to the district generally and to a little village close to Jerusalem where the district began (Edersheim, II, 354). Robertson suggests that Bethany ("house of unripe young figs") "apparently lay on the eastern slope of Olivet or at the foot of the mountain, a little further from Jerusalem than Bethany" (Matthew, p. 165). Other commentators locate it somewhere near the south-eastern corner of the walls of Jerusalem.

3. Bethany.

Bethany, which means "house of dates," may well be called the Judean home of Jesus, for He often lodged here. The town, perched on a broken rocky plateau east of Jerusalem, faces the east on the southeast slope of the Mount of Olives. If one were to name the localities in

English, one would say that the road led from Datetown across Figtown, towards the Mount of Olives Plantation (Lange, Life of the Lord, III, 31).

4. The Mount of Olives.

The hill to the east of Jerusalem is called in the Old Testament "the olive trees" (II Sam. 15:30), "the mount of the olive trees" (Zech. 14:4), or simply "the mountain," as in the apocryphal II Esdras 18:15. The Old Testament name is pregnant with Messianic significance. It is that hill to which the Messiah will return in glory to establish His kingdom (Zech. 14).

III. The Preparation for the Triumphal Entry. Mark 11:1-7.

1. The dispatching of the disciples. Mark 11:1

"And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples. . ."

Evidently Jesus departed from the home of His friends at Bethany in the morning. It was then that He dispatched two of His disciples to obtain the means needful for the occasion. The disciples were possibly Peter and John, the same who were later dispatched to make ready the upper room (Luke 22:8). The word sent (apostellei) is a descriptive historic present, presenting a vivid account of the events of which Mark imagines himself to be present. All of the disciples were apparently arranged in pairs, (Matt. 10:2-4) and the going in pairs reflects Jewish custom (Granfield, Mark, p. 198).

a. The delineation of their duty. Mark 11:2-3

"And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him. And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither."

1) The designation of the town:

Jesus told the two disciples to go into the village over against them. Depending on which town was situated closer to Jerusalem, the town could have been either Bethphage or Bethany. Since Christ and the disciples spent the night in Bethany, the village was probably Bethphage, which may have been situated on the opposite side of the ascent, between Bethany which they had just left, and Jerusalem, which was their destination. Jesus and the Twelve, leaving the hospitable shelter in Bethany passed out of the town to the little valley beneath it, with its clusters of fig, almond, and olive trees, soon to burst into leaf, and its evergreen palms. Somewhere near lay the village of Bethphage, probably slightly larger than Bethany, to which the two disciples had just been sent.

2) The description of the circumstances:

Immediately upon entering the village, they would find a colt, having been tied there. Matthew mentions "an ass tied, and a colt with her" (21:2). Evidently he introduces the second animal to emphasize the fact that the colt was really unused, as the synoptics indicate. The mother animal was necessary since the unbroken young donkey would not have submitted to being ridden amid the cheering crowds unless she were along (Johnson, "The Triumphal Entry," Bib. Sac., July, 1967, p. 222).

Mark is very emphatic here. This colt was never yet ridden upon by men: "upon which no one of men ever sat." The emphasis on the unused colt has deep religious significance. Only an animal or article that had never been used could serve a sacred purpose (Num. 19:2; Deut. 21:3; I Sam. 6:7; II Sam. 6:3). Further, it was a custom in ancient times that kings should be honored this way: with an unused animal, roads especially built for them, and the like. Thus Zechariah, seeing this combination of the religious and royal element, speaks in prophetic anticipation of this significant event:

Rejoice greatly, o daughter of Zion; shout, o daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. (Zech. 9:9)

The colt would be found tied; it would be unused; and Christ's choice of such an animal not ridden by any before Him is a claim to His uniqueness, His Messiahship, and royalty, and was certainly understood as such by the disciples and people.

The command to the two disciples is explicit: Go! Loose! Bring! The present imperatives "go" and "bring" graphically look at the process that was involved, whereas the intervening aorist imperative "loose" looks at the act of freeing the colt.

The disciples were also instructed what to say if anyone should ask them. The phrase "if any one say unto you" (Mark 11:3) is a third class condition, referring to something which might or might not happen. They might be asked concerning their strange activity. Their answer was to be simple: "the Lord has need of it." It is not certain how the word kurios (Lord) would be understood by those who heard it. It is derived from kuros, meaning power or authority, and used of masters of slaves (Matt. 10:24), masters of the harvest (Matt. 9:30), the vineyard (Matt. 20:8), the emperor (Acts 13:27), and of God (Matt. 11:20, 25). It seems as if the disciples used the appellation of Jesus and He accepted it and used it Himself. The name denotes power and authority and even as Christ sends His disciples for the animals He manifests great authority. The King who has no royal stable, who walked on earth as one having nothing, to Him belong all things. And to such a walk He is educating

all of His disciples. A further lesson comes out of this passage. One should note Christ's meticulous care even in the smallest details. The colt would be returned immediately upon use, either to the place where Jesus is waiting or to the near village.

At this point in the narrative Matthew makes apologetic introduction of an Old Testament prophecy:

"All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass." --Mt. 21:4-5.

The quotation is composed of two Old Testament passages: Isaiah 62:11 and Zechariah 9:9. The Evangelist shows that the Lord purposely did these things in order that the prophecy of Zechariah might be fulfilled.

The riding of the ass into Jerusalem was not only fulfilled prophecy; it was a giant object lesson designed to imprint the event upon the minds of the viewers in the style of some of the acted messages by Old Testament prophets (cf. Jer. 19:1-3; Ezek. 4:1-3). (Johnson, op. cit., p. 222). Afterwards the real meaning of the events would dawn upon the Twelve.

b. The discovery of the disciples: Mark 11:4-6.

"And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him. And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go."

When the two disciples find the ass and her foal, the events transpire exactly as they were predicted by the Lord. The Synoptics emphasize this correspondence between prediction and fulfillment. It is not necessary to assume the Lord had made prior arrangements with the owners. They were probably earlier followers of the Lord and were proud to have the colt used. The two disciples found the she ass and her foal, "tied at the door without in the open street." Robertson (Mark, p. 357) notes that this is a carefully drawn picture. The colt was outside the house in the street, but fastened to the door. The better class of houses were built about an open court, from which a passageway under the house led to the street outside. It was at this outside opening to the street that the colt was tied. The word open (amphodos) is difficult. It apparently means road around a thing, a crooked street, as most of them were. Edersheim (II, 365) interprets the word as a reference to "where two roads met," i.e. a street intersection. Mark's vivid detail here can best be explained by the supposition that Peter was one of the two disciples sent.

As they loosed the colt tied by its mother, "the owners" (Luke 19:33) and "certain of them that stood there" (Mark 11:5) make a natural inquiry. The owners, most certainly friends of the Lord, concerning whose arrival in Bethany they had heard, acquiesce.

2. The depiction by Christ: Mark 11:7.

"And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him."

a. The devotion of the disciples.

The colt, being unbroken, had no trappings (Gen. 12:3, Num. 22:21) and as a substitute some spare clothing was thrown upon it. Evidently this occurred at some unknown point along the way. While the disciples had gone to make the arrangements for the ass and her colt, the Lord and His followers inched along the well-known caravan road from Jericho to the holy city. Soon they were met by the two returning disciples and it is strongly intimated that it was they who put their garments on the colt. It would be consistent with Peter's nature who was first in action and first in asking. The garment (himation from hima, a piece of dress) was the outer garment, a cloak or a mantle. With devotion the disciples threw the garments upon the colt; the Lord took His seat and probably used the rope with which the colt had been tied as a bridle.

b. The details from Zechariah.

As the King approaches His city He does so not with outward power but as the lowly Prince of Peace. The tumultuous crowd expects Him to reveal His full power and glory as the Messiah-King. It is the Lord's object that His royal entry be seen very clearly but it is a lowly entry. Before the crown there must be a cross. The quotation from Zechariah is introduced by Matthew and John to show the Messianic character of the entry. The disciples, pilgrims, and citizens of Jerusalem were not ready for a suffering Messiah. It is of symbolic significance that these events happened near Bethphage, "house of unripe figs." The Lord's coming to Jerusalem shows that the city, like an unripe fig tree, was unprepared for the coming of its lowly King. (Toussaint, p. 277).

IV. The Proceedings of the Royal Entry. Mark 11:8-11.

1. The demonstrations of the multitude. Mark 11:8-10.

"And many spread their garments in the way; and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way. And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest."

From the pilgrim band which had accompanied Jesus from Galilee and Perea and preceded Him to Jerusalem, from the guests at the feast in Bethany, and from the people who had gone out to see both Jesus and Lazarus, the tidings of Christ's proximity must have spread in the city. The throng around Jesus was growing larger all the time. "A great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took the branches of the palm trees, and went forth to meet him" (John 12:12). Perhaps that morning some had come from Bethany and told in the temple that Christ was on His way to the city. The word probably spread especially among the Galileans who then came forth to meet Him in a large band. They and other pilgrims went out of Jerusalem toward Bethany. The citizens of Jerusalem, whose enmity was settled, no doubt stayed in the city, plotting further against Christ.

a. Their dedication:

1) The casting down of garments:

The enthusiasm generated as the two groups of followers met appears to have arisen spontaneously and to have taken the disciples by surprise. Taking their cue from the disciples who used their garments to saddle the foal, many stripped off their quadrangular wraps and carpeted the bridle path. Matthew says it was "the most part of the multitude" (21:8). The rest cut branches and spread them in the way. Matthew also calls attention to the way in which this was carried out. His careful use of the Greek tenses leads M'Neile to observe correctly:

Part of the crowd spread their cloaks once (estrosan) when the ride began, and when the colt had passed over them they would pick them up and follow, and part continued to pluck (ekopton) branches and to spread them (estrōnnuon) as they moved in front. (Cited by Johnson, op. cit., p. 223).

2) The cutting down of branches:

The sight of the crowd from Jerusalem with their palm branches, the national emblem of Palestine, kindled the disciples' interest and fervor. After they had set Jesus upon the colt, they too cut down branches from the trees along the way and spread them as a rough matting before the coming King. The disciples and multitude showed in this action their deep respect for Christ. Myrtle twigs and robes had been strewn by their ancestors before Mordecai, when he came forth from the palace of Ahasuerus (Esther 10:14). Deference was paid to Jehu in this fashion as he was made king (II Kings 8:13) and so the Persian army had honored Xerxes, when about to cross the Hellespont. (Geike, p. 373).

As to the nature of the branches which the multitude spread on the path, the word used is stibas, which refers to a bed of straw, rushes, or leaves, whether strewed loose or stuffed into a mattress.

The most natural interpretation would be that leaves were stripped off the branches and loosely scattered on the way. But John (12:13) mentions that those who came from Jerusalem were taking palm branches. Thus, both branches and leaves might have been strewn.

b. Their declaration:

The two crowds probably mingled. One had come from Jerusalem, the other was made up of those who had come up from Jericho with Jesus. With the former group there went also a number of Pharisees, their hearts filled with the bitterest thoughts of jealousy and hatred (Luke 19:39).

1) Their declaration concerning the Messiah.

Geldenuys (Luke, p. 480) has caught the mood of the multitude:

At last the procession reaches the highest part of the road on the Mount of Olives and they at once see their holy city (which the Messiah would now, according to their expectations, enter triumphantly). It lies spread out before them, with the beautiful buildings of the temple standing out majestically on the temple-mount. Spontaneously and irresistibly they now give vent to their excitement and greatest expectations by praising God exultantly for the mighty deeds which He had done through Jesus in Galilee and elsewhere, but especially when He raised Lazarus from the dead (xi. 45) and healed blind Bartimaeus, events still fresh in their minds--events which have revealed Him as Messiah in the eyes of His followers.

The sight of the City of David awakened echoes of his Psalms and excitedly they shout: "Hosanna to the son of David! the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" The words are based on Psalm 118:25-26. Hosanna is the transliteration of an Aramaic or Hebrew expression with the meaning, "Save, I pray." Hosanna in the highest," or, "save now (O Thou that dwellest) in the highest," is either the appeal for heavenly enablement, a prayer addressed to God by the theocratic people on behalf of its King Messiah, or simply an ascription of praise to Him, the Israelite equivalent of God save the king. (Johnson, op. cit., pp. 225-226).

The reference in Psalm 118 from which these words are derived seems to be to the dedication of the second temple and the term was intimately connected in the minds of all loyal Jews with the hope of national restoration. Its liturgical use at the feast of Tabernacles is still called "the Great Hosanna." Perhaps the foilage that was being strewn to make a path of honor for Jesus reminded the people of the bundles of palm, myrtle, and willow which were carried at the feast. And so this called to their minds and lips the passage of the psalms. The shout, "Blessed is he that

cometh in the name of the Lord!" is a direct quote from Psalm 128:26a. "The coming one" was a well-known Messianic title. Luke confirms this reference to the Messiah: "Blessed is the coming one, the king" (19:38).

It must have been a moving scene as Jesus advanced toward Jerusalem, preceded and followed by multitudes, with loud cries of rejoicing, as they would do at the feast of Tabernacles. Geike adds an interesting historical footnote to the event:

With the improvisatorial turn of the East, their acclamations took a rhythmical form, which was long chanted in the early Church as the first Christian hymn.
"Give (Thou) the triumph, (O Jehovah), to the Son of David!

Blessed be the kingdom of our Father David, now to be restored
in the name of Jehovah!
Our peace and salvation (now coming) are from God above!
Praised be He in the highest heavens (for sending them by Him,
the Son of David)!
From the highest heavens, send Thou, now, salvation!"

2) Their declaration concerning the kingdom.

The significance of the occasion can be seen by the kingdom references in the gospel accounts. The use of the 118th Psalm, sung in anticipation of the kingdom joy, foreshadowed the coming kingdom. The crowds further sing, "Blessed is the Coming One" (Mark 11:9) which is a clear reference to the King, for in the Lucan account the crowds shouted, "Blessed be the King who cometh in the name of the Lord" (19:38). Mark's addition, "Blessed be the kingdom of our father, David, that cometh" (11:10) which are found nowhere else, further serve to underscore the joyous expectation of the earthly kingdom which would arrive with the King before them.

The term "in the highest" occurs only in this context and Luke 2:14, but is closely related to Paul's "in the heavenlies" (Eph. 1:3; 4:12). As connected with "hosanna" it must be taken to mean, "Let the prayer for our deliverance be ratified in high heaven." Those Jews and disciples who understood the real spiritual significance were no doubt appealing to God for Messianic deliverance, both their national deliverance from the yoke of Rome, as well as their spiritual deliverance from their iniquities. Although their understanding was severely limited as to the true import of the occasion, they were calling on God in the highest heaven to answer their requests.

2. The displeasure of the Pharisees. Luke 19:39-40.

"And some of the Pharisees from the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. And he answered and said, I tell you that, if these shall hold their peace, the stones will cry out."

It is at this point of the narrative that Luke injects two dramatic details about the royal entry. Certain Pharisees among the multitude in vain tried to silence the acclamations of Christ's disciples. Annoyed at the Messianic reverence shown to the Nazarene, against whom they have plotted long ago, and afraid that the public applause will prompt the severe Roman governor, Pilate, to take military action against the nation, they ask Jesus to silence His jubilant disciples. But on this occasion Jesus wants to enter Jerusalem openly as Messiah and publicly show Himself as the King. It is an absolute impossibility for Him not to be applauded as Messiah. Even nature itself apprehends that the King is coming to His city.

Another striking detail in Luke pictures Christ's heartrending lamentation over Jerusalem.

3. The deportment of Christ.

a. The weeping over Jerusalem. 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 they children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

In highly dramatic contrast with the jubilant and shouting multitude, Jesus weeps over Jerusalem now that the city in all its dazzling splendor lies before Him. The request of the Pharisees proves to Him that the Jewish leaders, and through them the Jewish people, have again and now finally rejected Him.

As Jesus wept it was not the still weeping, as at the grave of Lazarus (edakrusen, John 11:35) but it was a loud and deep lamentation (eklausen). The word here is very strong and suggests the heaving of the bosom and the sob and the cry of a soul in agony.

Edersheim pictures the serious moment:

The contrast was, indeed, terrible between the Jerusalem that rose before Him in all its beauty, glory, and security, and the Jerusalem which He saw in vision dimly rising on the sky, with the camp of the enemy round about it on every side, hugging it closer and closer in deadly embrace, and the very "stockade" which the Roman Legions raised around it; then, another scene in the shifting panorama, and the City laid with the ground, and the gory bodies of her children among her ruins; and yet another scene:

the silence and desolateness of death by the Hand of God--not one stone left upon another! (II, 370)

The disciples must have been overcome with surprise at this outburst of grief. Their minds were unable to comprehend the ecstasy of the crowd and the emotional outburst of the Savior. They seem to have been hurried from event to event, not really knowing what to make of it all.

b. The entrance into Jerusalem. Matt. 21:10-11.

"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."

As the group approached Jerusalem, Christ alone was silent and sad among the excited multitude. The marks of the tears that He had wept over the city were still on His cheeks. But as the milling multitude descended into the Kidron valley, their tramping feet and loud acclamations gained the attention of everyone. Geike (p. 375) describes the scene well:

Sweeping round to the north, the road approached Jerusalem by the bridge over the Kedron, to reach which it had to pass Gethsemane. The myriads of pilgrims on the slopes of Olivet, and the crowd at the eastern wall of the Temple, thus saw the procession winding in slow advance, till it reached the gate, now, St. Stephen's through which Jesus passed into Bezetha--the new town--riding up the valley between it and Mount Moriah, through narrow streets, hung with flags and banners for the feast, and crowded, on the raised sides, and on every roof, and at every window, with eager faces. "Who is this?" passed from lip to lip. "It is Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth, in Galilee," shouted back the crowd of northern pilgrims and disciples, glorying in the vindication of the honour of their province before the proud and contemptuous sons of Jerusalem.

The procession of pilgrims evidently aroused unusual curiosity in the city, for the whole town "was stirred." Eseisthe comes from the root that is related to the word for an earthquake; and the expression is therefore a strong one (cf. Matt. 2:3). The men, women and children of Jerusalem are genuinely agitated as tremors of anxiety shake them. The worried question, "Who is this?" circulates from person to person. The explanation offered could not be more anticlimactic. It is not: "This is Israel's great King Messiah! He is thy Lord, worship thou Him," but "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee" (cf. John 12:16). The Lord was silent, His face wet with tears. Instead of the desired public assertion and national acknowledgment of His Messiahship, Jerusalem evidenced by its answer that unbelief had blinded them to accept this Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah King.

c. The activity in Jerusalem. Mark 11:11.

"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."

The double preposition "into Jerusalem" and "into the temple" makes it clear that Christ's main purpose on that eventful day was to see the temple, where He made His appearance as King and High Priest, according to theocratic right. He entered into the temple (hieron), which probably refers to the whole temple complex, including the courts and porches. Here He spent the better part of the day. As He looked around, His eyes surely took in the booths of the money-changers and the sellers of doves, which were to be the objects of His displeasure on the following day.

4. The departure for Bethany. Mark 11:11b.

"It being now, eventide, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve."

Christ's work was not finished till late in the evening, "the hour being already late. The shadows of evening were closing in and weary and sad, He once more returned with the twelve disciples to the shelter and rest of Bethany, but probably not without having first returned the colt with its mother to their owners in Bethphage. The disciples understood little of the significance of the unusual day in the Savior's ministry. For the present they were perplexed but after His ascension the full import of the triumphal entry dawned upon them (John 12:16). It was His royal presentation to a rejected people. It was the beginning of the end for Christ's earthly ministry. It was the beginning of the end for His royal city.